

#DoMore4Pongola

"A PLACE WHERE YOUNG CHILDREN FLOURISH"



Message from the Project Lead

"We always take pleasure in sharing with you the progress made through the DO MORE FOUNDATION'S initiatives that aim to improve the lives of young children in uPhongolo. In this latest newsletter, we share many ongoing activities from July to December such as regular porridge distribution, ECD centre infrastructure upgrades and ECD workforce training.

We also undertook numerous new initiatives and activities, such as hosting an annual ECD principals' event to celebrate the hard work and commitment of those teaching and caring for young children at 110 ECD centres across the municipality and providing support to a collaborative project with Dlananathi and the Department of Health focusing on babies first 1000 days of life.

We presented DMF's work to uPhongolo Councillors and hosted a number of our funders when we showcased the improvements that have been made possible through their funding. The RCL FOODS Sugar Estate and Ntonga Club continue to generously provide much needed office and storage space for us to work in.

A big thank you to all who have contributed to this important work. We're always grateful for the generous support of our donors and partners. Thank you for making 2023 a memorable and successful year." - Lynn Stefano, Director of Lulamaphiko

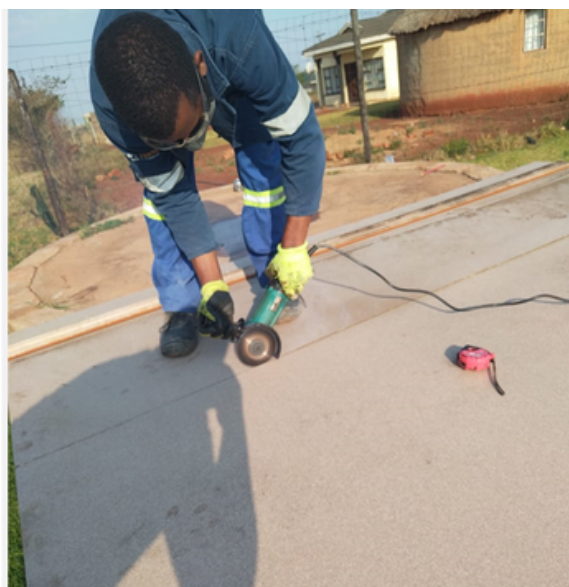
Uplifting ECD Centres Through Government Registration Assistance:

ECD centres cannot access the government subsidy of R17 per child per day until they are fully registered with the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The registration process is a long and often difficult one that involves multiple government departments and often make the demands on under-resourced ECD centres unrealistic as they try to meet the registration requirements.

The DO MORE FOUNDATION's implementing partner, Lulamaphiko, works closely with the Zululand District Municipality's Environmental Health Officers to identify what is required by individual ECD centres to achieve full registration compliance.

Between July and December 2023, 10 ECD centres received essential items and infrastructure upgrades needed for full registration eligibility, and we eagerly await the results of their applications from the District DBE. The upgrades have been realised through the partners we have in our corner that supply infrastructure and equipment required for registration, such as JoJo tanks, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, dustbins, and pest control.

We are immensely grateful to the funders who collaborate with us in strengthening the capacity of ECD centres in uPhongolo. Together we are able to support ECD centres to provide well-managed and adequately resourced services to meet the basic needs of young children in underserved communities.



Facilitating Knowledge-Sharing About ECD at Young Child Forums

Our monthly Young Child Forums (YCFs) continue to provide space for ECD principals and practitioners to engage with and discuss topics pertaining to early childhood development (ECD). The main objective of these gatherings is to increase access to ECD knowledge, experiences and share lessons, as well as increase planning, coordination, and collaboration among ECD stakeholders.

We are thrilled at the growing interest in the YCFs. Between July and December, almost 90 ECD principals/practitioners attended the five forum meetings held in three locations each month. There were two highlights in this period: a jamboree event in July and our annual celebration in August.

The Jamboree brought together numerous stakeholders, including Social Workers from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Social Development, and the Zululand District Municipality's Environmental Health Officers who all voiced commitment to facilitating ECD centre registration processes.



The annual YCF celebration was a festive and joyous occasion. 97 ECD centres were present as well as the Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education (SITFE) and South African Sugar Association (SASA) representatives (who co-fund DMF's work in uPhongolo), and Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini, DMF's National Young Child Manager.

Local partners working to improve the lives of young children use the YCFs to present on their work. Inkanyezi Care Organisation and Lifeline presented on Child Protection and Case Reporting, while the Department of Health's new Dietician Ndhivuwo Mphuru covered the topic of correct feeding for different age groups starting from infants up to 5-years.

Stakeholders who attend the meetings have expressed the value and impact that coming together in this way has for their work in ECD.



Connecting With More Parents and Caregivers Through Pongola FM



Pongola FM's weekly programme for parents and caregivers reaches the wider community while building upon the work done by the DOMORE FOUNDATION and its partners.

Every Wednesday morning, parents and caregivers can increase their ECD knowledge and learnings, relevant to the experiences, challenges and needs of their local communities. The radio broadcasts communicate evidence-based best practices to support young children's development and well-being.

Since our last newsletter, recent topics included child supervision, leaving children in others' care, breastfeeding, and learning through play.

Lulamaphiko team members presented on importance of giving young children a holistic foundation in their early years to set them up for future success. The majority of listener feedback revealed newfound knowledge about playing with children and creating toys from recycled items. The segment on storytelling in particular was praised for its engagement, with listeners expressing excitement about learning new things relating to young children.

This valuable partnership with Pongola FM helps us reach parents and caregivers in the town's outlying areas with important information about the care, safety, and education of their young children. Radio remains an important way for many people in uPhongolo to get news and other relevant information concerning young children.

Read and Play at Home – Powered by Book Dash and My School



The DO MORE FOUNDATION, in collaboration with BookDash and MySchool, has undertaken an initiative to enhance parents' and caregivers' skills in reading and playing with their children at home. Trained early childhood development (ECD) centre practitioners conduct workshops where they share valuable insights with parents and caregivers. At the conclusion of these sessions, each participant is gifted three Book Dash books tailored for young children.

Since September 2023, a total of 1161 parents and caregivers and 80 ECD principals actively engaged in these workshops. The impact of the initiative extends beyond individual households, as BookDash has generously distributed over 12,000 books to ECD centres and for young children to take home, benefiting both practitioners and children.

The collaborative effort has yielded positive feedback from participants, highlighting the growing recognition of the significance of early age reading in fostering a child's development. Book Dash, a South African non-profit organization, and a key player in this initiative, envisions that every child should own 100 books by the age of five. 4000 books were also donated by the Solon Foundation which have been distributed to 560 children across various ECD centres.

The combined efforts of Book Dash and Read and Play at Home have significantly increased access to quality storybooks and early literacy support resources for young children and their parents and caregivers. This collaborative approach underscores the collective commitment to fostering a love for reading and learning from an early age.



DoMore Porridge Continues to Fuel MORE Play



Good nutrition is vital for children attending ECD centres to learn and achieve the best cognitive outcomes. By delivering DoMore Porridge to unfunded ECD centres, we fulfil the promise of aiding young children to consume nutritious porridge, resulting in their immediate hunger being reduced. RCL FOODS's Sugar Mill HR Department assisted Lulamaphiko with the delivery of a total 10 307 kgs of DoMore Porridge to 39 ECD centres in uPhongolo from July to December 2023 which reached 1,478 children. This porridge equates to 206 140 meals for the young children.

Learning in the Garden: “Funda Engadin” Initiative Backed by Food Gardens at ECD Centres

In 2021, Lulamaphiko supported 10 ECD centres to establish food gardens with the aim of producing fresh, healthy vegetables for children’s meals and has continued to support ECD gardeners to apply sustainable, organic farming methods with support from Biowatch South Africa.

The Funda Engadini early learning programme – the Zulu phrase meaning “Learning in the Garden” – was started with the aim of supporting young children to learn in and from nature. In addition to producing fresh vegetables for children’s meals, the gardens serve another important purpose – to enable ECD practitioners to facilitate learning outdoors for young children.

Practitioners are trained monthly for eight months of the year and given resources to encourage children to learn in natural spaces beyond the classroom walls. This sets the stage for them to build a strong relationship with nature, and care for and protect their natural environment for the future.

This year nine ECD centres and one home-based group completed the programme. In total, 448 children between the ages of four and five years participated. Feedback from practitioners has highlighted that children thoroughly enjoy spending more time learning and exploring outdoors.



EAT LOVE PLAY TALK Practitioner Invited to Present at “Humana People to People”

The DO MORE FOUNDATION developed EAT LOVE PLAY TALK (ELPT) as a programme for ECD practitioners and facilitators to engage in activities and conversations with parents and caregivers of young children about healthy eating, building loving relationships, playful learning, and language development.

The Lulamaphiko team trained 14 ECD practitioners who in turn trained 182 parents at 7 ECD centres. Training had been so successful that Lungile Simelane, principal of Buhlebemvelo Creche was invited by Humana People to People in South Africa – an organisation that aims to help poor communities tackle the challenges of an unequal world - to present at a recent gathering under the banner of their 'Mothers of the Future' programme. Lungile was recommended by clinic sisters who attended one of her ELPT sessions. This recognition and development of Lungile is a direct result of the positive impact of ELPT, for which we are immensely proud.

We look forward to building upon the immense successes of 2023 as we take ELPT into 2024.



Advocating For The Rights Of Young Children



In November, Ntuthuko Mabuyakhulu (Lulamaphiko's ECD facilitator) and Mrs Jabulile Simelane (Chairperson of the ECD Forum) attended the Real Reform for ECD (RR4ECD) nutrition campaign launch in Johannesburg. On their return, Mrs Simelane reported back to the YCF members on the RR4ECD's strategy to get DBE to develop a national nutrition programme for ECD that guarantees nutritious meals for all eligible children at early learning programmes, regardless of their registration status.

Currently government subsidises feeding schemes in schools but not in early learning programmes, such as ECD centres and playgroups. It is widely known that children need enough healthy food every day to support their bodies and brains to grow and function well. Waiting until children attend primary school to be guaranteed a daily meal is far too late. The RR4ECD nutrition campaign has the potential to change this.

Ibhayi Lengane Programme - The First 1000 days

The DO MORE FOUNDATION is partnering with Dlananathi (a Pietermaritzburg-based NGO that provides psycho-social support through play) and the DoH to reach babies and young children from conception up to their 2nd birthday through an innovative programme. The Ibhayi Lengane Programme – which translates to a “Baby’s Blanket” – aims to provide Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Outreach Team Leaders (OTLs) with new ways of engaging with pregnant moms and their families, and to learn how to support them through the first 1000 days of their baby’s life.

Initially Dlananathi facilitators targeted 39 CHWs and OTLs to be trained and supported to implement the programme over nine months. However due to the very positive impact the programme is making, and the enthusiasm and commitment shown by the CHWs and OTLs, another group of 32 started in October.

This ground-breaking programme provides knowledge and skills that will last long after the training ends.

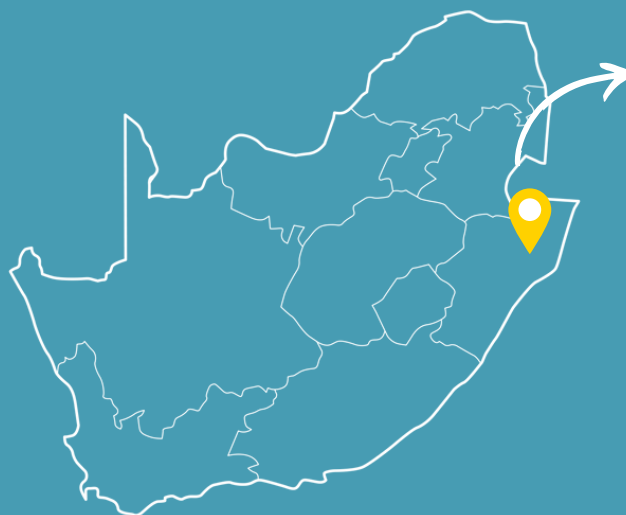


OUR IMPACT TO DATE

Young children reached: 5,260

ECD centres supported: 110

ECD workers empowered: 419



-  Food security and nutrition
-  Parent (caregiver) support
-  Maternal and child health
-  Early learning through play
-  Child safety and protection
-  The first thousand days
-  Infrastructure and services
-  Enterprise development
-  Capacity building + leadership development

PARTNERS WORKING TOGETHER



“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together”
- AFRICAN PROVERB

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