



Yolande Jacobs' story

Giving opportunity, gaining a safer, more inclusive taxi industry

Yolande Jacobs is a taxi operator and Chairperson for South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) Women in Mitchell's Plain Taxi Association.

Yolande was first introduced to the minibus taxi industry by her husband, who worked as a taxi operator. Her local Taxi Association, Mitchell's Plain, then approached Yolande with the offer of a receptionist role. From there, Yolande steadily built up her experience, progressing into administration then supporting the provincial SANTACO office in the Western Cape, where she worked for fourteen years.

Today, Yolande works at provincial level as a Traffic Liaison Officer, handling issues like fines, vehicle impoundments, and operational challenges faced by taxi operators. "I do everything because I know everything in the industry," she says. "If people come to me, I assist where I can."

Her depth of knowledge and willingness to support others has made her a trusted figure within the industry, particularly for women

navigating spaces where leadership opportunities have traditionally been limited. Yolande reflects, "This is a male-dominated industry. Most of the men don't really see women in high level positions, especially at provincial level. There are now some women involved at regional level, but not in all regions."

Yolande says that change began to take shape when the Western Cape's Minister of Transport, Public Works and Property Management, Tasneem Essop, asked, "Where are the women?". That question led to the inclusion of women at executive level within the provincial structure, and Yolande was among those appointed.

"But the challenge is, they don't see a woman running the province," she explains. "They must just give us the chance and let us show them what we can actually do."

She also speaks openly about how the industry has transformed her personally: "I'm always proud of my work. I've been here for a very long time and I built myself up. I was a very shy person when I came to this industry, but you became tough in this industry."

That personal transformation now feeds directly into her work with Transaid's Safer Minibus Taxis project, delivered in partnership with the SANTACO Women's Desk and funded by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. The project focuses on tackling harassment and sexual and gender-based violence (S+GBV) in minibus taxis, an issue that disproportionately affects women and girls, both as passengers and workers within the sector.

Through training, awareness, and mentorship, the project equips women and men in the taxi industry with the skills, confidence, and knowledge to challenge unsafe behaviour, support one another, and promote respectful, professional conduct across taxi ranks and routes. It also works to shift attitudes within the wider industry, recognising that safer transport systems benefit everyone.



"Since Transaid came on board, I can tell you I have seen changes in these ladies," Yolande says. "I can see their hunger for training, their hunger for what they get to learn, their hunger for experience. The future looks bright with Transaid next to us."

The Safe Minibus Taxi Charter and visible safety measures, such as project stickers displayed on vehicles, reinforce these commitments publicly. They signal to passengers that safety, respect, and accountability matter, while also giving women greater confidence to speak up and take leadership roles within their ranks.

"The Safe Minibus Taxi Charter and stickers are brilliant," Yolande says.

Looking ahead, Yolande emphasises the need to scale the project's impact through expanded training, particularly for sliding door operators, and by reaching additional regions: "We need to drive this project because this is the best one we've got in this province. We need more training. We need to expand to other regions as well, and we need to help the whole of Western Cape."

As International Women's Day 2026 calls for 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls.', Yolande's story shows what meaningful change looks like in practice. In a sector where social norms and entrenched inequalities have long limited women's leadership and safety, her work challenges those barriers head-on.

Advancing women's rights in the minibus taxi industry is not only a matter of fairness; it strengthens communities, protects passengers, and builds a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Yolande's message is clear: **"I always say we can only move forward if we work together."**



Inside Mitchell's Plain Taxi Rank