A man of vision and a leader of unparalleled distinction

Professor Dasarath Chetty (pictured), the president of Child Welfare Durban and District, is a leader of unparalleled distinction and unwavering commitment. For an incredible 40 years, Prof Chetty, a sociologist with a doctorate, has been a titan of the Child Welfare movement, dedicating his life as a volunteer to the rights and protection of children.
His journey began in the crucible of apartheid South Africa, where he took on leadership roles to challenge a segregated welfare system, in addition to participating in direct political resistance. This foundational experience culminated in his most defining national achievement: architecting the movement's transformation by amalgamating formerly racially defined societies to serve unserviced and underserved, mainly African, areas. He was elected the first Black president of the South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare (2004-2007), which he and his team transformed into the unified, non-racial Child Welfare South Africa. As the inaugural President of CWSA (2008-2012), he unified 250 child advocacy organisations under a single banner. Before assuming national leadership positions, he served on the board of Durban Indian Child Welfare, and thereafter as president of Child Family and Community Care Centre of Durban, which merged with Durban Child Welfare to become Durban Children's Society (now CWDD), where he also served as its first president. He has held a further 21 leadership positions in the Child Welfare sphere including currently as chair of the CWSA KZN Board.



Prof Chetty's genius for transformation was not confined to one sector. In a remarkable parallel journey, he played a role in dismantling the legacy of apartheid in academia, driving the historic merger, as part of a team, of the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal to establish the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has served as pro vice-chancellor of UKZN and on the UDW and UKZN executive committees, and as president of several national and international bodies including the SA Sociological Association, Gopio SA, UKZN Convocation, Marketing Advancement and Communication in Education. Today, Prof Chetty's expertise is sought across the globe. He is a global ambassador for social justice, serving as a visiting professor at universities in Germany and India, and holding a MAHSA University Board position in Malaysia. He has presented over 120 papers in 35 countries, over 200 papers in SA, and has published widely. His international peers have elected him for a second term as president of the Research Committee on Participation, Organisational Democracy and Self-Management, for the prestigious International Sociological Association (2018-2027), a testament to his global standing. His story is the ultimate inspiration for every community volunteer.
He embodies the pinnacle of what can be achieved through principled service and has received 11 national and international awards for his contribution to societal upliftment, in addition to 38 other professional awards. He brings to CWDD four decades of grassroots dedication, a track record of national transformation, and immense international prestige. He has demonstrated a unique ability to translate vision into collective action, a skill that is invaluable for leading a volunteer-driven organisation.

- Vivaga Thambiran