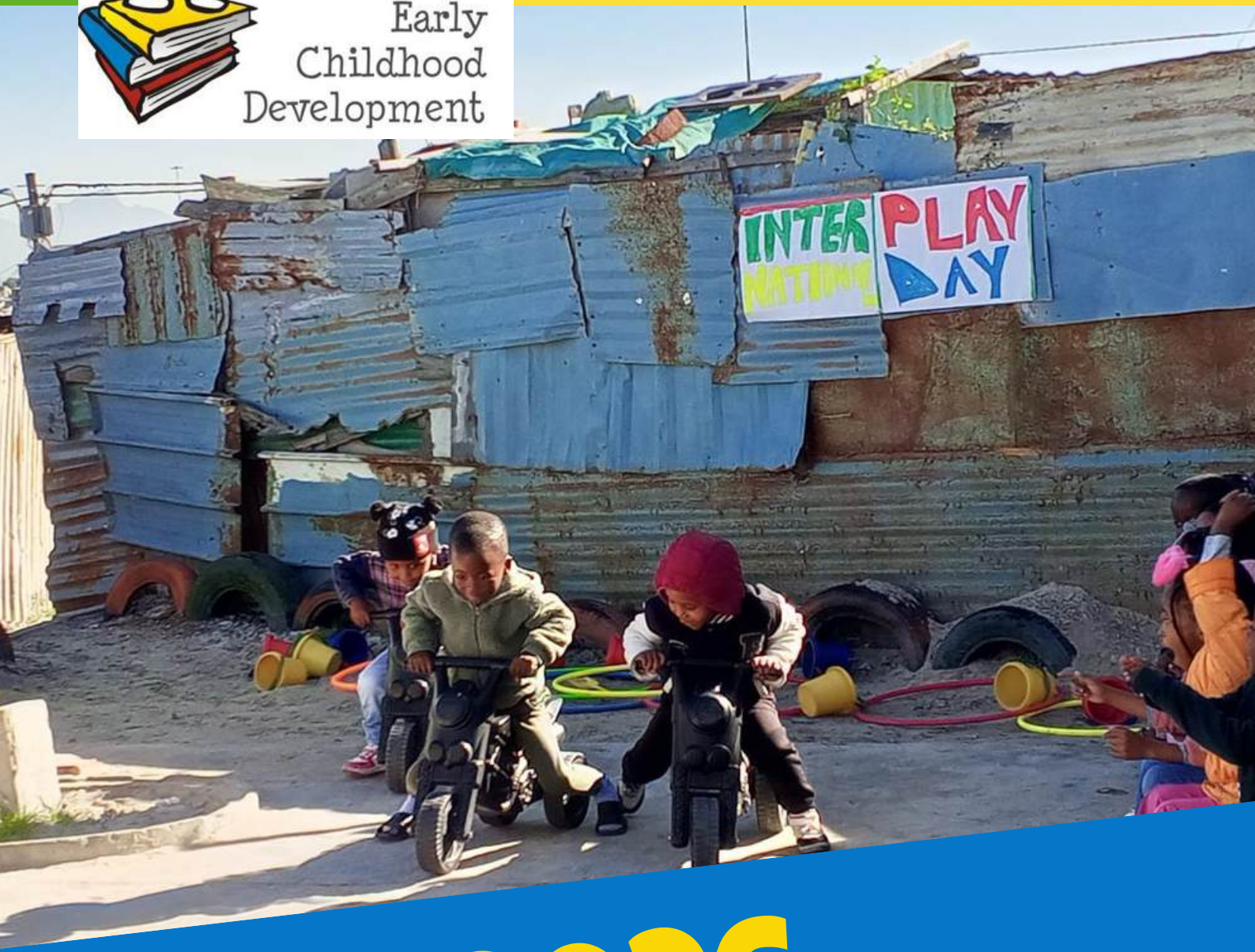
Sikhula Sonke

Early Childhood Development



2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Addressing the need for early childhood development training and resources in the informal settlements of Khayelitsha, Cape Town

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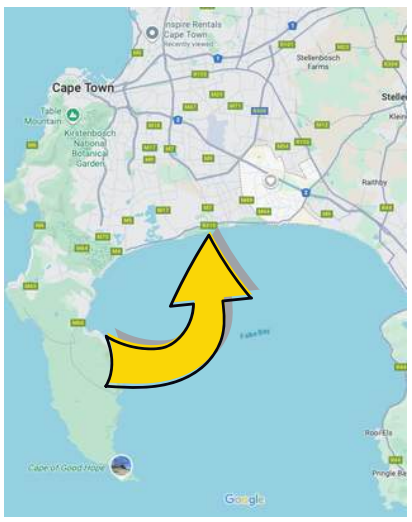
KHAYELITSHA

Khayelitsha is one of 22 identified Presidential poverty nodes in South Africa, located just outside Cape Town at the Southern tip of Africa. It comprises some formal and mostly informal housing (shacks) built on unallocated land lacking basic services.

With an ever-increasing estimated population of 2,400,000 (2022 stats) of which 60% is under the age of 29, Khayelitsha grapples with extensive socio-economic challenges including crowded living conditions, unemployment, GBV, gang violence, sexual assaults, infrastructure shortfalls and shack fires.

70% of children have no access to early childhood development support and/or learning opportunities.

Yet, amid such hardship, many locals embrace a culture of resilience, social activism and entrepreneurial spirit, striving to build a safer, more equitable community.



VISION & MISSION

Sikhula Sonke offers quality early childhood development training and support to the parents, caregivers and preschool teachers of young children in the Khayelitsha township of Cape Town, South Africa.

Our vision is that every child in Khayelitsha has the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential in a safe, stimulating and loving environment. We see the parents, caregivers, community members and preschool teachers in Khayelitsha being trained and supported to provide such an environment.

OUR STORY

In 1980s and 1990s Khayelitsha's communities were in turmoil. There was a dire need for proper housing, health and educational facilities. In response, Claremont Methodist Church and Habitat for Humanity began building houses in the Harare area of Khayelitsha as part of their Social Impact Ministry. While working in the area, members noted the plight of young, unschooled and vulnerable children.

Sikhula Sonke ECD was formed in 2001 to address the need for quality early childhood development so that children could start their primary schooling with the advantages of having reached childhood milestones.

Today Sikhula Sonke's programmes have expanded to include teacher training and mentorship, caregiver training, community outreach, mobile toy libraries, fatherhood networks and psychosocial support.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

In a recent conversation with a friend, we got to discussing how one's experience of life can be so different based on the variables that you're born into. At face value, for those who are fortunate in life, they may experience a good education, financial wealth and resources, practical opportunities, connections, stable family structures and a perspective on the world that is hopeful or "alive with possibilities". For the less fortunate, life may present difficulties, health challenges, relational instability, broken family structures, abuse, and any number of emotional or psychosocial problems.

As I reflect on the world around us and the rise of artificial intelligence, political instability, economic hardship, etc. I am left with the feeling that our purpose at Sikhula Sonke is increasing in relevance and need. It was Maya Angelou who said, "I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver", and my prayer is that we continue to bring a little more light into the communities that we serve, so that there is more hope, stability and opportunity for those we serve.

To the long-serving and hard-working team members of Sikhula Sonke, all of our thanks and appreciation needs to go to you. The conditions in which you operate are not glamorous, and the reward that you receive is limited by our financial standing, yet you bring the best of yourselves, with joy, and you impact the children you serve in a way that leaves them more prepared to face the world of tomorrow, and that is a wonderful thing.

Our executive director, Mdebuka Mthwazi, remains a pleasure to work with, a hard-working and dependable ally in the communities we serve. I'm always so thankful for our partnership, and proud of his contribution and impact.

To the rest of the team, we say thank you as always. And to our board members, Janet, Jenny, and Sindi, a profound note of appreciation for the time and experience you bring to Sikhula Sonke, and to your commitment in helping navigate the way forward.

Sikhula Sonke exists today, after more than a quarter century of operation, largely as a result of the dedication and commitment of our funders and partners who share our vision for serving, supporting and uplifting the children, educators and parents who live in Khayelitsha.

Our ability to offer social work support, community outreach programmes, and library services, amongst others, would not be possible were it not for our long-standing donors, and we thank you, as always, for your generosity.

Evan Torrance.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

"Sikhula Sonke Early Childhood Development continues to lead the way towards ensuring access to the right to education for children who are experiencing a legacy of deeply entrenched deprivation and limitations."

In a country more than three decades into democracy, the reality remains that too many children are left behind in their first 1000 days and early foundations. With 80% of South African children unable to read for meaning by Grade 4, the need for strong early childhood development has never been more urgent.

I am immensely proud of the Sikhula Sonke team who continue to roll up their sleeves and serve children and families on the margins of our city and society. I applaud our team leaders who continue to steer our ship through rough seas. Through strong partnerships and collaboration, they have helped ensure that essential services reach communities and that our interventions remain sustained, effective and impactful. Their commitment to fostering synergy between stakeholders and local organisations demonstrates a deep understanding that investing in people is not simply about meeting today's needs - it is about transforming lives and shaping futures.

At the heart of this work is our journey alongside communities. As we invest in children, we also empower their parents and caregivers to build stronger futures. I am especially grateful to the donors who supported the establishment and continued work of our Social Work department. Your investment has enabled us to respond to cases of neglect, abuse and other social ills, playing a vital role in upholding and protecting the rights of children in Khayelitsha.

Our staff, EPWP workers, FNB First Job interns and volunteers are the heartbeat of our work, opening their own homes to cook for children and store learning materials, embodying the resilience, compassion and selfless service that defines our organisation. Salute Maqobo Maqobokazana!

I am deeply grateful to our funders, donors, philanthropies and the whole village of Sikhula Sonke who believe that our light must remain bright and burning for the young children of Khayelitsha. Together, we are changing the narrative for children growing up in our informal settlements.

Last but not least, I extend my deepest gratitude to our Board of Directors who are the guardrails of our priorities, even though at times we feel tempted to do more with nothing except our energies. They kept us on track and warned us against doing things that are not sustainable. Their wisdom is our compass, ensuring that we stand true to our word to the community, donors, and our primary beneficiaries. Their insights have served the organization well, providing a steady strategic foundation upon which we can build long-term, meaningful solutions that genuinely empower those we serve.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to our vision and mission and to creating lasting impact, ensuring that every resource is utilized effectively to foster growth, resilience, and a sustainable organisation.

In closing, our collective efforts and the unwavering support of the "village" of Sikhula Sonke has turned our ambitious goals into tangible realities. With your continued partnership, we are confident that we will continue to achieve significant milestones and deliver exceptional value to our communities. It really takes a village to raise a child. "Sakha umntwana sakha isizwe sangomso".

May we continue to grow and thrive together, sustained in unity in our journey of community development, to achieve strong early childhood development educational outcomes. "Maz'enethole".

Mdebuka Mthwazi

Funda Udlale Toy Library

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676 children part of World Play Day
8450+ books given to children
90 group sessions
4378 individual play inteactions

Fatherhood Network

---

36 fathers participating
3 x community gardens maintained
1 x Positive Parenting course

Imbewu ECD coaching & support

---

54 centres (8026 children) mentored
235 visits by team
20 practitioners graduated from Basic ECD course

IMPACT REPORT

Emthonjeni Playgroup Outreach

---

303 children
289 families
9 sites
151 children graduated to Grade R

Imbiza Family & Community Motivator

4759 home visits
204 children
201 families
8 sites
7 new moms supported

Staff growth

---

3 x BEd diplomas
1 x BEd degree
3 x ECD Level 4 & 5 graduates
6 x Basic ECD graduates
5 x Level 1 First Aiders
7 x different courses

WE BELIEVE THAT ...

- All children have the right to be loved, cared for and developed physically, intellectually, emotionally, morally and socially.
- Women are uniquely placed to protect and enforce the rights of children and need to be supported, encouraged and equipped with the necessary skills to do so.
- By nurturing and building our children, we nurture and build our nation.
- All parents/caregivers of young children should be knowledgeable about early childhood development so that they can play an active role in nurturing and enhancing the development of the children in their care.
- Our united efforts will significantly and positively impact on the future of our young children and afford them the opportunity to realise their potential, and in so doing, secure the future of our country.

IMBIZA FCM
FAMILY & COMMUNITY

Support and training to families and caregivers, in their homes and using community spaces

Working in UT Gardens, K2 Section, Monwabisi CO-4, Monwabisi A Section, Enkanini, Khunkqu, Taiwan and Mew Way.

Growing Together is a group-based approach bringing mothers together for Nanny 'n Me training, in which moms and tots learn and play together. Parents receive certificates which help employability as nannies.

1st 1000 Days continues to support mothers and babies 0-2 years old. 7 pregnant women were identified and enrolled in the program, with 7 babies born.

Parenting skills workshops resulted in noticeable improvement in parenting skills and participation during home visits.

Nutrition interventions and health checkups ensured early interventions, less stunting, and improved health, thanks to our partners.

Literacy accessibility was made possible thanks to donated books and readers from Book Dash, Kids Collab and Growing Together.

Support Groups and FAMSA training strengthened families and improved mental health.

Challenges: The loss of two parents, ongoing alcohol abuse linked to gender-based violence (GBV) and child neglect, and persistent hygiene challenges in some homes. Caregivers did not consistently attend the Growing Together group sessions.

8 sites
204 children in FCM playgroups
4,759 home visits with caregivers
17 special needs children supported
16 participated in GBV support groups
32 parent cluster workshops in the year
31 training sessions on Positive Parenting
31 caregivers attended a trauma-informed workshop

IMBEWU ECD TRAINING

Coaching, training, support and access to ECD resources for preschool practitioners

Workplace mentoring saw 168 ECD centres supported by Sikhula Sonke's ECD coaches and mentors through centre visits and one-on-one feedback.

Basic ECD Training is a one-year commitment. The course ran weekly, with practitioners learning about ECD premises and equipment; health, safety and nutrition; management and governance; working with families and communities; active learning and classroom activities. The practitioners who attended Basic Training showed great improvement in their ECD centers, and the principals gave positive feedback. During the year they did their practical projects in class, took them back to their workplaces, and even showed other peers what they learned in class. We celebrated 14 ECD practitioners and 6 SISO staff completing the course and graduating in November.

Donations: Nal'ibali donated storybooks and story supplements for children to two ECD centers. 51 ECD practitioners also attended and completed Nal'ibali training for 2 days. Wordworks spent their Mandela Day giving gifts to Manyano Educare Centre in Mandela Park.

Training: Inclusive Education provided training for 41 ECD practitioners who successfully completed the course to receive certificates.

Many of the ECD practitioners who did ECD Basic training with us from 2016 to 2021 have enrolled to further their studies in different colleges; several have completed ECD Level 4, Level 5 and a Diploma in ECD.

168 Early Childhood Centres supported
159 mentoring visits by SISO coaches
27 special needs children assisted
20 ECD practitioners completed SISO Basic ECD Training & Computer Training
39 children from 7 ECD Centres enjoyed SISO graduation ceremonies in readiness for entering primary school

EMTHONJENI PLAYGROUP OUTREACH

Preschool services and support for parents and caregivers using public and community spaces

Operating in 9 informal settlements: UT Gardens, K2 Section, Monwabisi CO-4, Monwabisi A Section, Enkanini, Khunkqu, Taiwan, Mew Way and SD (Social Distance).

Preschool services for families unable to access ECD: Emthonjeni offers play, learning, nutrition and literacy opportunities to children 3-6 years old to ensure they meet their developmental milestones. Attendance and development is carefully tracked and monitored.

Psychosocial & practical support: Our social workers provided counselling and referrals.

Nutrition & health: Stunting is being conquered through nutrition support thanks to funders and partners like Ikamva Labantu, ForAfrika and Wynberg Girls' High School. City of Cape Town Health teams provided immunisations to 254 children, contributing to improved health and wellbeing.

Key achievements: 75 children were assessed through ELOM to better understand and respond to developmental needs, 77 children moved from FCM to Emthonjeni Playgroup program. 170 children from the Emthonjeni and 3 ECD Centers shared a special graduation ceremony marking their progression to Grade R. Emthonjeni received 72 donated mats from Home Choice and Community Chest. Outings to Muizenberg Pools and a Colour Fun Run were highlights for both children and staff.

Despite some challenges, the staff remained dedicated to fostering resilience and development, ensuring that each child received personal care and educational input.

Challenges
Hygiene concerns among some children, increasing crime in communities, alcohol abuse, gender-based violence and child neglect. These systemic issues significantly hindered the consistent attendance of some of the children and created barriers to providing a safe, and supportive environment for our services.

9 sites
289 families registered
303 children enrolled
17 toy library visits
133 special needs children supported
151 children enrolled in primary school
302 children went to Muizenberg pools
1739 play sessions facilitated across the sites
128 children enjoyed a Colour Paint Run fun day at Mandela Park

FUNDA UDLALE
TOY LIBRARY SERVICES

Access to books, games and toys for families, communities and ECD Centres

The Toy Library has two components - a physical space at Harare Library which children and ECD centres can use, and outreach libraries to encourage play in home and ECDs in the communities. This year our focus activities included science experiments, storytelling, and make-believe play.

Events: 75 children from 3 ECD centres experienced lots of fun in celebration of the International Day of Play 2025 at the Toy Library. They had an exciting day with our mascot, Little Bee.
World Play Day was a great success. We reached 676 children from 26 ECD centers and Emthonjeni programme. It was a great joy in both principal/practitioners and children.
128 children enjoyed the Colour Paint Run fun day at Mandela Park public pack.

Donations: Biblionef SA donated educational toys, books, and hanging libraries to 20 ECD Centers. BookDash donated 8,450 books: 4 different storybooks each for young children, and 3 different sets of wordless books for babies. 19 ECD centers received a donation of very comfortable mats for children to sit on instead of cold damp floors.

Challenges
We can no longer have afternoon and school holiday sessions at the Toy Library due to the issue of a locked exit door. Current city protocols prevent direct access the Toy Library, which restricts the Toy Library's engagement to morning sessions.

360 toys borrowed
23 Emthonjeni play sessions
68 ECD Centre play sessions
29 community play sessions
4,378 child play interactions
7 special needs children helped
676 children attended World Play Day

SOCIAL WORK REPORT

Providing psychosocial support and practical social work services to individuals, families, community groups and our own staff.

The Social Work team focuses on strengthening families, protecting children's rights and improving access to essential government services through targeted community outreach programs, in-house psychosocial support sessions, and collaborative partnerships with local organizations that are also part of the Sikhula Sonke village.

The team provided ongoing psychosocial support through individual counselling sessions and cluster workshops. Various workshops empowered caregivers with skills, improving well-being and their ability to provide safe, supportive, and nurturing environments for their children. We assisted caregivers lacking IDs and undocumented children needing birth certificates who were unable to access Child Support Grants.

In collaboration with FAMSA, the Social Work team facilitated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) support groups for caregivers who had experienced GBV and other forms of abuse. These sessions provided emotional support, promoted healing, and strengthened participants' resilience and coping skills, empowering them to rebuild their lives and care for their families more effectively.

11 birth certificates obtained
9 Child Support Grants accessed
3 cases of child neglect resolved
16 women participated in FAMSA GBV Group
83 caregivers attended Counselling sessions
31 Positive Parenting attendees
148 caregivers in Food Gardening training
104 Child Protection Community Dialogues
37 Caregivers attended Nal'ibali story training
31 Caregivers in Trauma Informed Workshop

Engaging fathers to be active participants in their young children's lives and early childhood development

FATHERHOOD NETWORK

36 men participating in regular groups
3 community gardens looked after by men
1 Positive Parenting course run by FAMSA
74 fathers attended FAMSA Parenting sessions

PHATISWA'S STORY

My name is Phathiswa. I am 39 years old and the parent of a 4 year old girl and two older boys, and we live in Monwabisi Park A-section.

I joined Sikhula Sonke's 1st 1000 days programme at the beginning of 2024 when my youngest child was almost 2 years. At the time, I was separated from my husband, who was not supportive. I was unemployed, living with my three children and we all depended on Child Support Grants.

I realised that I had a passion for working with children, so I asked to volunteer at Sikhula Sonke. They gave me that opportunity to explore. It was so privileged for me to look after young ones in the playgroups instead of staying at home to do nothing. I attended the cluster workshops, which helped me deal with the trauma of separation, learn about early childhood development and improve my parenting skills.

Sikhula Sonke also kept encouraging me to improve my Grade 12 subjects. They were there to give me all the support I needed including my admin and research work. Since I met them, I have never gone to sleep hungry. In my darkest days, they stood by me and provided the food parcels.

Later, a Sikhula Sonke Social Worker needed someone with Grade 12 to work as a cleaner at CTM. The SISO team recommended me as the right candidate for that post, because they knew my commitment and dedication at work.

At my age I never imagined myself working for a big company like CTM. Meeting Sikhula Sonke has had such a positive impact towards my personal development. I send my gratitude to Sikhula Sonke for playing a vital role to appoint me for this job. I also thank Sikhula Sonke for strengthening me and now my husband is back. I am now happily working permanently at CTM because of you.

STAFF GROWTH

INVESTING IN OUR TEAM

Sikhula Sonke's team are all local to Khayelitsha. We have 26 full time staff, 5 FNB Interns and 20 EPWP interns (Extended Public Work Program).

As an organisation, we make sure that every year our staff are empowered and developing themselves so that they can be updated about the current trends happening in the ECD sector. This includes attending workshops, access to training programs and short developmental courses.

CURRENTLY STUDYING

Level 4: Zizipho Mbali, Zintle Nocanda
Level 5: Bongiswa Malunga, Buyiswa Balani
Diploma in ECD: Nolusindiso Sixholo, Nolitha Gana, Ziyanda Siganga, Nolubabalo Sijentu, Nothemba Maseti, Nomathemba Peter
Diploma in Grade R: Makhosazana Padi, Lucia Mthwazi

COMPLETED STUDIES

Basic ECD Training: Phumela Maqondase, Zizipho Mbali, Amanda Hali, Alizwa Ngwendu, Peace Banca, Sanelisiwe Dlakavu
Level 4: Siphokuhle Mtyhaphi, Lelethu Ngodwana
Level 5: Phelokazi Moyikwa
Diploma: Nomasister Matsiliza, Melissa Jonkers, Bukiwe Genu
BEd Degree: Zingisa Ngcolo

COURSES

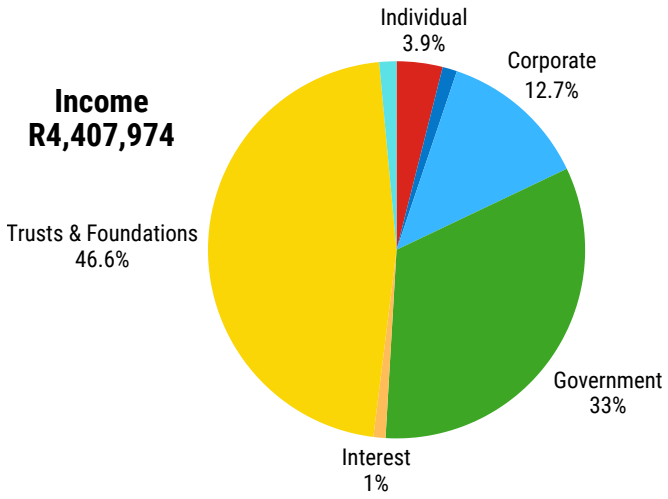
Facilitation training: Siphokuhle Mtyaphi, Sisanda Sipuka and Nobuhle Mnyeko
Stress Relief Training: 11 staff members
Safety Corner Training: 10 staff members
Play Box Train the Trainers Training: 15 staff members
Fatherhood Training: 8 staff members
Nali Bali Training: 17 staff members
Introduction to Autism: 46 staff members
First Aid Training: Ziyanda Siganga, Nolitha Gana, Nomathemba Peter, Nothemba Maseti, Nolubabalo Sijentu

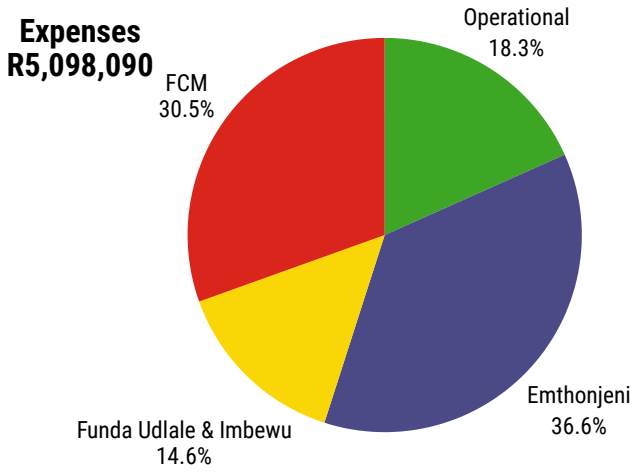
"Sikhula Sonke always encourages us to learn more and share what we learn. This is a life-long skill that I am grateful for." - Staff member

FINANCIALS

2025 was challenging, both in the field and financially. We ended the year with a loss financially, but our cashflow remains good and staff remain prudent in spending, while multiplying their impact through many years of experience, efficiency and resourcefulness. Unfortunately we lost our bus to an armed robbery. Thankfully our driver was unharmed but with the increase in hijacking in Khayelitsha, we have put the purchase of a new vehicle on hold.

Apart from this, we are so encouraged that our funders remain faithful and involved, believe in our mission and vision, and are working with us to really impact the young lives in our care. We appreciate your visits to understand our joys and challenges, and thank you for providing training and platforms for engagement and collaboration among our partners and other stakeholders in ECD.





THANK YOU!

Our Partners, Friends & Supporters

Biblionef
Book Dash
Breadline Africa
Caroline Peterson
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
ChildVision
City of Cape Town (various Departments)
Community Chest
Jeffrey Family (David & Natasha)
De Groot Family
Dr Corinne Abel
Duja Consulting
Families South Africa (FAMSA)
ForAfrika
ForGood Causes
First Rand First Job Project
Fierus Family (Dr Monika & Udo)
Gallant Accounting
Growing Together
Harare Police Station
Hebbel Family (Ernst & Lindi)
Home Choice Development Trust
Inclusive Education
Ikamva Labantu
Keike Barth
Kids Collab
Maximilian Igl
Mikhulu Trust
Nanny 'n Me
Nal'ibali
Possibility Corner
Safe Hub
Sisanda Fundaytion
South African Education Project
South Africa Research Association for Early Childhood Education
Shoprite/Checkers
The Lunchbox
The Unlimited Child
Wordworks
Wynberg Girls' High School

Networks & Alliances

Connect Network
Izinga Assist
Khayelitsha ECD Forum
Khayelitsha Peace Forum
National Early Childhood Development Alliance
SALT Alliance

Funders & Donors

Abax Development Trust
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Change X Foundation
CODETA
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Gerard Adema
HCI foundation
International Women's Club of Cape Town - Philanthropy
Izinga Assist
Jim Joel Foundation
L&S Chiappini Trust
MAID Foundation
Mapula Trust
Nedbank Private Wealth
Percy Fox Foundation
PEU Communication Solutions (Pty) Ltd
Roelf Stephan - Nussbaum Foundation
Solon Foundation
Western Cape Department of Education
Private donors
Staff through payroll giving

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Board
Evan Torrance - Chairman
Mdebuka Mthwazi - Executive Director
Sindiswa Dapula - Community & ECD Representation
Jennifer Klein - Legal
Janet Glanville - Finance Manager