

Building Foundations for the Future

Leadership, Sustainability
and Compliance within
the ECD Sector

Annual Report
2025



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Early Care Foundation’s Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

Our Vision

Laying a foundation for children to access quality early childhood development education

Our Mandate

“We, the Early Care Foundation, exist to systematically transform the ECD ecosystem with ECD leaders, practitioners and partners to deliver high-quality programmes that improve children’s outcomes, reduce inequality, and create pathways to employment.”

Our Mission

Capacitate, mentor, and support informal ECD owners and practitioners to provide quality ECD, while promoting viable SMEs and contributing to children’s potential.

Strategic Objectives:

The organisation’s strategic objectives were Informed and developed by its theory of change process

Problem Statement

- **55% of children aged 0–5 in South Africa**, especially in underserved communities, **lack access to quality, compliant ECD services**.
- Numerous centres operate informally, without registration, trained staff, or proper infrastructure.
- **Caregivers often lack support to reinforce learning at home**, and systemic issues like poor coordination and weak monitoring hinder progress.
- Without targeted interventions, **children risk entering school unprepared**, reinforcing cycles of inequality.

- To equip and promote women’s leadership as small business owners.
- To generate evidence based ECD programme models and practices of advocacy, replication and scale up the sector.

Theory of Change Statement

If ECD centres are supported to become compliant, functional, and quality-driven, and ECD practitioners, caregivers, and communities are capacitated and connected through a community of practice, then children aged 0–5 will have equitable access to holistic, developmentally appropriate early learning, resulting in improved developmental outcomes and school readiness—especially for those in underserved communities.

Strategic Objectives to Address Problems

- To capacitate women to provide quality early learning services to children and families.

Message from Chairperson



Advocate
Nelson Lolwane

It is my honour to present the Chairperson's Report for the Early Care Foundation (ECF) for the 2025 financial year.

"The progress reflected in this report speaks not only to the strength of ECF as an organization, but to the resilience and commitment of the practitioners and communities it serves. As a Board, we are encouraged by the Foundation's ability to translate strategic intent into measurable impact, while remaining focused on the long-term goal of building a professional, accountable, and sustainable ECD sector."

The Board of ECF remains committed to providing strong governance, strategic direction, and oversight to the organization. During the year, we continued to focus on ensuring that the Foundation operated with integrity, accountability, and in alignment with its mission of advancing quality ECD.

Attention was given to strengthening organisational governance; enhancing risk management and compliance; and supporting alignment with national priorities, including those of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The Board recognizes that effective governance is not only about oversight, but also about enabling the organization to respond strategically to a rapidly evolving ECD landscape.

Programme Performance and Impact

In 2025, the Foundation reached nearly 1 000 practitioners from almost **500 ECD centres**, ultimately impacting well **over 23 000 children**. The Board is encouraged by the low dropout rate of participants in ECF programmes; the reinforcement and implementation of training achieved through frequent on-site support visits; and the organization's ability to operate across diverse socioeconomic contexts, especially rural and underserved communities.

These achievements strengthened the Foundation's position as a trusted and impactful ECD implementation partner, and advocate for community engagement and upliftment. The results achieved during the financial year reflect a programme model that is both effective and scalable.

A Sector in Transition

The demographic profile of programme beneficiaries provided valuable insight into the state of the ECD sector. The sector continues to have a predominantly female workforce, where the Foundation contributes to women's empowerment through ECD training and management and development of entrepreneurial skills. However, this workforce is in transition with the development of a multi-generational practitioner

base with a growing strong participation from youth serving alongside long serving experienced caregivers. In addition, there is an increasing drive towards formalization, professionalism, governance capacity, and access to qualifications within the sector.

This transition and positive transformation require sustained and coordinated support. As a result, the Board fully supports the organization's increasing focus on Governance and compliance strengthening, pathways and support to professionalism, and building leadership capacity at ECD centre level.

Partnerships and Sustainability

The Foundation's achievements were made possible through the continued support of its funding and strategic partners, and, on behalf of the Board, I extend our sincere appreciation to all donors and partners who have invested in the Foundation's work. Strong enduring partnerships are essential not only in enabling programme delivery, but in supporting long-term sector development and systems change. These include sustained and flexible funding supporting ECF programmes as well as the operational costs of the organization; long-term partnerships aligned with sector transformation goals; and continued collaboration with government and sector stakeholders. partnerships aligned with sector transformation goals; and continued collaboration with government and sector stakeholders.

In conclusion, I am confident the ECF remains well-positioned to meaningfully contribute to the transformation of the ECD sector. The Board is confident that, through strong governance, effective partnerships, and strategic clarity which drive effective interventions the organization will continue to deliver lasting impact for young children, families, and underserved communities.

2026 and Beyond

As the ECD sector continues to evolve within the national policy environment, the role of organizations such as ECF becomes increasingly important. In the coming year, the Board's priorities include supporting national ECD reforms within the sector; strengthening ECF's sustainability and resource mobilisation; ensuring continued excellence in governance and accountability of the organization; and enabling the organization to scale responsibly while maintaining the quality of its interventions.

Appreciation

I extend my deep gratitude towards fellow Board Members for their stewardship and commitment; the CEO and management team for their leadership; ECF staff and programme teams for their dedication to community upliftment through ECD; and finally, the ECD practitioners who continue to show great resilience to nurture and develop our children with love and care.

The Board would also like to extend its heartfelt appreciation to Dr Brian Chinsamy for his valuable contribution to the work of the ECF. His commitment and support have played an important role in strengthening the organization and advancing its objectives. We wish him every success in his future endeavours and trust that his continued work will further contribute to the development of the ECD sector and its broader community impact.

Board of Trustees

Governance and Strategic Support

The ECF Board of Trustees is responsible for governance and compliance with all legislation, as well as providing strategic guidance and oversight that is in the best interest of the Trust and its beneficiaries.



Dr Tshepo Motsepe
Patron



Adv. Nelson Lolwane
Chairperson



Dr Brian Chinsamy



Ms. Nontokozo Nhleko



Ms. Polo Leteka



Mr Mpumi Tyikwe



Ms. Cathy Mohlahlana



Ms. Tamzin Stroucken



CEO's Report

Ms Ipeleng Mohlala

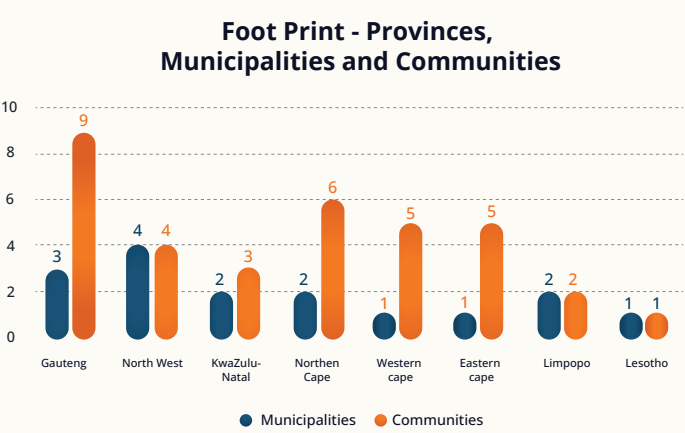


I am pleased to present the ECF's Annual Report for the 2025 financial year, reflecting on a period of continued growth, deepened impact, and a diversity of partnerships to enhance quality ECD across South Africa and Lesotho.

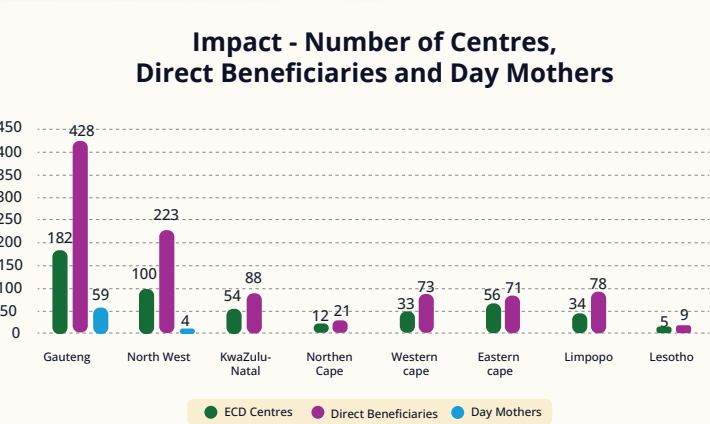
"This year's results affirm that when we invest in ECD practitioners, we transform the lives of a multitude of children. Beyond the numbers, our data tells a powerful story of a sector led by women, strengthened by experience, and renewed by a generation of young practitioners. With the continued support of our partners, we are not only expanding access to the ECD sector, but we are also actively shaping a more professional, resilient, better resourced, and sustainable sector for the future."

Organizational Reach and Footprint

In 2025, ECF expanded its reach and footprint into **7 provinces and Lesotho** with projects in **16 municipalities across 35 communities** and supporting a total of 476 ECD centres.



ECF Programmes directly impacting on **988 ECD practitioners, site heads, and community-based caregivers**, with a remarkably low dropout rate of just 7 individuals, which reflects a strong programme relevance and participant commitment.



It is noteworthy that programmes included specialised support for **63 Day Mothers**, a critical component of ECF's strategy to strengthen ECD at household level through informed interaction with their children.

Impact on Children and Communities

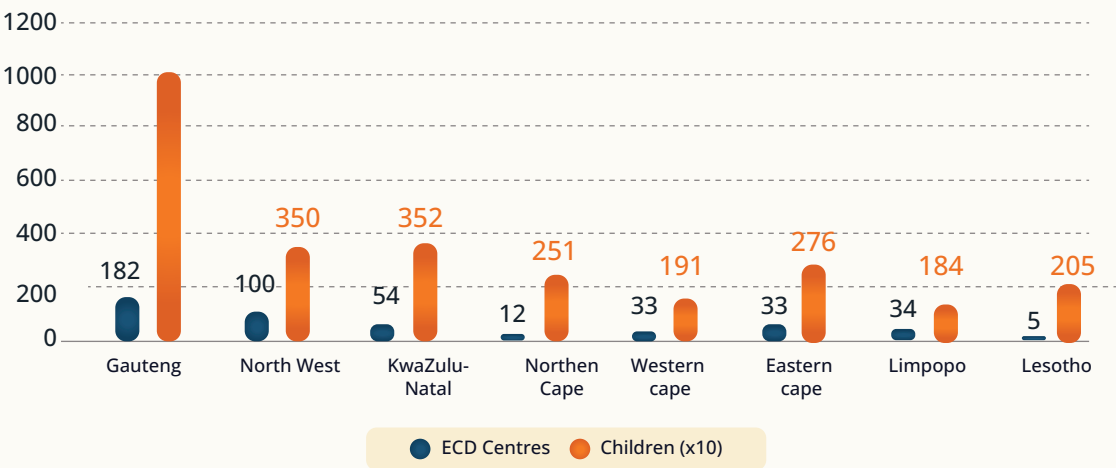
Through our integrated programme model, we reached **23,773 children**, providing improved access to quality early learning environments and care. Our work continues to prioritise underserved communities, with most beneficiaries being women, reinforcing our contribution to both **gender empowerment and community development**.

Geographic Distribution

The graph below illustrates: **Gauteng** remains our largest programme hub. Significant impact was achieved in **North West and KwaZulu-Natal**.

Our footprint extended to more rural areas including **Limpopo, Northern Cape, and Eastern Cape**, as well as cross-border work in **Lesotho**, reflecting our commitment to expanding the organization's footprint and access to quality ECD to increasing numbers of children.

Provinces, ECD Centres and Children



Training and Capacity Building

ECF's core focus of the year has been strengthening practitioner competence through its structured training and all-important on-site support across multiple programme areas.

Key training achievements include:

- **783 beneficiaries completed CARE skills training**, supported by 1,569 site support visits, demonstrating strong implementation follow-through.
- **623 practitioners completed National Curriculum Framework (NCF) training**, reinforcing curriculum alignment in ECD centres.
- **620 beneficiaries completed Child Development training**, supported by 469 site visits, ensuring practical application of ECD knowledge.

- **398 beneficiaries completed Money Management training**, strengthening basic business skills, budgeting and financial sustainability at centre level.
- **98 beneficiaries completed Governance and Management training**, with 49 targeted support visits, reflecting the ongoing need to strengthen leadership and management capacity in ECD centres.
- **122 beneficiaries completed Inclusion training**, supporting more inclusive and equitable learning environments.
- **256 participants completed Protective Behaviour training**, contributing to safer ECD sites for young children.

Our model emphasises not only training but sustained mentorship. Across programmes, targeted site support visits ensured that training was translated into practice at ECD sites, reinforcing quality early childhood educare practices and compliance with national standards.



Demographic Reach

The 2025 programme year revealed important insights about who ECF is reaching, and what that means for both sector development and long-term sustainability.

1. Strong Representation of Women in the ECD Workforce

Of the **988 direct beneficiaries**, **974 are female** and **only 16 are male**.

This overwhelming majority confirms that:

- A large majority of the ECD workforce are female, reflecting broader global and national trends.
- Older practitioners are remaining active for longer.
- Training being delivered by ECF must therefore be differentiated (digital literacy, accreditation pathways, mentorship models) to suit the needs.
- ECF is **deeply embedded in supporting women-led community services**.
- The organization's work contributes significantly to **women's economic participation, skills development, and livelihoods**, especially in rural and underserved communities.

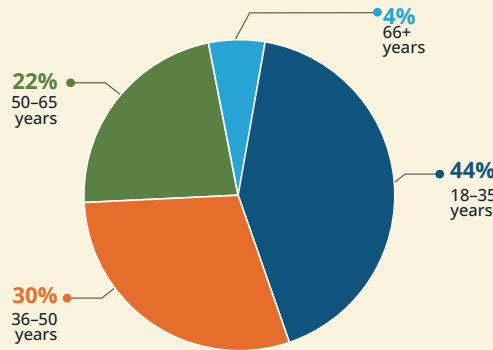
While this denotes strong impact in gender enablement, it also highlights an opportunity to:

- Encourage **greater male participation in early childhood care**, particularly in caregiving and centre management roles.
- Challenge persistent gender norms in the sector over time.

2. A Healthy Age Distribution

The age breakdown of practitioners in ECD centres supported by ECF are shown below:

Demography - Ages of ECD Training Participants



- 18–35 years: 419 beneficiaries
- 36–50 years: 290 beneficiaries
- 50–65 years: 208 beneficiaries
- 66+ years: 37 beneficiaries

This age distribution shows a strong pipeline of younger practitioners suggesting new entrants are being attracted to the ECD sector. This is critical for its long-term sustainability and aligns with national youth employment and skills development priorities.

It demonstrates a balanced mid-career representation where nearly 50% of participants fall within the 36–65 age group. These practitioners are experienced caregivers and centre operators. Their participation ensures that institutional knowledge is retained and passed on to a new generation of practitioners and centre managers.



There is a small but important older cohort of seasoned community-based caregivers over 66 years old who continue to play significant roles in informal and rural settings. Experience has shown This group may require targeted support, especially around formalization, digital systems (e.g. DBE platforms), and compliance processes.

This demographic spread reflects a sector in transition; where younger practitioners are entering the profession and older practitioners are remaining active for longer. It also shows the training being delivered by ECF must be differentiated (digital literacy, accreditation pathways, mentorship models) to suit the needs of the different age groups.

“Our work continues to demonstrate that investing in ECD practitioners directly translates into better outcomes for children.”

Strategic Reflections

This year’s results reflect the continued effectiveness of **ECF’s integrated programme model**, which combines:

- A broad spectrum of structured training.
- Ongoing mentorship and site visits by ECF trainer mentors.
- Governance and compliance support to facilitate registration and government subsidies.
- Focused interventions such as CARE, Inclusion, and Financial Management.
- Continued partnerships with strategic ECD stakeholders for whole centre development.

The strong uptake in CARE skills and NCF training highlights sector demand for practical, **implementable tools** that directly improve the classroom environment and the quality of learning and teaching.

At the same time, relatively lower completion rates in governance and advanced qualifications indicate **ongoing gaps in leadership and formal accreditation**, which remain key focus areas for the coming years.



Looking Ahead

As we enter the 2026 financial year, the organization’s priorities will include:

- Scaling governance and compliance support in line with the DBE Mass Registration Drive (MRD).
- Deepening quality improvement through enhanced site support models.
- Leveraging a diversity of partnerships to increase reach, access to resources and site sustainability.

Conclusion

The 2025 financial year has been marked by meaningful growth in reach, depth of impact, and programme quality, as well as a broad spectrum of enhanced partnerships and community engagements. Our work continues to demonstrate that investing in ECD practitioners directly translates into better outcomes for children.

In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude to our donors, partners, staff, and the ECD practitioners who remain at the heart of our mission. Together, we are building stronger foundations for South Africa’s youngest citizens.

Ipeleng Mohlala,
CEO

Building Foundations for the Future – ECD Infrastructure Support

At ECF, we believe that the future of our country is built in its earliest years. For young children to thrive, learn, and realize their full potential in life, they must begin their development and learning in environments that are safe, nurturing, and designed with their development in mind. Over the past year, through our partnership with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), we have taken a decisive step toward this vision, laying strong, practical foundations for the future through our ECD Infrastructure Pilot Project (IPP).

Across South Africa, thousands of ECD centres operate in conditions that fall short of minimum safety and infrastructure standards, potentially endangering children and preventing them from registering with the DBE and accessing critical public funding.

By focusing on children first, our approach has been simple yet transformative. Rather than treating infrastructure as a compliance exercise, we prioritised safe, dignified, and developmentally appropriate spaces where children can learn and grow.



“In 2025/26, the ECD maintenance component will contribute R160 million to infrastructure support for ECD programmes, with National Treasury allocating an additional R100 million in the following financial year.”

- **Minister Siviwe Gwarube**, Minister of Basic Education, ECD Infrastructure Fund Business Breakfast, 27 January 2025.

This project directly supports the education department’s MRD national initiative aimed at bringing ECD programmes into the formal education system so they can access formal oversight, support, and public funding. A key barrier to registration has been non-compliant infrastructure, which prevented many otherwise functional centres from meeting minimum norms and standards.

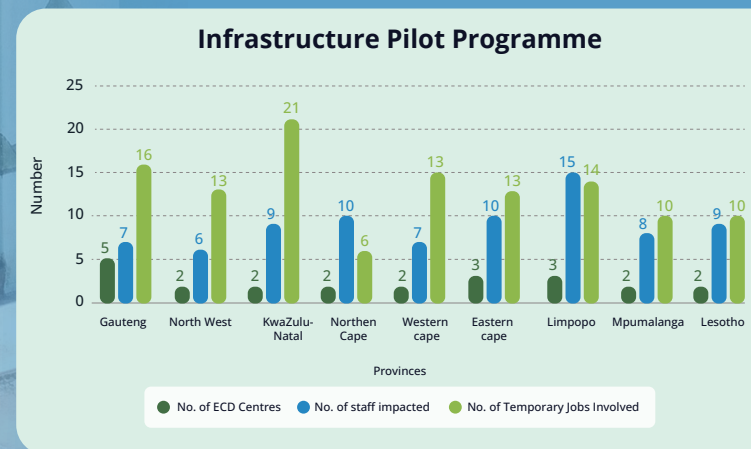
Through this pilot, ECF has demonstrated how targeted infrastructure investment can unlock resources, enabling ECD centres to move more efficiently along the MRD pathway from informal or non-compliant status toward full DBE registration. By sequencing infrastructure improvements alongside registration readiness, the project not only accelerates compliance but strengthens the overall effectiveness of the Bana Pele MDR initiative, ensuring that more

centres can deliver safe, quality early learning while becoming part of a regulated and supported national system. Using data from the DBE eCares platform and environmental health reports, ECF assessed **99 ECD centres** across all nine provinces. From these, **20 centres** were prioritised based on the level of risk to children, readiness for registration, and potential for immediate community impact.

With assistance from the DBSA, each selected centre received targeted infrastructure upgrades addressing critical needs such as sanitation, structural safety, fencing, kitchens, and learning spaces. These upgrades were delivered efficiently, with all projects completed within an average of **2.5 weeks per centre**.

The results of this work have been both immediate and far-reaching. Today, **705 children** now attend centres that are safer, healthier, and better equipped to support ECD. They have classrooms which are now structurally sound and better ventilated. Sanitation facilities that meet minimum standards, promoting both health and dignity. Kitchens and food preparation areas which comply with health and safety requirements, reducing risk and improving daily care.

These improvements are not merely physical, they shape children’s daily experiences, strengthening the foundation for school readiness, wellbeing, and lifelong learning.





Unlocking Access and Opportunity

Beyond improving learning environments, the infrastructure upgrades have enabled meaningful progress along the ECD registration pathway. All 20 supported centres have achieved Bronze registration status and are progressing toward Silver which would position them to access government subsidies and formal system support.

This infrastructure project has demonstrated tangible results where safety and quality issues are addressed, leading to ECD centres achieving DBE compliance and access to government funding.

Strengthening Communities

The impact of this work extends beyond ECD centres into the broader community. The project intentionally prioritised local procurement and the use of local contractors at different sites which involved a total of **125 tradesmen** during the infrastructural projects and added to the economic activity across provinces.

In addition, **95 ECD** staff members now work in improved environments, contributing to better morale, stability, and quality of care. This highlights the dual role of ECD and DBSA as both a social service and an economic driver, supporting children while strengthening communities.

What We Have Learned

The pilot has reinforced several critical lessons that will guide our future work. We have seen that:

- Small, targeted infrastructure investments can unlock significant change.
- Community involvement and strong partnerships are essential for the sustainability of ECD centres.
- Solutions must be tailored to local contexts rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Infrastructure alone is not enough, quality ECD also depends on trained practitioners, learning materials, and ongoing support.

Importantly, we have learned that clear agreements, strong monitoring, and collaboration across sectors, from health to education to local government, are critical to delivering impact at scale.

Looking Ahead: Scaling What Works

Building on the success of the pilot, ECF is focused on scaling this model to reach more children and communities. In the next phase, we aim to:

- Strengthen coordination with municipalities and environmental health authorities.
- Expand access to skilled local contractors.
- Increase per-centre investment to address deeper infrastructure needs.
- Enhance technical support, including architectural planning and infrastructural compliance.

These steps will help remove persistent barriers to registration and enable more ECD centres to enter the formal system and access state funding.

A Foundation for the Future

The ECD IPP has shown that investing in safe, high-quality environments for young children is one of the most effective ways to strengthen the entire ECD ecosystem.

At its heart, this work is about dignity, opportunity, and equity. It is about ensuring that every child, regardless of where they are born, has the chance to learn, grow, and succeed in a safe and supportive environment.

As we look to the future, ECF remains committed to building these foundations of one centre, one community, and one child at a time.

A Case for Multi-Year Partnerships: Driving Lasting Impact in Early Childhood Development

At ECF, we believe that meaningful change in ECD requires more than short-term interventions, it demands sustained partnerships, deep community engagement, and a commitment to building systems that endure.

Our partnerships of over **10 years** with organizations such as the Gibela Rail Consortium (Gibela) and the Spur Foundation (Spur) reflect how a long-term commitment to financial support for ECD programmes can translate into measurable, lasting impact for children, practitioners, ECD sites, and communities.

Expanding Access at Scale

For example, over a two-year period (**2024 – 2025**) the partnership with Gibela, supported **150 ECD** centres in Gauteng across six communities in Mamelodi, Tembisa, Daveyton, Tsakane, Duduza, and KwaThema, reaching thousands of children and practitioners.

At baseline in 2024, these centres collectively served **7 195 children**. By the end of the programme, access had expanded to **7 906 children**, reflecting an increase of over **700 children** gaining access to early learning opportunities. This growth aligns with national priorities to ensure universal access to quality ECD and importantly illustrates how sustained longer-term programme support can effectively impact on participating centres over time. In Mafikeng in the North West, the Spur partnership again demonstrated how long-term support of centres has lasting influence on children, practitioners and communities. Over two years, **30 ECD** centres across **20 communities** benefited from structured training, mentoring, and resource provision, demonstrating how long-term support can reinforce broader system-wide change.

Strengthening Systems for Long-Term Sustainability

A defining feature of ECF's whole school approach is in strengthening the systems that underpin quality ECD delivery. Across both partnerships, a strong emphasis was placed on registration, compliance, governance, and financial sustainability.

Through the Gibela programme, ECF supported centres to engage with the government's Bana Pele MRD, an essential step toward formal recognition and access to state subsidies. At the start of the intervention, only 12% of centres were registered. However, by November 2025, 144 centres had achieved registration, with many progressing to higher compliance levels.

In parallel, capacity-building initiatives ensured that compliance translated into quality, where training in governance, financial management, and administration resulted in tangible improvements where the centres with business plans rose from 40 to 95, and 96 centres implemented emergency and evacuation plans an increase of 55 from 41 at baseline assessments.

Similarly, the Spur programme in Mafikeng facilitated governance and leadership training equipping site heads with tools for long-term planning, accountability, and operational excellence. Participants developed business plans, improved staff management practices, and established governance structures, laying the foundation for functional centre growth.

Critically, this led to the formation of the Tswelelang ECD Forum, a locally driven platform for collaboration, and shared learning among centre leaders; an extremely important indicator that a community of best practice is taking root beyond the programme itself.

Transforming Quality of Learning Environments

Beyond access and systems, ECF's multi-year model drives significant improvements in the quality of learning environments and programme delivery.

Across the Gibela centres, practitioners received structured training in:

- Child development and early learning.
- National Curriculum Framework implementation.
- CARE skills and classroom management.
- Financial and operational management.

These interventions translated into meaningful changes in daily practice:

- Classrooms were reorganised into structured learning areas.
- Balanced nutrition plans were introduced and delivered.
- Child assessment and monitoring systems were implemented.
- Financial management practices improved, with centres opening bank accounts and managing budgets effectively.

In Mafikeng, Spur sponsored practitioners also received inclusion training, equipping them to identify and support children with learning barriers and disabilities. This has strengthened the participating centre's ability to deliver inclusive, equitable early learning environments, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Infrastructure Improvements that Dignify Learning

Sustained investment also enabled tangible improvements in infrastructure, critical for creating safe and stimulating environments for young children.

Through the Gibela partnership, 15 centres received significant infrastructure upgrades, including newly built classrooms, toilets, kitchens, offices, and safer outdoor facilities.

In Mafikeng, the Spur partnership demonstrated that centre-level transformations were equally impactful:

- Centres moved from informal structures to permanent classrooms.
- New sanitation facilities improved hygiene and safety compliance.
- Learning spaces were expanded to accommodate growing enrolment.

These improvements not only enhance safety and functionality but also restore dignity to both children and practitioners, reinforcing the value of early childhood educare within communities.

Building Human Capital at Scale

Across both programmes, investment in people has been central. In the Gibela programme, 952 certificates were awarded across training areas including curriculum implementation, child development, CARE skills, and financial management.

In Mafikeng, the Spur programme achieved a 100% completion rate, with all 60 participating site heads and practitioners successfully completing the training.

This consistent, high-quality training and mentorship equips practitioners, many of whom had limited prior formal training, with the skills and confidence to deliver enriched learning experiences for children.





A Foundation for Lasting Impact

The combined impact of these long-term partnerships is clear:

- Increased access to early learning for thousands of children.
- Strengthened compliance and integration into national systems.
- Improved quality of teaching, learning, and care.
- Enhanced infrastructure and safer learning environments.
- Empowered practitioners and centre leaders with enhanced and broadened skill sets, knowledge and understanding.

Crucially, these gains are not temporary. By focusing on systems, capacity, and community ownership over a longer period, ECF and its partners ensures that the benefits continue long after programme completion.

As we reflect on these partnerships, one lesson stands out; the scale of projects alone does not create impact but sustained, strategic investment does. When partners commit to multi-year support the result are transformations that endure, these changes are aligned to community needs and national priorities as well as equipping skilled practitioners and children for life-long learning.



Strengthening the Foundations: ECD Leadership and Sustainable Centres

Over the past three years, ECF has placed ECD leadership and centre sustainability at the core of its work. The organization has recognized that quality ECD outcomes are not only shaped in classrooms, but are driven by strong, capable, and resilient leaders. As the sector continues to evolve in South Africa, the need for empowered centre-level leadership, particularly among women-led organizations, has never been more critical.



The Central Role of Leadership in ECD Quality

ECD centres are often the first point of structured learning for young children, but they are also complex organizations that require effective governance, financial management, compliance, and community engagement. At the heart of all of this is strong, capable leadership.

Centre leaders, most of whom are women, carry the responsibility of managing staff, ensuring curriculum delivery, maintaining regulatory compliance, and sustaining operations within resource-constrained environments. Without strong capable leadership, even the most well-intentioned ECD programmes struggle to achieve consistency and quality.

ECF's work has demonstrated that leadership development is not an optional add-on, but a foundational requirement for a functional and thriving ECD ecosystem. By equipping site heads and practitioners with governance, management,

and operational skills, ECF has helped to strengthen the internal systems that underpin quality service delivery.

Sustainability Begins at Centre Level

Sustainability in ECD goes beyond financial survival, it encompasses the ability of centres to deliver reliable, compliant, and high-quality services over time. This includes diversified income streams, sound financial practices, adherence to regulatory requirements, and strong relationships with communities and other stakeholders.

ECF has supported centres to move from vulnerability to stability through its programmes, including governance and management training, compliance support, and the integration of digital tools such as the eCares platform. Centres that are well-managed are better positioned to access funding, meet government requirements, and provide consistent care and education to children.

Importantly, sustainability is deeply linked to leadership confidence and capability. When leaders are empowered with knowledge and embedded in networks, they are more able to make informed decisions, advocate for their centres, and respond to challenges with resilience.





Elevating Women-Led Organisations

Over the past three years, ECF has convened a series of conferences that have become a powerful platform for learning, creating connections, and advocating change within the ECD sector. These gatherings have played a critical role in elevating the voices and visibility of women-led organizations operating at community level.

The conferences have created safe and enabling spaces for ECD leaders, many of whom have historically operated in isolation, to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build networks of support that often lead to the formation of ECD forums. Participants have gained both practical tools and renewed confidence in their leadership roles, through peer learning, exposure to best practices, and engagement with policymakers and sector experts.

Crucially, these conferences have also shifted the narrative around ECD centre leaders. Too often, their work is undervalued despite its profound impact on children, families, and communities. By placing women leaders at the centre of these conferences, ECF has actively recognized and reinforced their role as entrepreneurs, educators, and community change-makers.



Building a Movement for Community-Based Leadership

The impact of ECF's conference series extends beyond individual participants. It is contributing to a broader movement that acknowledges and strengthens community-based, women-led organizations as key drivers of social and economic development.

These leaders are not only delivering ECD services; they are creating employment, supporting families, and anchoring community resilience. By investing in their growth and skills sets, ECF is helping to build a more inclusive and responsive ECD system that reflects the realities of the communities it serves.

Looking Ahead

As ECF continues its work, the focus on leadership and sustainability will remain central. The progress achieved over the past three years demonstrates that when centre leaders are supported, the entire ECD ecosystem benefits, from improved programme quality to stronger organizational resilience, as well as positively impacting on local communities.

The ongoing commitment to convening, capacitating, and advocating for women-led ECD organizations positions ECF as a catalyst for meaningful, long-term change. By strengthening leadership at the centre level, ECF is not only improving outcomes for children today, but also investing in the sustainability of the sector for generations to come.

ECF Team

Executive Management Team



Ipeleng Mohlala
CEO



Mario Claasen
Head of Programmes



Dunyiswa Mati
Head of Finance

Support Staff



Nontobeko Nkwamba
Programmes
Co-ordinator
& Administrator



Lebo Moerane
Marketing
& Communications



Xolani Kausele
Infrastructure
Project
Administrator



Naomi Tlale
Provincial Project
Administrator



Zanele Khumalo
Provincial Project
Administrator



Oatile Makua
Finance &
HR Administrator

Management Team



Theodelsea Goliath
Finance and Operations
Manager



Letlhogonolo Morekhure
Provincial Project Manager



Nontsapo Pasiya
Provincial Project Manager



Livhuwani Ligidima
Manager ECD Infrastructure
Projects & Stakeholders

Facilitators & Field-Support Staff



Bathabile Vilakazi
Facilitator



Nomsa Gumbi
Facilitator



Ntombizodwa Sonkqayi
Facilitator



Nompumelelo Zungu
Facilitator



Fikile Moloto
Facilitator



Alicia Shongwe
Facilitator



Namsie Lesito
Facilitator



Nolubabalo Mbotshwa
EC Trainer



Dieketseng Mompoti
Field Support Officer



Ingrid Mathibe
Facilitator



Lesly Ditire
Facilitator

A Message of Gratitude to Our Donors

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each of our donors for your generous support over the past year. Your commitment and belief in our mission make our work possible and meaningful.

Because of you, we have been able to reach more communities, support more children, practitioners and families, and continue building strong foundations for ECD. Your contributions do more than fund programmes, they create opportunities, inspire growth, and help transform lives and underserved communities.

We are deeply grateful for the trust you place in us. Your partnership strengthens our resolve and fuels our vision for a brighter, more equitable future for all children.

Thank you for standing with us and for being an essential part of our journey.



List of Donors

2025/26

Gibela Rail Consortium	Waterloo Solar
Assupol Community Trust	Greta Train
De Wildt Solar	SASOL Energy
Ekhukanyeni Relief Projects	Mulilo Energy Holdings (PTY) Ltd
Anchor Capital	Engie Southern Africa
Shoprite	Ntataise Trust
Do More Foundation	Saide
Haleon	Flex Wind
Spur Foundation	HRBEE Solutions
Jet Demolition	Adopt a School
SASOL Foundation	Embassy of the People's Republic of China
Development Bank of Southern Africa	Relate Trust
Taryn Geyser	The Inqolobane Investment Trust

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Tribute to Dr Brian Chinsamy



The ECF acknowledges with deep appreciation the dedicated service of Dr Brian Chinsamy, who has served as a trustee for 19 years.

Dr Chinsamy played a pivotal role in guiding the organization through its transition from the ASHA Trust to the ECF Trust. Over nearly two decades, his insight and leadership have contributed significantly to strengthening the Foundation's governance, organizational development, and human resource practices.

His commitment to mentorship and his thoughtful guidance has left a lasting impact on both the organization and its people.

We extend our sincere thanks to Dr Chinsamy for his invaluable contribution and wish him every success as he continues his journey in coaching, leadership, and learning.



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