

Ann Miles Case Study

Ann has worked as a physiotherapist for people living with severe and profound disabilities for almost twenty years.

Ann gets very enthused when she speaks about the system that supports the disabled people of the Western Cape. She enjoys developing a network of support, and constantly moves between different elements in it. She is currently working at a specialized unit in the Red Cross Children's hospital, but collaborates with Shonaquip, the [Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre \(WCRC\)](#), Sibongile Home and Vukani Home amongst others. She points out that the reason she is able to contribute so much to the network is that she has had years of experience working with the institutions and people in the province. Her view of the network is that each person and institution fulfils a valuable role that the others depend on.

At one point in the conversation I mention that I have recently met a person living with cerebral palsy. Ann immediately asks for details and without any request from me offers her commitment to follow up. It is when seemingly random connections like this happen that Ann feels the system is working best. This organic network of support can then potentially catch those who need it most. Her passion for those most in need shines through as she talks about the various community-based projects that she has managed to reach in her career.

She refers to [Sibongile Home](#) in Khayelitsha, and the journey she has shared with the staff at the project. With a barely disguised sense of pride she describes the project's trajectory in excellence, and the role she played in teaching the staff about quality care and support in terms of their clients' posture and movement. The clients and staff at Sibongile home attended [seating clinics](#) organised by Shonaquip, WCRC and Red Cross Children's Hospital. Ann organised or participated in some of these. She is clearly thrilled by the idea that a project such as Sibongile has this family of support in the province on which it can depend. According to Ann, Shonaquip plays a vital part in this support system of the province, and the country, both with their seating clinics and with the equipment they provide.

A [seating clinic](#) is an event where children and their devices are attended to by a team of technicians and therapists. Ideally the child's home-chair and school-chair should be present and all aspects of the child's support and comfort are assessed and adapted on site. When a child leaves a seating clinic they will be perfectly seated, and their chair will be perfectly adapted to their unique needs. The seating clinic is one way in which Shonaquip carries out their dedication to individually tailor made device adaptation.

Ann mentions that outreach seating clinics target central spots in neighbourhoods that children and parents can easily reach close to their homes. Shonaquip has a van with a mobile mini-workshop in the back that has everything necessary to adapt or repair a chair. When a clinic is arranged the van arrives and the therapists and technicians are ready to work. Ann names a few aspects of seating clinics that she appreciates as a therapist.

- *Outreach:* The fact that clinics go to the community where seating is required cannot be underestimated in value. Transporting children and their buggies or chairs is a major dilemma to the community of people living with disabilities. It means a lot for Shaniq in Hanover Park or Azipho in Khayelitsha to be only a few blocks away from a seating opportunity, and to skip the public transport system or transport service providers to get there.
- *Both chairs get adjusted:* Most children have a home chair and their school chair. These chairs need to provide consistent support of the child's posture, with the time they spend at school or at home matching their seating positions. Often this is hard to achieve if the seating event happens at school. The child's home chair then differs in its support specifics and could hinder therapeutic progress.
- *The mobile van:* When the Shonaquip van arrives, a technical facility is immediately available that is usually only accessible in centralized places that are hard to reach. The van has a built in workbench and range of specialized tools with the ability to adjust or repair most common problems faces by wheelchair users.
- *Clinics are training events:* At a seating clinic the staff and parents at the various centres being visited get to see what therapists and technicians are doing. A clinic, besides positioning the child, also mentors these carers and guardians about positioning in the buggy or chair. Between seating opportunities the staff are then more able to care for the seating needs of the child.

Ann has collaborated with Shonaquip on many seating clinics through the years. As a physiotherapist she knew the basics of seating, but the training that Shonaquip provides, and hands-on experience she gained from supporting the seating clinics, has been invaluable. She mentions that she is now able to give a more comprehensive assessment and support service to the children she meets.

Through the seating clinics and their insistence on individually adapting each new chair, Shonaquip plays an essential role to Ann. They strengthen the network that she works in with quality products and support and thereby reach the disabled children of the Western Cape who are most in need.

What Ann neglects to mention however is that the unspoken values of dedication to detail and a depth of quality support are aspects that are not just displayed by partners like Shonaquip, but by therapists like her too.