

Marisa van der Merwe



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Founder & CEO

MiniChess (Pty) Ltd

&

MiniChess Franchise
Holdings (Pty) Ltd

Trustee:

The Entrust Foundation

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Marisa is the Founder & CEO of MiniChess (Pty) Ltd as well as MiniChess Franchise Holdings (Pty) Ltd. She is a Social Entrepreneur at heart, an Ashoka Fellow (one of 3000 in 81 countries) and member of the 1st Tendrel Forum in SA (linked to YPO international). She has focussed her life's energy on community-work - specially to benefit children. This included organisation and management in Schools and SA Chess-community. She was a successful chess-coach & manager of many provincial and national chess champion-teams, producing 28 Junior-national players and 100's of provincial players - herself achieving provincial- and national colours in Chess. Captain of the SA Ladies team at the 2002 World Chess Olympiad in Bled, Slovenia, and became the 1st South-African to play Ex-world chess-champion, GM Garry Kasparov (by invitation) in Belgium in 2011!

She developed the award-winning "MiniChess"-program for Gr. R-3 learners, acknowledged by CHESSA, FIDE, Kasparov Chess Foundation and many NGO's. MiniChess is her passion – utilising play to harness the most powerful energy in the world: Human Talent. MiniChess is taught at 280+ Schools, to 75 000+ learners over the past 5 years, in SA and various Africa countries, the USA and in Central Asia.

Marisa won the Shoprite Checkers Women of the Year Award in 2012 (Category: Education) and participated in many international events: Women in the World Summit 2013 in NY, The London Chess & Mathematics Conference (2013, 2014 & 2015) and at WISE (World Innovation Summit on Education) in Qatar as well as The Ass. for Childhood Education's Global Conference 2014 in Vancouver, Canada, and the Global Visual Literacy Conference 2015 in Portugal (included in an e-book by Oxford University) and she was the key-note speaker at the International ECD-Conference in Bishkek, Central Asia. Was an invited guest at the Deutsche Welle Media Forum in Bonn 2016, speaker at various EduWeek Conferences 2016 & 2017 and invited guest at the 1st Oslo Freedom Forum in Africa, Johannesburg 2018.

Member of The Capital Business Chamber and Centurion Business Forum.

She is a founder-member and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for The Entrust Foundation. They focus on systemic solutions towards value-based capacity-building in disadvantage communities in SA – with specific focus on Early Education-empowerment for 21st Century demands, in-community Youth-entrepreneurism and job-creation as well as the Dream-maker initiative: introducing healthy role-models to disadvantaged children. She is a member of Xpand's NPO-Tribe in SA. She was 2nd Runner-up in the SACBW's Business Women of the Year 2017 Competition!

Driven to enhance Human Capacity in the technology-driven 21st Century, she is excited about the creation of a new program: *MindCompany Unlimited (MindCo.)* for Team-building & Capacity-growth in Corporates and Young Professionals – currently presenting a MindCo-program over 12 weeks at WITS University's medical school. It utilises game-play and interactive discussion-platforms to optimize team-potential & strengthen the unique personal capacity of individual members. Looking forward to developing similar structures for Teens (15-18 years) and Young leaders (±12 years) in collaboration with Xpand SA.

She is married to Willem. They have 3 grown children & one cute little grandson.