



# DoMore4Nkomazi Newsletter

THE LEAVE NO YOUNG CHILD BEHIND EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

March 2021



## LETTER FROM THE PROJECT LEAD

The beginning of 2020 started with much excitement around the implementation of the expanded Leave No Young Child Behind initiative. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, all programmes came to a grinding halt as we braced for hard lockdown and the predicted negative impacts this carried for our country's most vulnerable children and families.

We feel truly inspired by the partners who continued to find alternative ways of working to ensure the rights and needs of Nkomazi's young children were not forgotten and that no young child was left behind. Despite the challenges of 2020, there were some powerful stories that we are able to share with great pride. We would like to give massive thanks to all the stakeholders – both new and old – who rallied together to make these stories possible and pay special tribute to the health workers and our colleagues in the Department of Health who really bore the brunt of the pandemic.

## A LITTLE BACKGROUND

In order to #DoMore4Nkomazi, the DO MORE FOUNDATION embarked on a multi-stakeholder community initiative in order to drive significant improvements in the wellbeing of young children in Nkomazi – particularly in wards 16 and 19 where the majority of young children struggle to access essential Early Childhood Development (ECD) services. We call this the Leave No Young Child Behind (LNYCB) Initiative. This initiative seeks to mobilize stakeholders from inside and outside the community and facilitate universal access to a comprehensive ‘package of quality services’ that meet young children’s developmental needs in line with the National Integrated ECD Policy approved by Cabinet in December 2015.

## EXPANDING TO NEW VILLAGES

The LNYCB 2020 Implementation plan (whilst somewhat delayed due to Covid-19) is showing great progress. The strategic planning workshops, held with key stakeholder at the end of 2019, directed activities towards finding the “missing children” (those without identification or not accessing services); raising the importance of ECD with local stakeholders; and the expansion of certain components of the LNYCB initiative to other areas. It is with great excitement that we can confirm that the LNYCB initiative will be expanding to 12 additional villages and 35 more ECD Centres in Nkomazi, bringing the total footprint to 19 villages and 60 ECD Centres. The recently onboarded villages include Masibekela Village, Khombaso Village, Mananga Village, Hhoyi Village, KaMandulo Village, Goba Village, Mbangwane Village, Tsambokhulu Village, Mbuzini Village, Ngwenyeni Village, Steenbork Village and Dlunduma Village.



## DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

One of the critical challenges presented during lockdown, was the issue of child hunger. Children in vulnerable communities often get their one substantial meal for the day at ECD programmes and with the closure of the Centres and playgroups, these meals were not available to them. In the community of Nkomazi alone, the DO MORE FOUNDATION worked with various organizations to ensure that there was some continuity in feeding children and their families during lockdown through the distribution of approximately 80 tons of DoMore porridge and other RCL FOODS products. This was made possible through various funding partners who supported the [#GiveltUp campaign](#) - including Riverview Primary School, RCL FOODS farm shops, Jock Safari Lodge and many individuals in the Nkomazi region. We would also like to thank Ntataise Lowveld who assisted in distributing this food to families in a safe manner. In addition to the above donations, SPAR and YumYum provided 110,000 sachets of YumYum peanut butter to young children attending ECD Centres in the LNYCB constituency as part of a [National cause-related marketing campaign](#).

## PARENT/CAREGIVER SUPPORT

The LNYCB parenting programme – in partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the Department of Social Development (DSD) – utilises the skills of 50 trained parent programme facilitators to conduct one on one sessions with parents and/or caregivers in order to encourage parental involvement in the early years and create awareness around their young child's holistic development. This group of passionate young parent facilitators (Community Works Programme workers) have been trained to facilitate these sessions within the homes of the parents based on the [Parental/primary Caregiver Capacity Building Training Package](#) developed by UNICEF and the Department of Social Development (DSD). In 2019, 535 parents completed this 11 month parenting programme in Nkomazi. Since this programme was temporarily halted in 2020, due to the pandemic, the DO MORE FOUNDATION created an [online parenting resource hub](#) to assist parents/caregivers during this time and provide them with datafree resources for early stimulation within the home. With lockdown restrictions easing in 2021, we are pleased to announce that the facilitators have recently undergone a refresher training course on the training package (conducted by DSD) and are resuming their work on the programme with the implementation of strict Covid-19 safety protocols to protect the parents and caregivers involved.



## IMMUNIZATION CAMPAIGN

In order to promote access to health services for young children in wards 16 and 19 of Nkomazi, various campaigns and activities have taken place in the past few months. Most notably, the Immunization campaign rolled out by the Department of Health (DoH) to address the gaps in immunization taking place due to the pandemic ("catch up" campaign). This was part of a National campaign for areas that have been identified to have had low immunization uptake during Covid-19. ECD Centres were seen as an ideal place to host the campaign in Nkomazi where children could receive their "missing" vaccines based on information found in their personal [Road to Health booklets](#).

## FIRST 1000 DAYS PROGRAMME

In an effort to address the importance of the First 1000 Days (a key pillar of the National ECD Policy), the DO MORE FOUNDATION has partnered with Sikunye - an Early Life initiative that capacitates faith based organisations to support parents/caregivers and families with children in the critically important first 1000 days of life. In Nkomazi, the LNYCB team has begun identifying faith based organisations to partner with for this vital period. It is with these new partners that the team will identify suitable champions for the programme and raise awareness around the first 1000 days in faith based organisations across the whole of Nkomazi.



## WONDERBAGS CREATING INCOME

The DO MORE FOUNDATION and Wonderbag piloted the "Wonderbag economic development" initiative with 25 ECD principals in Nkomazi. These principals were given the Wonderbags for free and were able to sell Wonderbags within their community as a source of income in order to assist in re-opening their ECD Centres. Through the Repurpose for Purpose project, the Foundation was able to add early learning resources (WordWorks animal cards) to the bags when they were sold to parents in the community. The ECD principals were also given Wonderbags to use within their own ECD Centres in order to save money on gas and take advantage of the many other benefits that the Wonderbag technology offers.



## SUPPORTING THE ECD WORKFORCE

The pandemic has had devastating consequences on the ECD sector. In order to guard against the collapse of these facilities in Nkomazi, the DO MORE FOUNDATION and partners rallied together to support ECD practitioners and playgroup facilitators in whatever way possible. This included the procurement of PPE starter kits (containing deep cleaning agents, temperature guns, gloves, soap, buckets, etc) to 25 ECD Centres. The principals of these Centres were provided with training (and "re-training") on Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures to equip them for reopening. These starter kits were funded through the generosity of the Foundation's Mandela Day partners as well as through the Ackermans in store campaign. Thanks to the generosity of Pep Stores, the Foundation was able to provide thousands of disposable masks to ECD personnel in wards 16 and 19 as well as to DSD for distribution to all ECD Centres in Nkomazi. DO MORE FOUNDATION was further able to assist all 25 ECD Centres in registering for the Presidential ECD stimulus package which is promised to provide just over R4,000 for every ECD personnel. Lastly, in order to encourage parents to return their young children to ECD Centres and playgroups, the DO MORE FOUNDATION continues to provide nutritional support to 25 ECD Centres and 26 playgroups in Nkomazi with the intention of extending this monthly supply of porridge to the recently onboarded unregistered ECD Centres in the 12 new villages.

## PROMOTING BOOK OWNERSHIP

Research shows that books can spark joyful interaction between adults and children, develop their language and literacy skills, empathy and emotional capacity. The DO MORE FOUNDATION was the proud recipient of 2,500 beautiful SiSwati and wordless storybooks donated by Bookdash. Working with the Ntataise Lowveld and Flourish teams in Nkomazi, the teams ensured these books went to the homes of young children attending the ECD Centres and playgroups in wards 16 & 19. These were particularly well received by parents/caregivers during lockdown when access to early learning at their usual programme was not permitted due to lockdown regulations.





## THE FLOURISH PROGRAMME

The Flourish ante-natal and post-natal programme for pregnant mothers, implemented by the Grow Great Campaign and supported by us, is reaching a total of 131 mothers in Nkomazi and is gaining great momentum in the community. During lockdown, the programme forged ahead with online classes focusing on various topics including nutrition, play, the Child Support grant and CV building. Upon graduating from the 9-week programme, the mothers received attendance certificates and flourish branded nappy bags. Thanks to an anonymous donor through Vector Logistics, the mothers were provided with nappies as well as beautiful, proudly South African story books for babies which were donated by Bookdash.

## UPSKILLING PRACTITIONERS

In order to ensure all young children from birth to school going age in Nkomazi Wards 16 & 19 access quality, age appropriate early learning (a key LNYCB strategic objective), many role players have dedicated their time to upskilling and empowering the ECD Centre practitioners and playgroups facilitators in wards 16 & 19. As part of an ongoing partnership, Riverview Primary School teachers have continued to transfer their skills during Saturday morning training sessions offered free of charge by the school. Taking place during appropriate lockdown levels, these sessions have focused on developing new early learning techniques and allow for practitioners to connect on various topics. Further skills training was conducted by Ntataise Lowveld, during appropriate lockdown levels, focusing on the Accredited ECD Skills Training at NQF Levels 2 and 3; ECD enrichment programme; and the Ntataise Lowveld toy kit training.

## NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the past year, several ECD Centres within the LNYCB constituency received infrastructure support provided by private and/or public sector partners. This is part of the LNYCB ongoing strategic focus area that seeks to ensure there are sufficient safe, child friendly spaces and facilities in Nkomazi Wards 16 & 19 to cater for all young children to access early learning services and opportunities to play. During lockdown, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) constructed outdoor play equipment at 11 of these ECD Centres. Another well-deserving ECD Centre graciously received an additional classroom to make room for their increase in young learners (constructed by the National Development Agency (NDA)). The NDA further assisted with the supply of a container to be used as a temporary kitchen to ensure the young children attending the Centre receives their daily meals. The RCL FOODS Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) team kindly conducted their annual fire extinguisher service at all 25 ECD Centres. Lastly, three ECD Centres received their own 2,500 Litre water tank taking them from receiving water once a week to having a permanent water supply on site. A very special thank you goes out to the following Mandela Day partners who made this possible – Globefight, Phakisa, Crown National, Anchor Yeast, Buckman Laboratories, Kaytee Professional services, JD Group and Safetymax Online.



## NKOMAZI FM SPREADS HOPE

The Nkomazi FM radio station continues to be a powerful and effective communication tool to reach parents and caregivers in the Nkomazi community. Over the past year, this platform was used to amplify Covid-19 safety and awareness messaging, the importance of mothers registering for social grants and to provide useful advice on how parents can protect their children against HIV. During the second half of 2020, this platform further assisted DSD in encouraging parents to return their young children to ECD Centres and playgroups (once permitted to re-open). The DoH also utilised this platform to address the decline in child clinic visits by addressing the fears of parents/caregivers and encouraging them to bring their children for their immunizations and health check-ups. This local radio station has proven to be a great source of information and spreader of hope to parents and caregivers in the community.



## ECD CENTRE GARDENS

We are delighted to announce that the Department of Agriculture has come onboard the LNYCB Initiative to assist in the establishment of vegetable gardens at ECD Centres in wards 16 & 19. The selected ECD Centres will be receiving implementation tools and seedlings from the Department in order to establish the gardens on their premises. The principals and staff will also receive ongoing technical support (training) on the running of these gardens in order for them to sustainably produce fresh vegetables for the ECD Centres' meals. All fresh vegetables will be integrated into the ECD Centres existing menu and the remaining fresh produce will be sold to community members as an additional source of income for the ECD Centre. We look forward to sharing the developments of this sustainable food provision project for young children as we move forward.



## SUPPORTING NKOMAZI YOUTH

This Siyatentela active buddies co-op – meaning “we are doing it for ourselves” - comprises of a group of passionate young entrepreneurs with excellent sewing skills. Whilst this initiative does not fall within the LNYCB goals, it does form part of the DO MORE FOUNDATION's broader strategy to see the community of Nkomazi thrive. Thanks to the generosity of GFOX (a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Cleaning Chemicals, Paper Products, and Industrial Consumable Supplies company), the Siyatentela active buddies co-op has received a donation of sewing machines to expand their product offering. Their first big job was secured by the DO MORE FOUNDATION whereby GFOX provided the co-op with materials to produce 100 face masks for ECD Centre practitioners in Nkomazi. Going forward, the Foundation will continue to act as a supporting agent to the co-op by linking them to other resources and providing market linkages to help them kick start their business.



## WHERE TO FROM HERE...

In 2021 the DO MORE FOUNDATION will continue its support to young children in Nkomazi in partnerships with government, the private sector, NGOs and CBOs. Within the partnerships the next steps taking place include:

- Setting up a Young Child Forum for Phase 2 (expansion of LNYCB)
- The Grow Great Campaign will be on boarding additional Community Health Workers for the newly expanded villages
- Supporting Flourish in community awareness campaigns to market their existing programme and expand their reach
- In partnership with CoGTA /CWP start Parenting Program in the newly onboarded villages
- Initiating the First 1000 Days program in Nkomazi in partnership with Sikunye
- Piloting a Nutrition and Parent Education program in 10 ECD centres

The LNYCB Initiative needs your help! Here are a few exciting opportunities for partnership, collaboration and contribution:

- SiSwati books for children and babies
- Toy kits – early learning play equipment both indoor and outdoor (climbing frames)
- Learning Resources like crayons, paint, glue, scissors and other art equipment etc
- Funding for incidental and accredited training of ECD/ Playgroup practitioners from the newly onboarded LNYCB Villages
- Water Tanks
- First Aid Training and kits for ECD Practitioners from the newly onboarded LNYCB Villages
- Fires Extinguishers
- Play mats
- Kitchen structures for ECD Centres that still prepare meals on open fires
- Toilet Facilities for ECD centres

Should you wish to partner on any of the above aspects or if you would like to discuss any stories mentioned in our newsletter in more detail, please contact the Young Child portfolio lead at the DO MORE FOUNDATION - Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini (Jabu.Mthembu-Dlamini@domore.org.za)

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**“OUR CHILDREN ARE THE ROCK ON WHICH OUR FUTURE IS BUILT, OUR GREATEST ASSET AS A NATION. THEY WILL BE THE LEADERS OF OUR COUNTRY, THE CREATORS OF OUR NATIONAL WEALTH, THOSE WHO CARE FOR AND PROTECT OUR PEOPLE”**

**- NELSON MANDELA**

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