



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 | 2025



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Chairman’s Report

This annual report is a celebration of teamwork, bringing hope to thousands of parents that the educational experience and opportunity for their children will be better than their own.

In the 10 years since Starting Chance was registered schools in our programme have provided 17 640 opportunities for learners to access quality early learning education and produced at least 5 200 primary school ready children. Bringing hope to many parents that their children’s lives will be much improved because they had a starting chance.

During the past year Starting Chance has experienced remarkable growth. Our highly motivated team has expanded the organisation’s reach. As a result, almost 50 schools are now in the Starting Chance programme – and access to quality ECD in and around the Mfuleni community is increasing.

Remarkably, this year Starting Chance will bring hope to the parents of almost 3000 children that their early learners will receive a better start – an increase in access to quality early learning programmes of almost 1000 places on the previous year!

Ten years on, as you will read in this annual report, we are poised to reach many more.

Newly published research into the impact that adversity has on early brain development highlights the critically important role that exposure to positive early learning environments can have in mitigating the impact of poverty on the acquisition of skills in literacy and numeracy. It gives us hope that the work of Starting Chance will translate into a lifelong benefit for children through the creation of opportunity for growth in stimulating and engaging early learning environments. And with this will come self-efficacy for the principals and teachers we work with, many of whom did not have the opportunity of a quality education themselves.

Thanks to the generosity of the HomeChoice Development Trust, 2025 will now be a landmark year for this organisation, as we set our sights on radically increasing our reach and impact across the Cape Town Metropolitan area and beyond in future.

In March we began the construction of a specially designed ECD Training Facility for practical skills transfer to principals and practitioners from educares in low-income communities across the

Metro. The intensive, 5-day programme accredited by SACE in early 2025 is based on 15 years of hard-earned experience reaching deep into the Mfuleni community. With a well-proven track record of sustainable educational improvement, the workshops will not only give attending principals and practitioners a real opportunity to develop professionally but also the chance to transform their early learning environments.

Year on year our partners such as Bargain Books, Biblionef and Book Dash and Hero in my Hood are helping us to spearhead our Building Blocks drive which aims to raise the acquisition of early skills required for literacy and numeracy – through these partners more than 10 000 books have been distributed throughout schools and homes in Mfuleni. It also brought everyone great joy to be able to once again focus on creating opportunity for family fun. The Mandela numeracy event attracted over 2 000 parents and children. Schools in our programme showcased numeracy-based games and our alumni raised funds for their schools by providing food and drinks.

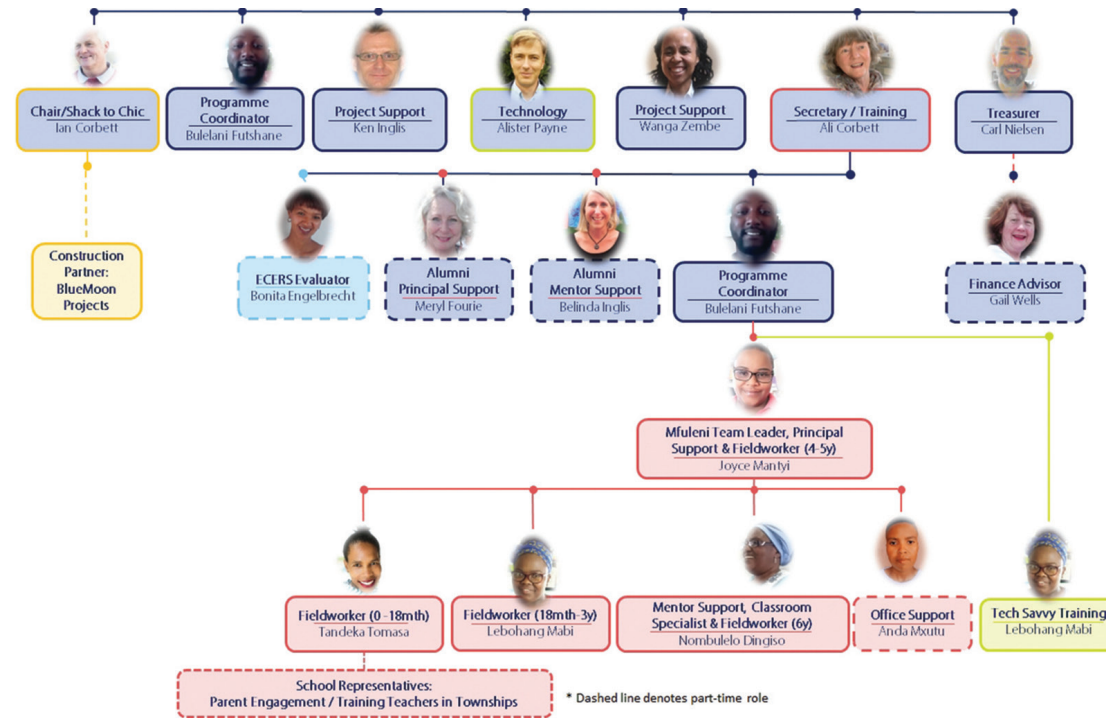
Our Mandela focus in 2025 is Building Block for Life Skills – I hope you will be supporting us; as ever it is your support that enables us to make it happen!

Dr Ian Corbett
CHAIRMAN





Board of Trustees and Staff

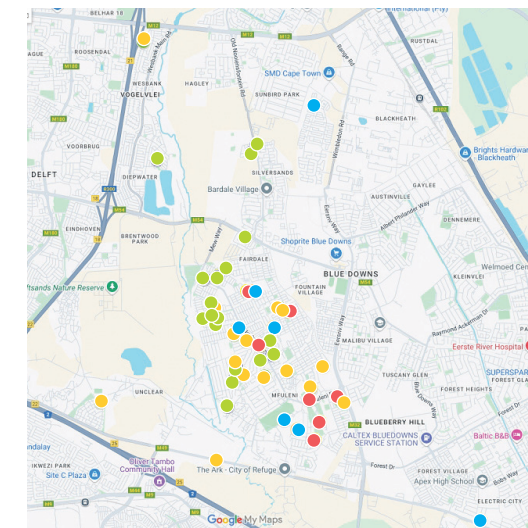


The Starting Chance school network at end February 2025

Alumni Schools	Annie's Day Care Practitioners 3 Children 34	Blooming Stars 1 Practitioners 7 Children 120	Blooming Stars 2 Practitioners 2 Children 13	Empire Practitioners 6 Children 75	Hluma Academy Practitioners 5 Children 98	Ikusasa-lethu Practitioners 4 Children 27	Lentsana Zethu Practitioners 5 Children 93	Likhona Ithemba Practitioners 2 Children 35	Little Shining Stars Practitioners 5 Children 74
	Little Stars Practitioners 5 Children 100	Lutho Practitioners 4 Children 67	Mzamomhle Practitioners 6 Children 148	Ncubeko Practitioners 4 Children 16	Qingqamntwana Practitioners 2 Children 26	Raise of Hope Practitioners 5 Children 63	Sakhuluntu Practitioners 5 Children 74	Shining Stars Practitioners 3 Children 42	Westline Practitioners 5 Children 56
The Hub	Hub+ Schools	Bavumeleni Practitioners 4 Children 56	Lithemba Practitioners 4 Children 61	Lonwabo Practitioners 3 Children 33	Nokwezi Practitioners 5 Children 120	Tangram Practitioners 4 Children 21	Hub Schools	Hope Practitioners 3 Children 60	Phandulwazi Practitioners 3 Children 47
<p>The Hub is the resource centre for educators participating in the Training Teachers in Townships (TTinT) programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hub Plus schools have scored more than 24 in the evaluation 2024.Hub schools engage in an integrated programme including TTinT workshops, resource training, site visits and 'shop'.TTinT schools engage in workshops and site visits as they prepare for hub.									
TTinT Schools	Asakhe Practitioners 4 Children 16	Jabulane Practitioners 2 Children 21	Noncedo Practitioners 5 Children 54	Liyabona Practitioners 2 Children 22	Phakamani Practitioners 7 Children 86	Sinothando Practitioners 2 Children 31	Three Bees Practitioners 3 Children 47		
Community Schools	Good Care Practitioners 4 Children 38	Ihla Practitioners 2 Children 20	Inkanyezi Practitioners 2 Children 27	Lisakhanya Practitioners 5 Children 93	Mzamowethu Practitioners 3 Children 55	New Beginning Practitioners 2 Children 21	Olothando 1 Practitioners 2 Children 10	Olothando 2 Practitioners 1 Children 17	Qaqamba Practitioners 2 Children 52
						Sizimisele Practitioners 6 Children 70	Young Mind Practitioners 4 Children 99	Zizamele Practitioners 2 Children 34	Zosuliwe Practitioners 2 Children 23

The Starting Chance community schools serve as the entry-level tier for ECD centres that have not yet qualified for the TTinT programme. These schools receive limited support from Starting Chance, which includes access to the monthly TTinT workshops, the Hanging Library initiative from Biblionef, book donations from Book Dash, and participation in the annual Mandela ECD Event.

- Alumni Schools
- Hub & Hub+ Schools
- TTinT Schools
- Community Schools



A decade of building hope		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
S	NUMBERS & IMPACT	20 October 2015 Starting Chance is registered as an NPO and PBO. 	450 children 28 Principals & Practitioners 4 Schools 2 Starting Chance team members	950 children 56 Principals & Practitioners 9 Schools 3 Starting Chance team members	1 768 children 163 Principals & Practitioners 25 Schools 4 Starting Chance team members	1 917 children 165 Principals & Practitioners 25 Schools 4 Starting Chance team members	2 029 children 213 Principals & Practitioners 30 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members	1 702 children 167 Principals & Practitioners 30 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members	1 543 children 93 Principals & Practitioners 21 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members	1 332 children 158 Principals & Practitioners 26 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members	2 039 children 160 Principals & Practitioners 28 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members	2 395 children 212 Principals & Practitioners 46 Schools 5 Starting Chance team members
	SHACK TO CHIC	First school is built. 	First school registered. Playground renovated. 	Funds received to build four more schools. 	First house renovated for school. 	A 2 700m ² erf purchased for ECD Campus and Training Centre 	Construction halted due to COVID restrictions. 	Phase 1 of the Starting Chance ECD Campus is built. 	Quick wins: renovations for DBE mass registrations. 	Autistic school renovated. 	Quick wins continue. 	17 March 2025: Breaking ground for Phase 2 of the ECD Campus and Training Centre.
T	TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	Workshops and Site Visits begin. 	Resource Hub opens as a lending facility. 	Starting Chance Incentive Shop opens. 	Token booklets introduced to recognise performance. 	Age specific training for three age groups introduced. 	Schools closed. Starting Chance framework formalised. 	Introduction of the Alumni Programme. 	Site Visits to Principals introduced. 	Building Blocks series introduced. 	Numeracy Building Blocks. Principals' Toolkit introduced. 	CALM accredited by SACE. Principals' Toolkit formalised. 
	ASSESSMENTS	We introduce the schools to ECERS evaluations. 	Professional Development workshops introduced. 	Child assessments introduced. 	Best practice ideas shared monthly. 	Children's assessments show improvement (May vs Oct) 	Schools close during COVID—we support 135 teachers. 	Assessments biannual. External evaluation introduced. 	Principal evaluations and principal shop introduced. 	Practitioners trained on how to do class observations. 	Mentors support to new schools helps improve performance. 	Performance improvement across all schools. 
R	READY FOR SCHOOL	Starting Chance is introduced to parents. 	Knowledge exchange day for parents introduced. 	First Mandela Day function, where we start to engage with parents. 	First Parent Workshop. 	Parent Support Reps programme started. 	Schools close during COVID—we support 135 teachers. 	Alumni Programme introduced. 	Formal Parent Support Programme (PSP) introduced. 	Building Blocks for Parents Programme started. 	Community Impact Day: 'Fun with Numeracy'. 	Resource Training and Shop for parents introduced 
	TECH SAVVY	Tech partners agree to support Starting Chance. 	Opening of Computer Tech Lab. Computer training begins. 	Tablet fun for children starts. 	16 TTinT schools start tech training. 	Training continues. First incident of theft. 	Starting Chance staff become Tech Savvy. 	Principals encouraged to upskill. 	Starting Chance staff work towards a paperless office. 	Tablet fun reintroduced to hub schools. 	Support principals to meet the new DBE requirements. 	80 Tablets distributed. 
I	BROADER COMMUNITY SUPPORT		Friends of Starting Chance is born. 	R60K raised through 'Fair Play Fun Day' on Mandela Day. 			Friends of Starting Chance raise funds to support teachers during COVID lockdown. 				R291 474 raised by Friends of Starting Chance. 	
	INCOME		End of financial year	R3 553 505	R2 629 097	R2 272 722	R2 437 283	R4 278 932	R6 220 628	R3 290 131	R2 460 496	R6 517 647
E	EXPENDITURE		End of financial year	R1 126 681	R1 339 216	R3 364 534	R2 487 740	R4 652 718	R6 403 661	R2 405 352	R2 738 806	R4 552 680



we build hope | sakha ithemba



Shack to Chic

As the Western Cape Education Department launches 'Mass Online Registration' we continue to seek quick wins enabling Shack to Chic to help schools in the programme to successfully win 'approval'.

In the past year we completed 4 more quick win renovations and one ECD needed to be rewired after thieves stripped the newly upgraded electrical system.

The range and scale of work varies from site to site, and we are highly fortunate to have Mr Potwana and his team on-hand to provide reliable results.

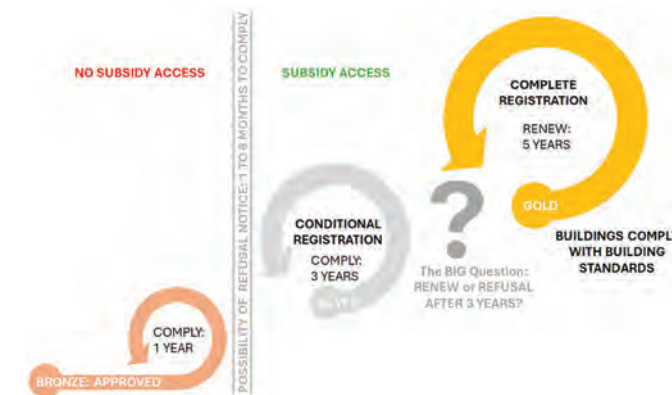
Bana Pele: Gateway to Sustainability?

With the release of more information on the Department of Basic Education's *Bana Pele* registration drive we need to prepare to be even more responsive. Principals will need to comply with requirements within the time frames provided if they are to achieve Silver Registration. As yet it is unclear how long they can remain at Silver level, as the process is only complete when Gold Registration is gained.

are coming in, and we encourage readers to consider donating undesignated funds directly to the Building Fund so that we can drive this important work forward to secure the future of the schools involved by getting them to Silver status.

Projects exceeding R250 000 will continue to be managed on a project-by-project basis and funders will continue to be able to elect to provide funding designated to deliver a specific project in these cases.

The expansion of reach and impact with training and development has caused us to evaluate where we need to focus our human resources going forward. Through the year under review, we have progressively brought our partnership with Blue Moon Projects into effect. Management of the main contract to deliver Phase 2 of our development in School Street to complete the Integrated Inclusive ECD Campus and Training Facility is the final step in the process. Going forward Shack to Chic projects will be collaboratively scoped by our team with Blue Moon Projects who will then deliver the project once it is approved.



I am so happy for my new kitchen renovations and electricity wires. Starting Chance renovated my school in November 2024, and I feel grateful with everything they did for my children. These renovations helped us to grow our school and I appreciate what they did for me. And also the meetings for PDP has been very helpful in my development as a principal. I now also understand that the school is not only dependant on the principals but has three legs: Principal, Practitioner and Parents.

– Mrs Sizeka Hlezuphondo, Principal, Bavumeleni

Since we started working with Starting Chance, a lot has changed, we actually have a better structure or I must say a beautiful and healthy environment, children develop without lacking the resources, teachers are making sure that children develop holistically without having headache on how to develop them, because CALM is there to guide them throughout the day. We are so grateful for our children with the support we receive from Starting Chance.

– Noma-Efese Nodliwa, Principal, Shining Stars

In anticipation of urgency to respond, we are creating a Starting Chance Building Fund. Linked to our 'Principal's Toolkit' training programme the aim is to enable principals to grasp responsibility for ensuring that their schools are well maintained, safe and hygienic. A key benefit of the fund will be the flexibility to direct funding to where it is needed, and the ability to run multiple projects in parallel if necessary, providing sufficient funding is available. Applications

Infrastructure Upgrades

Bavumeleni Educare Centre



Tangram Academy



Shining Stars Educare Centre



Westline Educare Centre



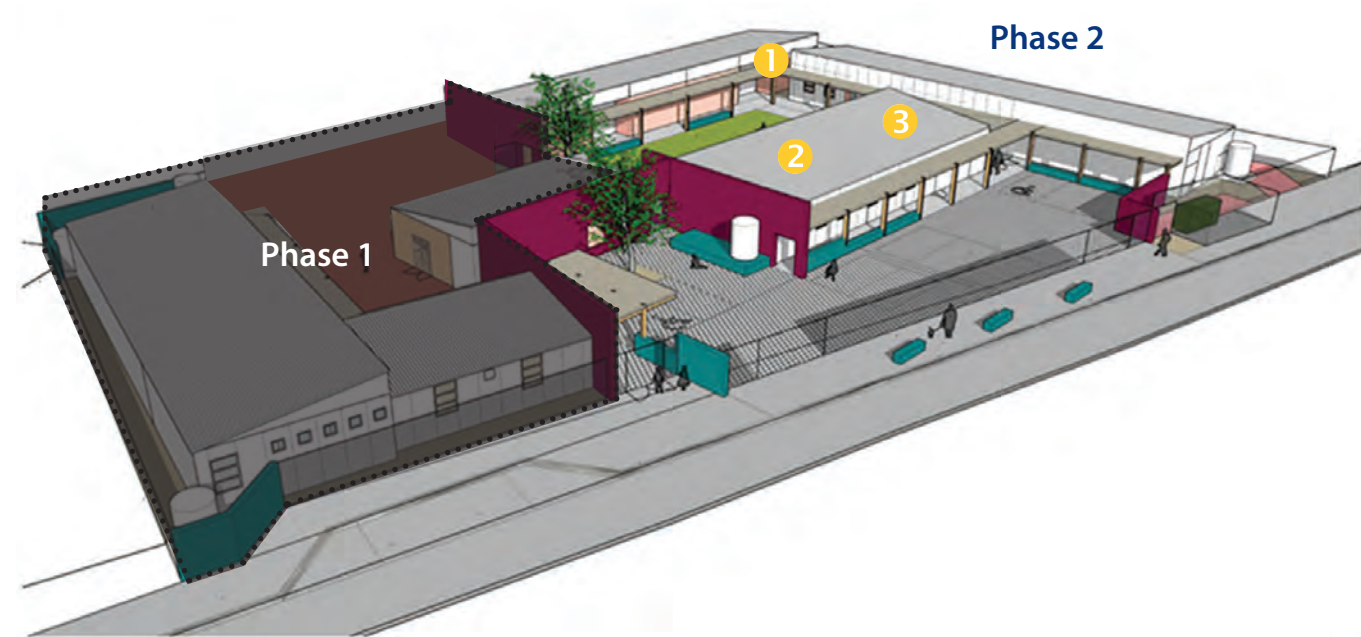
Phase 2 of the ECD Campus and Training Centre

We are very excited to announce the breaking of ground for Phase 2 of the Inclusive ECD Campus and Training Centre, which began in 2020 with the Lonwabo Special Care Centre.

The Project will hugely benefit the Mfuleni early childhood sector, the broader community and the ECD community across the Cape Town Metro.

There are three main components:

- 1 **An ECD for 200 children** will offer an employment opportunity and provide guidance on how to run a best-practice school in the community. Featuring a demonstration classroom, it will enable the Starting Chance team to demonstrate early childhood teaching techniques.
- 2 **An ample training space** – this will be used to run our accredited CALM (classroom and learning management) course for the Mfuleni teaching community and beyond. It will also provide opportunities for other organisations within the community to apply to run suitable courses.
- 3 **A resource centre** will be available to the teaching community, where they can borrow equipment and receive training on how to use it in their classrooms.



T Training and Development

One of the most significant milestones for Starting Chance in the 2024/25 period is the official accreditation of our C.A.L.M (Classroom and Learning Management) Educational Framework by the South African Council of Educators (SACE). This three-year partnership with SACE affirms the credibility and quality of our training content, marking a major step forward in our mission to professionalise the early childhood development (ECD) sector.

In January 2025, we rolled out the first accredited CALM 5-Day Training for practitioners, held from 13–17 January. The training was enthusiastically received, reinforcing the demand for high-quality, structured professional development in Early Childhood Development.

The SACE accreditation coincides with the construction of a state-of-the-art Starting Chance ECD facility, a flagship model for excellence in early learning. Scheduled for completion in August 2025, this centre will be instrumental in scaling our training and development work.



Training Teachers in Townships Workshops

The Training of Teachers in Townships (TTinT) workshops which continued throughout 2024 and early 2025 has been a rewarding journey for Starting Chance. It is deeply encouraging to witness early childhood development (ECD) practitioners demonstrating a strong commitment to improving the quality of education in their centres by consistently attending these monthly workshops. Their dedication to professional growth is a testament to their

passion for creating nurturing, play-based learning environments for children aged 0–6 years.

TTinT workshops are grounded in experiential learning, encouraging hands-on participation rather than relying solely on theory or oral instruction. This approach has proven to be highly effective in enhancing both understanding and practice among ECD practitioners.

In 2024, we continued our approach in the TTinT workshops by dividing practitioners according to the age group they work with. This targeted approach has allowed for deeper engagement with the developmental needs of each age cohort. Practitioners now collaborate more effectively with our experienced training team to develop age-appropriate teaching aids, lesson plans, and learning resources aligned with key childhood development milestones. The topics for the workshops link to CALM and are planned according to the observations we see on our site visits.

To meet growing demand, we have expanded our reach to 46 schools, impacting over 2 395 children in Mfuleni and surrounding communities. This growth necessitated the introduction of a new category of engagement – Community Schools – for those currently on our waiting list. Although they receive limited programmatic support, these schools benefit from our monthly Training of Teachers in Townships (TTinT) workshops, a mobile Hanging Library (in partnership with Biblionef), and take-home books supplied by Book Dash.

I am deeply appreciative of the impact of Starting Chance in improving my teaching practices. The support and guidance that Starting Chance provides to me as a toddlers teacher is truly amazing and inspirational.

The trainings and resources have been helpful for me to develop effective strategies for managing classroom behaviour and good learning environment.

– Asive Nthoesane, Practitioner, Nokhwezi Educare

My overall experience in the TTinT workshops has been very fruitful. I understand more of how to work with smaller groups and the importance of one on one teaching. Each child develops on a different level and I can work better now knowing how the child's development/growth takes place. I still have a long way to go but my view on working with the little ones has improved.

Cindy Verhoog-Bull, Practitioner, Annie's Educare Centre

Resource Training

To further support practitioners, the Starting Chance team also hosts weekly resource training sessions. These sessions are designed to equip practitioners with the skills and creativity to make effective teaching resources using recycled materials. This initiative is vital, as many of the schools we support are located in under-resourced communities that lack adequate infrastructure and access to educational materials. By promoting the use of recyclable and affordable materials, we are enabling practitioners to create stimulating learning environments without the need for costly, sophisticated toys or resources.

In addition to our facilitators, we've welcomed alumni principals into our support model. These leaders now mentor newer or entry-

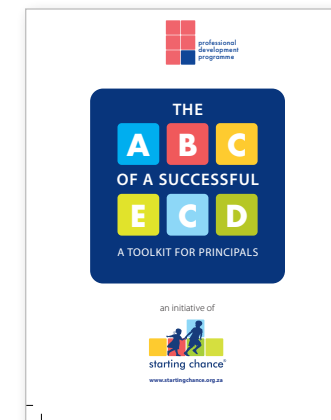


level practitioners by modelling best practices and inspiring them to grow professionally and personally.

Importantly, the TTinT workshops have played a critical role in shaping and informing the development of our now SACE-accredited C.A.L.M. educational framework. The insights gathered from workshop interactions have helped refine the content and ensure relevance to the everyday realities of township ECD centres.

Principals Development Programme

With the changes that are happening in the ECD sector with the Department of Basic Education, it is imperative that we support our Principals to enable their schools to meet the requirements to achieve gold status.



The Principals Toolkit was launched this year and it encompasses five critical areas of professionalism:

- Skilled Leadership
- Management of Teams
- Administration
- Resources and Infrastructure
- Teaching and Learning Environment



Through interactive workshops, site visits and management meetings we are working together to create a community of best practice in ECD in Mfuleni. Principals are excited and determined to meet the stringent requirements.

I would like to thank and appreciate Starting Chance for giving me the opportunity to be the part of your team.

From the PDP trainings I learned and gained a lot. When I was starting/opening SINOTHANDO EDUCARE I was blank in terms of leadership (though it was not my first time being the principal). from the first workshop I learned many thing that I was not aware of, but my mind was open a little bit. I have to find myself what kind of a manager I am. From the list of management style I have an idea of me what kind of style must I practice and how my ECD can grow, by involving staff, parents and the board committee.

For attending the PDP workshop means a lot to me it can pave my way and develop me to be a better principal. All I need is to implement what I learned from starting chance team.

Thank you once again .

– Fezeka Mbete, Principal, Sinothando Educare

Site Visits and Our Team

Our training team – Nombulelo Dingiso, Joyce Matyi, Lebohang Mabi, and Thandeka Tomsama – bring a combined 40+ years of experience in ECD. Their expertise extends beyond the workshop setting,

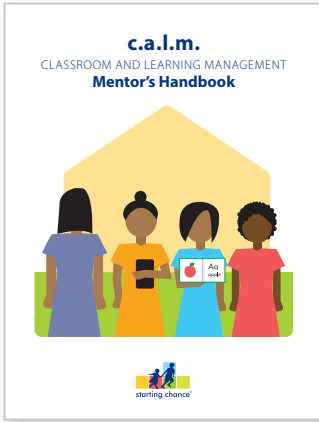


with bi-monthly visits to each supported Starting Chance school. These visits reinforce TTinT workshop content through practical demonstrations, ongoing mentorship, and supportive engagement with practitioners, strengthening relationships and promoting sustainable implementation of best practices.

Site visits are often a highlight for the Practitioners as this is the time where they can engage one on one if there are any areas they are not sure of or if there are concerns they may have in the classroom.

The Starting Chance Mentorship Programme

The Mentorship and Support Programme at Starting Chance has steadily developed into a robust, effective, and sustainable model for strengthening Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Mfuleni.



This programme plays a critical role in building capacity within the ECD sector by creating a structured platform where seasoned and well-established principals from mature schools provide hands-on mentorship, peer support, and leadership development to principals and staff from newer or entry-level schools within the TTinT cohort.

Through this initiative, Starting Chance is cultivating a culture of collaboration and professional growth among ECD practitioners, helping to bridge the gap between established schools and those still finding their footing. The programme is guided and supported by Mrs Belinda Inglis, whose wealth of experience in the ECD sector adds immense value, alongside the tireless efforts of two Starting Chance fieldworkers, Thandeka and Nombulelo, who are actively engaged in ensuring the mentorship process remains relevant, responsive and impactful.

Currently, ten volunteer mentors from Alumni, Hub and Hub Plus schools have generously stepped forward to be part of this initiative between 2024/25. Their dedication and willingness to share their expertise, time, and resources has been nothing short of inspiring. These mentors have shown a deep commitment to the growth and development of their mentee schools, consistently demonstrating leadership and compassion. It has been remarkable to see the strong

relationships forming between mentors and mentees, grounded in mutual respect, open dialogue, and a shared vision for quality education.

Equally encouraging is the response from the entry-level schools, many of which have embraced this opportunity with great enthusiasm and humility. They have welcomed their mentors with open arms, actively engaging in reflective learning, adopting best practices, and building stronger management and teaching systems within their schools. A particularly heartening development is that several mentors have begun sharing tangible teaching and learning resources with their mentee schools – an indicator that this programme is not only supporting skills transfer but also fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose.

What is emerging is more than just a mentorship model; it is a vibrant and growing community of practice among ECD principals and practitioners. Under the umbrella of Starting Chance, this initiative is planting the seeds for long-term systemic improvement in the township-based ECD sector – promoting leadership, resilience, and a collective commitment to excellence in early learning.

The mentors have gone beyond this year – we have even had one mentor accompanying a Principal to the DBE offices to help them with their paperwork. – Mrs Nombulelo Dingiso, Starting Chance

Starting Chance Alumni Programme

In 2021, schools that had completed the Starting Chance three-year programme were invited to join our newly established Alumni Programme. This initiative was born from a vision to retain and nurture the expertise of practitioners and principals who had journeyed with us, while building a thriving community of best practice.

Since its inception, the Alumni Programme has continued to grow in strength and impact. A dedicated committee of alumni members—supported by the Starting Chance team and guided by Mrs. Meryl Fourie—has played a vital role in deepening collective expertise and peer learning. Alumni are encouraged to 'give back' by mentoring newly enrolled TTinT schools, sharing their classroom experience, and supporting efforts to maintain high standards of education. This includes promoting play-based learning and nurturing environments for young children.

Alumni principals also play a pivotal role in supporting new school leaders as they work toward meeting the Department of

Basic Education (DBE) registration requirements. By offering practical guidance and pointing them in the right direction, they help schools navigate the complex registration process.

This growing network has developed into a meaningful Community of Practice, where principals and practitioners learn from and support one another. It has been deeply rewarding for the Starting Chance team to witness this sense of unity and collaboration in action.

As part of our continued commitment to Alumni Schools, we provide access to key Starting Chance programmes, including TTinT workshops, the Professional Development Programme (PDP), and the Parent Support Programme (PSP). Given the frequent turnover of staff, it is vital that new teachers at Alumni Schools have access to ongoing training and development. Attendance at these workshops has remained strong, with principals regularly sharing their knowledge, materials, and encouragement with schools that have fewer resources.

Quarterly Alumni meetings allow us to respond to specific needs raised by schools, particularly around compliance with DBE regulations. Expert guest speakers, including representatives from organisations like the Centre for Early Childhood Development, have enriched these sessions with valuable insights and practical advice.

Ultimately, our Alumni Programme is a cornerstone of sustainability in the early childhood development sector, ensuring that the expertise and leadership cultivated through Starting Chance continues to benefit future generations.



A Assessments

Monitoring and Evaluation: A Tool for Growth and Learning

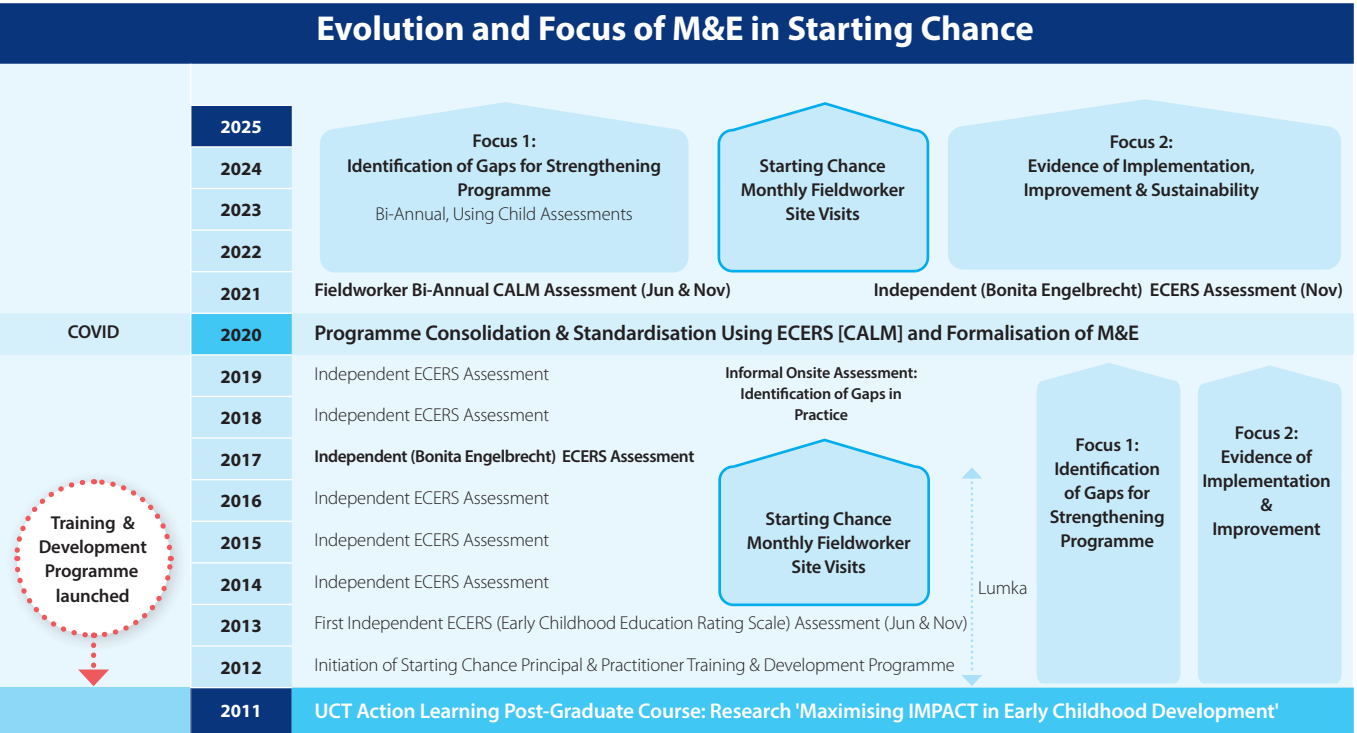
Since the beginning, Starting Chance has always ensured a robust M & E approach. As Starting Chance continues to grow – both geographically and in the depth of its programme implementation – the need for strong, responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems has become increasingly vital. This section reflects on our evolving M&E approach and the ways we measure programme impact over the 12-month period from June 2024 to June 2025.

Our evaluation practices are rooted in our values of positivity and child-centredness. Instead of using terms like 'assessments,' we speak of bi-annual child observations, conducted in March and September. This language reinforces our commitment to nurturing, inclusive and developmentally appropriate learning environments. These child

observations are currently conducted with our Hub and Hub Plus schools – ECD centres that have benefited from two to three years of structured support from the Starting Chance field team.

The results are analysed, discussed with our team and the practitioners and an action plan is implemented to support key learning areas which need help. We also tailor our training and resource training to ensure gaps are filled.

Complementing child observations, we undertake classroom-based observations, focusing on specific age groups to ensure that learning activities are tailored to the developmental stages of the children. These insights help guide practitioners in delivering age-appropriate, engaging and meaningful experiences in the classroom. Observation and reflection are embedded throughout our programme cycle, allowing us to continually enhance the quality of support we provide.



To strengthen the credibility of our tools and methodologies, we continue to partner with Mrs. Bonita Engelbrecht, an ECERS assessor with extensive experience in early childhood education. Her work in conducting external evaluations using the ECERS tool adds an important layer of objectivity and validation to our internal processes.

In November 2024, we compared the results from the evaluations conducted by Bonita and those conducted by our team. It was exciting to see that the results were similar. This shows that our fieldworker team are effective in pinpointing areas of excellence and areas which need help.

Together, the external evaluations, bi-annual child observations, and ongoing site visits conducted by our fieldwork team help determine each school's level of engagement with Starting Chance. These components provide tangible evidence of a school's progress and development.

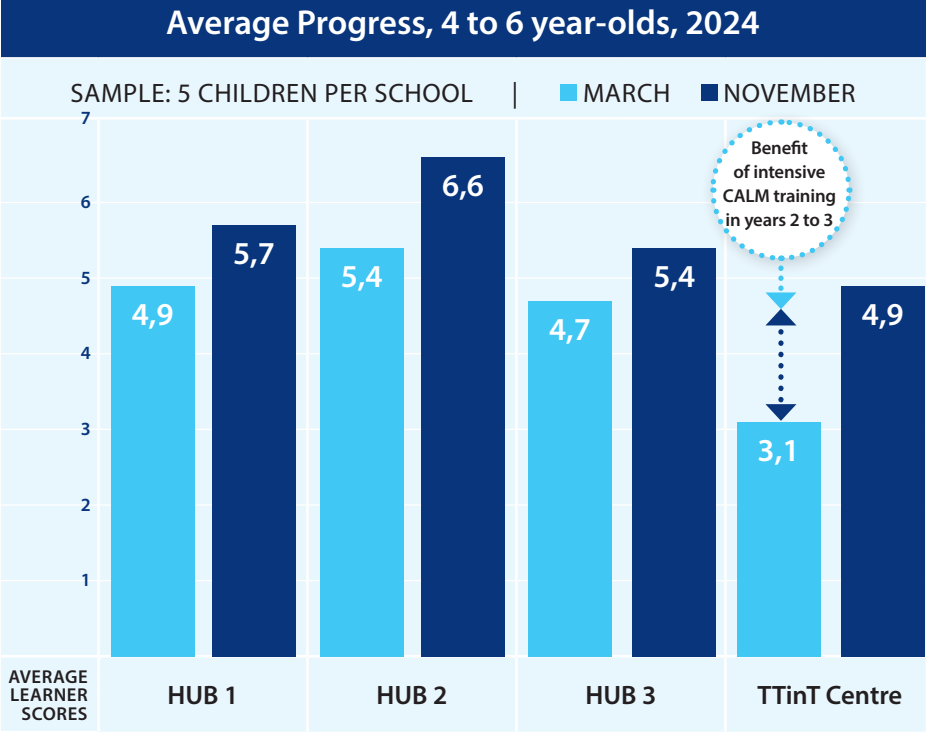
Beyond internal use, our M&E approach also aims to build capacity within the ECD sector. Practitioners are supported with tools such as child engagement journals and strategies for communicating progress to parents, empowering them to take ownership of observation and reflection in their own classrooms.

By making monitoring and evaluation a shared, constructive, and empowering process, we stay aligned with our mission: to create stimulating, inclusive, and high-quality learning environments where every child can thrive.

An integral part of our programme is to ensure that the Principals are supported through regular site visits, workshops and management meetings. These evaluations are discussed with the principals and they are given opportunities to engage with the fieldworker team. We are actively helping them to provide best practice environments for the children and the practitioners and thereby reaching Gold status with the Department of Basic Education. The Principals Toolkit (PTK) has been designed to enable this process to be accessible and useful.

ECD is increasingly recognised as a critical window of opportunity for shaping the long-term physical, cognitive and emotional health and development of young children.

– Emily Vargas-Barón, PhD, 2009



According to the ECERS ratings:
≥5 and <6 = Good Quality Education
≥6 = Excellent Education.

This graph shows that Hub schools consistently achieve ECD practitioner performance levels needed to deliver a good quality of education to the children attending them, and that Starting Chance is achieving its goal, which is to help children to become primary-school ready.

It also illustrates the difference between a school entering the programme (TTinT) relative to the Hub schools which are in their 2nd and/or 3rd year of CALM training. Children in Hub schools are developmentally ahead of their peers coming into the year in a TTinT school, BUT the year in TTinT helps the practitioners in an entry level school to improve their teaching capability so that by the end of the year, the children are catching up with their peers in the Hub schools.

R Ready for School



It takes a village to raise a child!

To ensure that children are ready for school, the triangle of support is essential. When parents/care givers, practitioners and principals work together for the good of the child – wonderful things happen! Starting Chance is continually looking at ways to strengthen this triangular partnership.

Parent Support Programme (PSP)

The Parent Support Programme (PSP) continues to gain remarkable momentum within the Starting Chance-supported school community. In the past year, all three planned workshops were successfully held, achieving an impressive 90% attendance rate. This enthusiastic participation is especially noteworthy in light of the common perception that parents are often disengaged from their children's education at the ECD level.

The overwhelmingly positive response has inspired Starting Chance to expand both the programme's scope and its budget allocation. In 2025, we are increasing the number of workshops to four, with the addition of a dedicated session for the parents of children at our special needs partner schools – Tangram Academy and Lonwabo Special Care. We believe that no parent should be left

behind in this growing movement of parental involvement in early childhood education.

Moreover, we are adapting some of our practitioner-focused programme elements for parents – an initiative that has been met with great enthusiasm. These include Resource Training sessions on using recycled materials for play and learning, as well as the highly popular Parent Resource Shop.

Parent Support Representatives

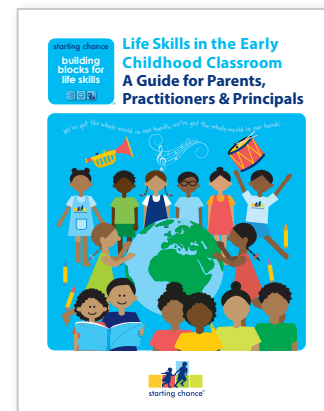
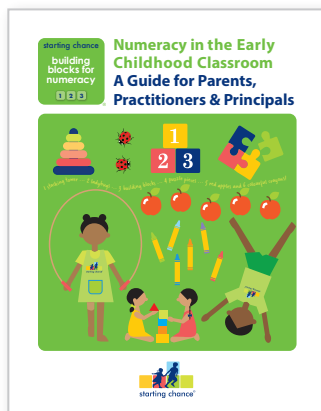
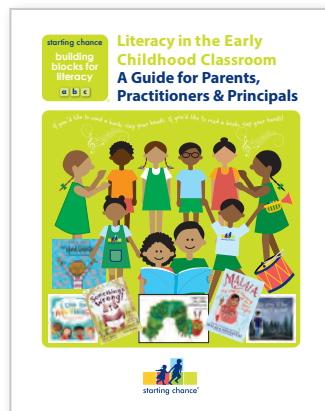
As part of the Starting Chance Sustainability Support Model, we encourage each of our schools in our programme to ensure one or two members of staff become Parent Support Representatives (PSR). The practitioners work with the Starting Chance Team to upskill their knowledge and skills by helping with the Starting Chance Parent workshops, Mandela Day events and other key parts of the programme. In addition to this they attend training on the Building Blocks Series:

- Building Blocks for Literacy
- Building Blocks for Numeracy
- Building Blocks for Life Skills

Through this initiative we are launching our *Parent Workshops in Schools* programme in August. Each school will run their own mini workshop for the parents in their school on a key Building Blocks activity that will be implemented in the home.

This grassroots approach ensures that all parents have consistent access to Starting Chance's guidance, tools, and encouragement – further embedding a culture of active parental engagement across our communities.

The first Starting Chance parent workshop was led by Dr Wanga Zembe-Mkabile.



Parent Workshops

In this reporting period we held the first parent workshop in February 2025, and the main theme focused on 'Life Skills for Children under five'. The workshop had record-breaking attendance, with nearly 200 parents coming to the workshop. Importantly, the parents included a sizable number of fathers, a rarity in low-income communities in South Africa.



The workshop used an experiential learning approach to engage parents in thinking and learning about the critical life skills they should be supporting their children to gain in the under five age group. The structure of the workshop included ice breakers to build rapport with parents, and covered learning areas on 'Introduction to life skills', 'Life skills for each stage of development', 'How to nurture your child's emotional garden', and ended with a section on 'When to seek help'. Case studies were used before the introduction of each learning area, and the parents engaged with each case study – identifying key issues, as well as potential solutions, and sharing resonating experiences where necessary. There was great interest, enthusiasm and vibrancy in the workshop. As we do with each parent workshop, at the end, each parent walked away with a resource package that they could use at home to apply some of the learnings from the workshop. This included an A4 typed 'How to' poster that they could hang on their walls to remind them of the key strategies discussed in the workshop to build life skills; a toy they could use with their child, and a book.

The Co-Use Space

In 2024, we intensified our efforts to activate and optimise the co-used space at Lonwabo Special Care. For the third consecutive year, we have collaborated with the Children's Institute (CI) at the University of Cape Town – an organisation that specialises in facilitating access to government social assistance programmes, particularly those that support children from low-income families and children with disabilities.

This year, we secured exclusive support from a legal practitioner affiliated with the CI. This professional visits Lonwabo multiple times annually to provide one-on-one assistance to parents and caregivers in obtaining essential documents such as birth certificates and accessing child-related social grants. This service addresses a critical need in Mfuleni, where many households rely on social grants as their primary source of income. These grants are especially vital in supporting children's basic needs, including food security and access to early childhood development (ECD) services.

In 2025, we revived our partnership with Hope Counsellors and have since allocated a qualified Social Worker to lead counselling sessions for both parents and ECD practitioners. This has provided essential psycho-social support to caregivers. These sessions are strictly confidential; neither Starting Chance nor school principals have access to the discussions between counsellors and caregivers.

We remain committed to mobilising additional partners to keep the co-used space at Lonwabo active, supportive, and responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Tangram and Lonwabo

There has been pleasing progress at both Special Needs Schools. At Lonwabo there has been great progress in the interactive class. Children are participating in art and music, and there has been notable progress.

At Tangram, the improvement in the environment through the input of Starting Chance, has helped to improve the learning area. Practitioners work hard to support the children, and we have seen encouraging signs of development.

Our Occupational Therapist, Mrs Jacqui Couper has continued with her bi-monthly visits to both schools which has been hugely beneficial. In addition, the Starting Chance Fieldworkers have visited on a monthly basis.

T Tech Savvy

Principals become Tech Savvy

There has been a shift in the importance of professionalising the Early Childhood Sector in lower income communities. With the changes in process, the Department of Basic Education is streamlining the way ECD's are registered and how they move towards acquiring subsidies for the children in their schools. Many principals do not have access to computers and do not have the knowledge to cope with the requirements laid down by the Department.

In 2025, the Starting Chance Tech Support Programme has become increasingly integrated with the Professional Development Programme (PDP), enhancing its role in empowering ECD principals and founders. A key component, the Computer Training sessions, has proven instrumental – not only in strengthening school administration systems but also in supporting principals to register their centres on the Department of Education platform and achieve Bronze registration status.

This phase has offered valuable insights for the Tech Support facilitator, who found that many centres remain behind in the registration process and require hands-on support. In response,

Starting Chance donated ten desktop computers to ten schools, including alumni schools that have graduated from direct fieldwork support. This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to building digital capacity and promoting a shift toward more efficient, paperless administration.



Tablet Fun

For the 4 to 6 year-olds in the schools we support, we have always recognised that tablet fun should be an integral part of the child's week. Concrete play is foremost in the child's day and nothing should prevent this. However, introducing digital play is also important and we have found that fun programmes on the tablet can enhance understanding.

The Tablets component of the TSP is gaining momentum. Practitioner training sessions were launched in March and have seen strong participation. To ensure quality engagement and effective learning, the facilitator divided schools into smaller groups. This year, Starting Chance expanded the Tablet Fun programme to include both Hub and Hub Plus schools. A total of 80 tablets have been distributed across ten schools in Mfuleni and surrounding communities – reflecting our continued commitment to learning through play using interactive games and educational apps.

Since we received tablets, children are always excited for the sessions, they enjoy the games because the games extend their vocabulary through alphabets and other educational games.
– Zimasa Tyekana, Practitioner, Shining Stars



Starting Chance Team – a paperless world

There has been wonderful growth in our team as we move more and more towards a paperless world. It has been exciting to see our team undertake research for their workshops and ideas for supporting the making of equipment using recycled material.

Digital support has been provided through online courses and advice from our tech trustees.



Mandela Month

A Flagship Moment for Fundraising and Awareness

At Starting Chance, we have identified July – Mandela Month – as our flagship month for fundraising and public awareness. Each year, we spotlight one of the foundational Building Blocks for Education at Early Childhood Development (ECD) level: Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills. In 2024, we focused on Numeracy, building on the momentum of our 2023 Literacy Campaign. Throughout July, Starting Chance hosted a series of impactful events aimed at raising awareness about the importance of numeracy in early learning.

Highlights

Some highlights included:

- Workshops for ECD Practitioners and Parents held on 13 and 20 July 2024, featuring guest speaker Ms Mgoqi from the University of Cape Town, who shared her insights and expertise on early childhood numeracy development.
- A flagship community event on 27 July 2024 at Nalikamva Primary School, attended by over 2 000 parents and children. This vibrant celebration highlighted our schools' innovative numeracy practices and deepened community engagement, reinforcing our role as a trusted partner in Mfuleni.



It was exciting to see the involvement of our schools in our programme. The Alumni Schools each created food stalls which were extremely popular. The Hub and Hub Plus schools created numeracy games which were very successful, and children and parents alike loved the opportunity to participate. The TTinT schools participated in the games. It was rewarding to see the amazing turnout on a rainy day and to see all the dads having fun with their children.

Stakeholder Contributions

The success of Mandela Month 2024 was made possible by the incredible support of our community partners. We acknowledge and thank the following stakeholders for their valuable contributions:

- **Nalikamva Primary School** – for generously hosting our flagship event
- **Mfuleni Library** – for ongoing literacy partnership in Mfuleni
- **Hero In My Hood** – for child-centered donated books
- **Bargain Books** – for donating books and educational resources.
- **Sweet Valley Primary School** – for donating educational resources in relation to the numeracy theme.
- **Book Dash** – for their continued support in promoting book ownership among young children at home
- **Messy Play** – for introducing young children to tactile play
- **108 and 114 ECD Forums in Mfuleni** – for mobilising participation and ensuring strong practitioner engagement.



Looking Ahead: Life Skills in 2025

For 2025, we shift our focus to the third building block – Life Skills – as part of our strategic progression. Our programme will include:

- **Two Life Skills-focused workshops** in July 2025 for ECD practitioners and parents, led by esteemed facilitators Dr Wanga Zembe-Mkabile and Dr Siyabulela Mkabile.
- **A community celebration event** on 27 September 2025, allowing more time for planning and broader participation. We aim to surpass our 2 000 attendee milestone, strengthening our ties with the Mfuleni community and offering schools a platform to showcase best practices in Life Skills education.

These annual festivities are a cornerstone of our relationship-building strategy, reaffirming Starting Chance's commitment to collaborative, community-rooted education transformation.





Friends of Starting Chance

Building Hope through Support

Starting Chance has invested R25 million into the Early Childhood sector in ten years. Children have benefited, practitioners have been trained, and Principals have grown on the journey with us.

None of this would have been possible without the support of organisations, churches, schools, and individuals who are part of the Starting Chance Family. In 2016, Christiaan Greyling spent a week camping on the top of Table Mountain and running to work each day. He selected Starting Chance as his charity to benefit from his initiative, and 'Friends of Starting Chance was born'. Marianne Flint took on the challenge of rebranding us with her brilliant design and thinking.

Friends from around the globe have visited us over the last ten years, and many have



chosen to support the work we do, even when they haven't had the opportunity to visit us in person. What is so heart-warming is that many of those very early friends are *still* supporting us ten years later!

Donations in Kind

BOOKS:

Bargain Books: Bargain Books have continued to provide a variety of books for our reading corners and have printed posters and information pamphlets for schools and parents. In addition to this, Bargain Books has continued supporting us through their R10 at the till initiative. This initiative helped us to provide resource kits for schools and develop reading corners in new schools.

Biblioneef: Thanks to Biblioneef, 36 schools now have hanging libraries equipped with a variety of books in multiple languages. This innovative solution to having books in small spaces has ensured our 'Building Blocks for Literacy' has grown and developed in all our schools.

Book Dash: In July 2024, we received 6 000 books from Book Dash to support our Building Blocks for Literacy Programme for children at home. Every child in the programme took home at least three books. For many this was the very first time they had owned their own book.

Heroes in the Hood: We were delighted to receive a donation of books from this organisation in Mandela Month, and more since. The booklets, inspiring young children to be Heroes in their Neighbourhood, are an exciting addition to our book donations.



RESOURCES:

Sweet Valley Primary: The Grade 2's at SVP have been collecting gently used and new resources for Starting Chance since 2016. They have helped to provide resource packs for schools, equip the Starting Chance shop and provide resources for parents at home.

Sam Corbett and Friends: Sam and her friends regularly collect children's clothes and toys to donate to families in Mfuleni.

Stenstroms and Swedish Friends of Starting Chance: Every year, the Stenstroms arrive from Sweden with a suitcase filled with exquisite hand-sewn quilts for mini library corners in all our schools. They have also provided stationery and toys.



Woodside Village: Thanks to the recyclers and support from Woodside Village, each month we are able to provide our schools with recycling items that are used for science experiments, creative art, music and story time. Sandra and Arne Nielsen fill a corner of their garage with bags and bags for collection.

Donations in Time

Advisory members on the Starting Chance Panel: Belinda Inglis and Meryl Fourie have both supported Starting Chance by giving their time and valuable experience to support the Mentor and Alumni Programmes, respectively. Belinda has also supported the Starting Chance Fieldworker team by creating notes for practitioners on the TTinT workshops.

Facilitators at Starting Chance Workshops: Dr Wanga Zembe-Mkabile and Dr Siyabulela Mkabile have shared their valuable knowledge and expertise facilitating parent and principal workshops.

Jamie Mogapi of Kamoeba has provided valuable time and expertise in interpreting data to provide graphs and information from Children's assessments and the ECERS results.

Marianne Flint generously contributed her time and expertise in graphic design, including the creation of materials submitted for accreditation as part of our CALM programme. The approval granted by the South African Council of Educators in February 2025 is a well-deserved recognition of this effort.

BACCS: For doing our Independent Review free of charge.

Financial Donations

Starting Chance has been very fortunate to receive donations from a variety of companies, organisations, schools, churches and individuals. Our donors come from all over the world and we are humbled by the ongoing support we have received.

Donors have been acknowledged in our Partners section as there are too many to mention by name.

Thank you to all the Friends of Starting Chance. You have enabled us to:

- Give **2 395 children** a starting chance on their educational journey;
- Train **167 practitioners**;
- Support **34 principals**;
- Renovate and improve eight schools;
- Provide **450 resource packs**;
- Distribute over **6 000 books** to families and children; and
- Impact **2 395 families**.



Financial Report

Reflecting on the financial highlights table presented here, the standout figure is the dramatic increase in project-specific donations received—alongside the corresponding rise in expenditure on Shack to Chic. As reported on page 9, Phase 2 of our development at School Street is now underway, and these particular numbers are clear evidence of that. A significant grant receipt has paved the way for the project to begin. We are excited!

The rest of the figures paint what we hope you'll agree is a very positive picture. All sources of income have increased significantly year on year. We are deeply grateful to those who support us faithfully month by month, providing a dependable baseline income. In the 2024/25 financial year, we also received several tremendously generous ad hoc gifts—so much so that general donations rose by nearly 50% compared to the previous year.

In addition, our fundraising income saw a notable boost, led by the Bargain Books campaign, where shoppers are invited to add R10 (or R67 during Mandela Month) to their purchases in support of Starting Chance. This initiative alone raised almost R500,000 during the year.

We see this positive trajectory in funding as a vote of confidence—especially after we took the bold step of expanding our programmes, including the key appointment of a full-time Programme Manager. The increase in expenditure reflects this growth. While administration costs have risen slightly more than other regular (non-construction) expenses, they still account for less than 3% of total expenses. We strive to run a lean operation! This is also thanks to the amazing volunteers and service providers who offer their time and skills pro bono or at discounted rates.

We're pleased to report that we have been able to end the services that previously led to high property holding costs. This line item is now much more manageable.

Once again this year, we've transferred 5% of donations and fundraising income—where donor conditions allow—to our "endowment" investment. This fund exceeded R1 million in value for the first time during the year. While, like most non-profits, we remain reliant on donor support, it's encouraging to know we're also building a sustainable income stream for the future.



A huge thank you to all our friends and donors. Your contributions make this work possible. These financial results are a testimony to your generosity.

Carl Nielsen
TREASURER

	2025	2024	Change
Income			
Project-specific	2 878 450	117 240	2355%
Non-specific donations	2 119 813	1 438 070	47%
Investment income	402 224	311 390	29%
Fundraising	754 950	548 048	38%
Beneficiary contributions	81 311	45 748	78%
Total Income	6 236 748	2 460 496	153%
Expenditure			
Shack to Chic	2 446 538	888 780	175%
Training & Development	1 957 096	1 386 126	41%
Administration	134 404	87 021	54%
Property holding costs	23 416	342 802	-93%
Total Expenditure	4 561 454	2 704 729	69%
Transfer to endowment	143 738	99 307	45%
Reserves			
Funds available for infrastructure projects	1 460 728	990 215	48%
Funds available for training, development and other activities	2 266 791	1 248 690	82%
Endowment (at cost)	940 423	796 685	18%
Endowment (market value)	1 197 776	919 553	30%
	4 998 263	1 555 310	221%

Partners and Donors

Individuals

- Adrian Rose
Amy Knight
Anne Lawton
Anthony Hodges
Arne Nielsen
Bernard Hayes
Brendan Taylor
Carl Nielsen
Carolyn Elder
Claire Procter
Danie Meyer
Dennis Koopman
Dereck Palmer
Derek Wood
Eric Wood
Gero Wassweiler
Giles Buswell
Graham Blyth
Ian Corbett
Ivanna Granelli
Jamie Mogapi
Jerome Sheed
Jerome Tancred
Joel van der Schyff
John O'Sullivan
Ken Inglis
Kevin Waters
Liam Cockcroft
Lionel Waker
Liza Levy
Lo Dagerman
Lumley Hulley
Lynne Franco
Malcolm DIngle
Marcus Price
- Mark Long
Martin Bolsterli
Matthew O'Sullivan
Megan Alley
Michelle Baron
Mike De Wit
Mike Robinson
Nichole Francis
Nici Palmer
Ntaoleng Mohapi
Paul Speirs
Pete Myers
Petrus Cilliers
Riaan Myburgh
Richard Gurney
Rob Zipplies
Roel Assies
Rowena Westphalen
Sam Love
Siobhan O'Sullivan
Sue Manning
Viwe Gqiba
Wera Wendenberg
Wouter Wentzel
Xavier Scheurer

Institutions

- Ackerman Family Educational Trust
Adrenalin Fishing
Aerontec
Airush Kiteboarding
Amathemba Environmental Management Consulting
Bargain Books
Beerguevara
Cento Capital
Dandelion Trust
Din Din Trust
Dormac Marine
Douglas Joost Trust
Electric Storm
Farm Italy Imports
Federated Employers Mutual Assurance Company
Gemini Data Loggers
Gradons Transport Services
Halabi Thomaz Foundation
Home Choice Development Trust
iPay and iPay Services
Kairos Guests
Kamoeba
Libra Roofing
Marion Lahann Testamentary Trust
Ontec Systems
Öresundslinjen
Pest Relievers
Pinelands Village Veterinary Clinic
Reformed Church of Buelach
Solar Station Design
- Stenstroms
Stichting Mzamomhle
Stuart Software & Consulting
Sweet Valley Primary School
Terminix
Then Studio
The Van Group
Walraven Sax
Whimsical Collection
Wordsworth Books



**To find out the many ways in which you can contribute,
please visit our website:**

www.startingchance.org.za/take-action

We are a Christian based Not for Profit Organisation passionate about giving children in the ECD sector a Starting Chance on their educational journey.

Starting Chance is registered as a Section 18A Public Benefit Organisation. Accordingly, all donations we receive from South African residents are eligible for tax deduction subject to the provisions of the Income Tax Act.

Receipts in support of tax deductibility are issued on request.

The Starting Chance Trust

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