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*Journey with Us... Touching Lives 2023*

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*Cover photo: "Kid's play" - Molale Kevin Pemba*

The background of the slide is a solid blue color with a pattern of concentric circles in a slightly darker shade of blue. These circles are of varying sizes and are scattered across the entire page, creating a subtle, textured effect.

*"The only impossible journey  
is one you never begin."*

Tony Robbins

# Our commitment to corporate social investment

**The N3 Toll Route, extending 415Km between Cedara in KZN and Heidelberg in Gauteng, is a vitally important economic arterial and needs to be managed as such.**

N3TC's commitment to corporate social investment is not new, nor is it purely a response to the contractual obligations conferred on the company under the auspices of the Concession Contract, entered into between N3TC and SANRAL on 2 November 1999. The N3TC Touching Lives programme is an intentional effort to create impactful change, meaningful value and to contribute to a legacy that lasts well beyond the end of the concession in 2029, when the road reverts to Government.

The programme, incorporating four of the core B-BBEE pillars, namely Enterprise Development, Supplier Development, Skills

Development and Socio-Economic Development, is a central player providing much needed funding and support of initiatives which positively impact communities along the N3 Transport Corridor.

It is an enormous opportunity for innovation of the kind that improves the wellbeing and development of the broader society, and particularly those communities through which the route traverses.

As you turn the pages of this edition of N3TC Touching Lives you will experience first-hand, the unwavering commitment of many individuals who take strides every day to improve the lives of their loved ones, their communities and themselves through perseverance and sheer will. Their diverse initiatives range from

cultivating food gardens, breaking down the barriers that limit the next generation's access to education and development opportunities, to opening doors to gainful employment.

We invite you to 'Journey with Us' along the N3 Toll Route and the many towns and villages along the route and meet the wonderful people who weave the fabric of the unique tapestry that is South Africa, and to join N3TC's shareholders, directors, management and staff in supporting our like-minded partners in achieving real social upliftment and a better life for all South Africans.

*Neil Tolmie*

CEO









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## 2023 Overview

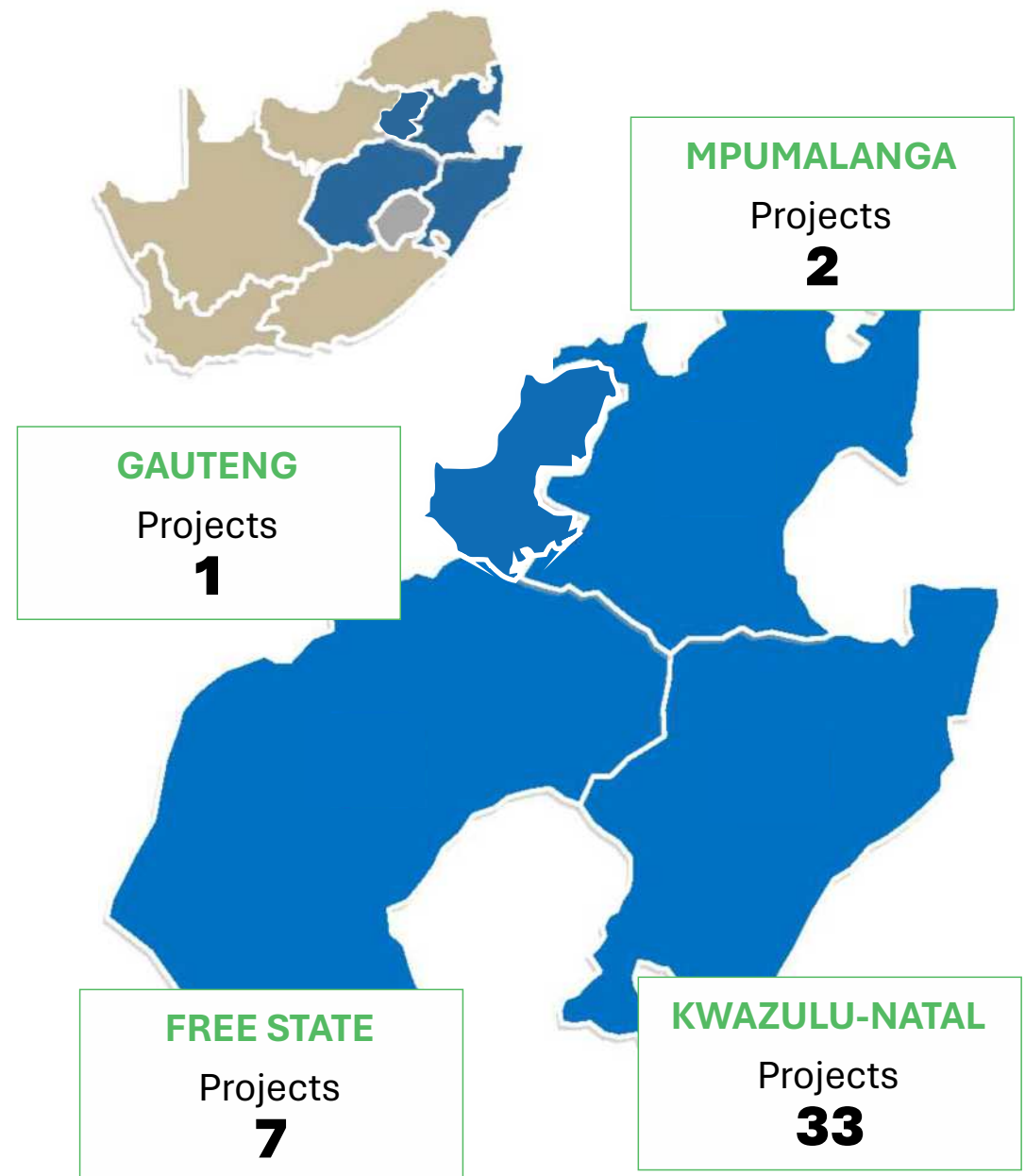
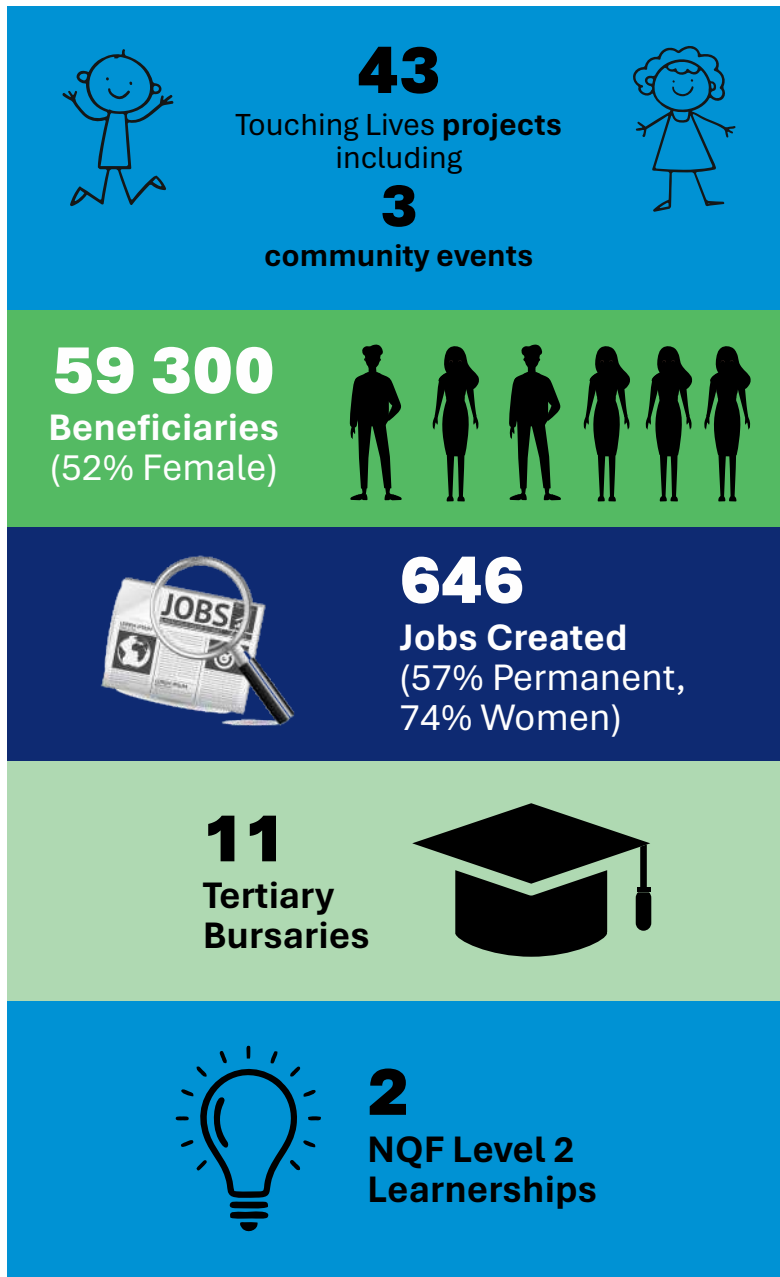






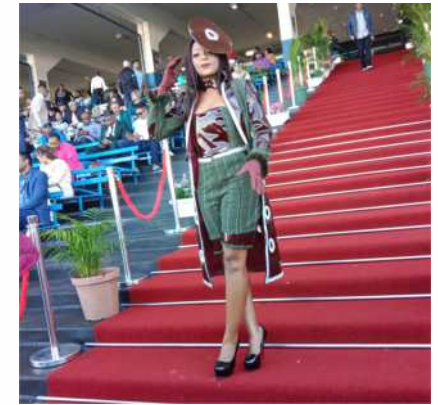
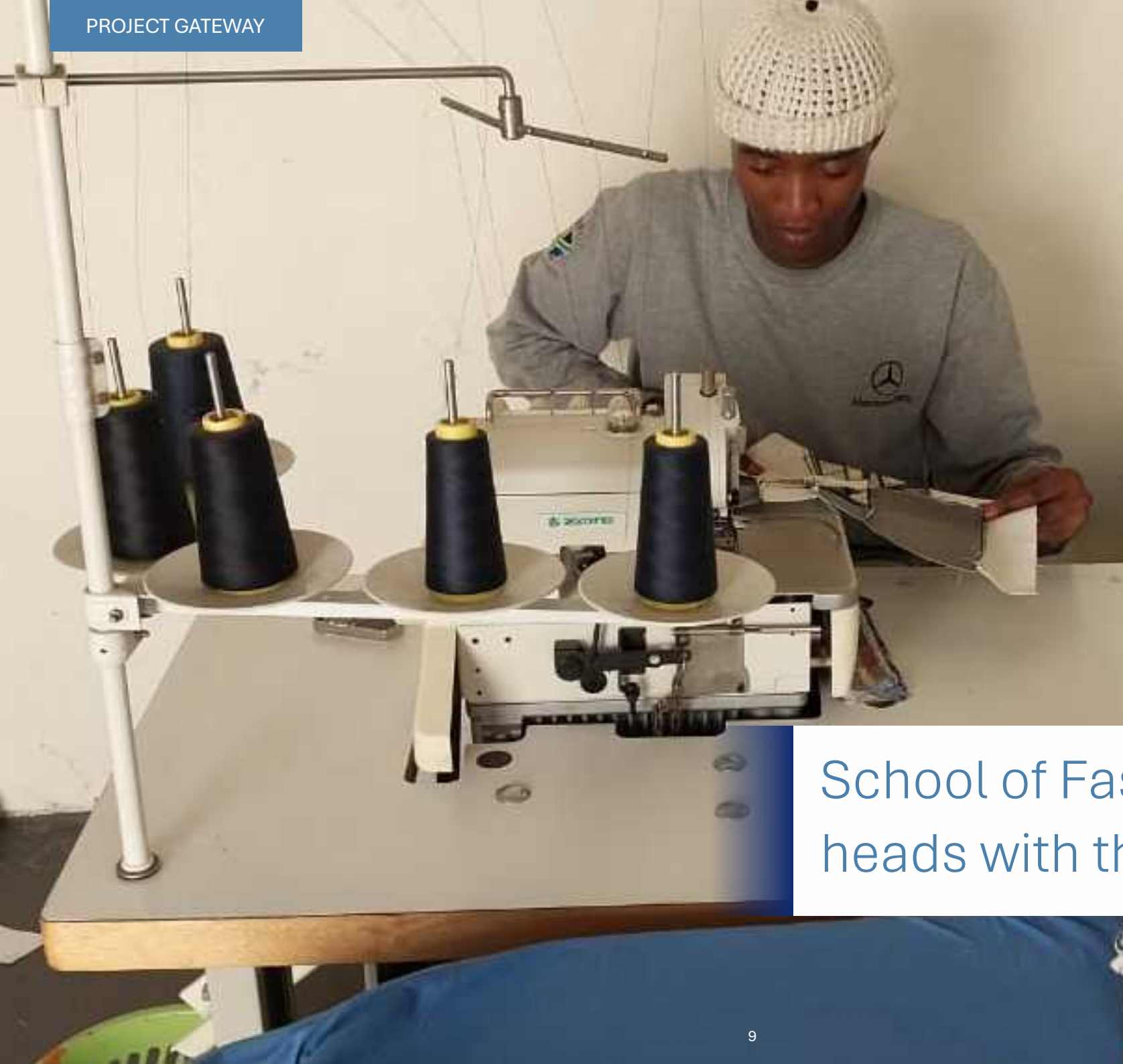
Photo by Rob Hart



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*“One’s destination is never a place,  
but a new way of seeing things.”*

Henry Miller



**In the heart of Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal, the Gateway School of Fashion is tackling unemployment by teaching out-of-school, and out-of-work young people skills that may radically improve their lives.**

School of Fashion turns heads with their designs



Pietermaritzburg



Thanks to the vision of the team of creative members from Project Gateway – the fashion school's parent organisation – young fashionistas are learning to draw, design, make patterns, and sew. Students who proceed to a second academic year also receive business skills training, and guidance to compile basic business plans and manage small businesses. They are also empowered and encouraged to generate income while attending class.

Project Gateway is a non-profit organisation (NPO) dedicated to the education and upliftment of vulnerable members of society. As an NPO, Project Gateway shares N3 Toll Concession's vision of not providing 'hand-outs' but rather creating partnerships that will affect lasting change, and contribute to improving the lives of people connected to the N3 Corridor.

An opportunity was created at the Durban July Handicap for Project Gateway's young designers to showcase their garments in the Raceday Fashion Competition. An impressive six of the Gateway School of Fashion designs were tagged in the Top 10 selection.



### Creating partnerships that will affect lasting change.

The highlight of 2023 was the school's Annual Fashion Show and graduation, hosted at the end of the academic year. In addition to the garments of the Durban July Handicap prize winners, ranges from first- and second-year students were also featured.

The theme for first-year students was 'Wild Fashion in Africa', while the second-year students created their masterpieces under the banner, "Masked Affair".

The competition was stiff, and the work produced astounding.

Their talented creations are nothing short of exceptional, considering that not a single one of these students had ever worked on a sewing machine before their first class.

A first-year student attempted to explain the scope and the impact of this opportunity: "This is an emotional moment. I feel privileged. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I could coordinate and produce a collection like this! Fashion and design are opening doors for me. I am looking forward to learning more and growing my business. Now, I can see the future."



Thabsile Memela is dressed in a 'red' dress. She made the four outfits in a mix-and-match design.



Second from the left is Patricia Ndlovu, the second year learner who had to make five outfits.



# Quality enrichment education in core subjects

PROTEC Pietermaritzburg Academy's Grade 12 students showed their academic prowess with excellent results. Not only did the Class of 2023 achieve a 100% pass rate, but every one of them attained a Bachelor Admission pass. "These excellent results now allow them to enrol at universities in South Africa, as well as a good many international ones," says Rosemary Smuts, executive director of PROTEC Academy Pietermaritzburg.



Pietermaritzburg

The matric class, of 30 students from 17 different feeder schools in the Greater Pietermaritzburg and Midlands region of KwaZulu-Natal (uMgungundlovu District), also scored 66 distinctions among them.

One of the most challenging factors affecting this group of learners was that they were in Grade 10 in 2021 and therefore got caught up in the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their schooling was disrupted at a time when the foundation was to be laid for their further education and training. “Students had to collect a limited number of printed instructions of what to study from their textbooks, and if they did not have books (which often was the case), their education came to a halt,” explains Mrs Smuts. According to news reports, 47% of the 1 081 618 learners who were in Grade 10 in 2021, had dropped out of school by their final school year in 2023.

Luckily for students of PROTEC Pietermaritzburg, their Academy stepped in to fill the void.

PROTEC Pietermaritzburg was founded in 1990 in response to the poor quality of Math and Science education in Secondary Schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, resulting in low enrollment numbers of black students in the faculties of Engineering, Medicine, and Information Technology at universities.

Their driving force is to help children from disadvantaged communities to prepare for careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) fields. The Academy provides quality enrichment education in core Mathematics, Physical- and Life Sciences, English Communication Studies, Coding, and the World of Work (Life Skills & Personalised Career Guidance) for Grade 9 – 12 students from the surrounding, predominantly rural, areas.

Students at PROTEC Pietermaritzburg Academy are carefully selected, enthusiastic, and motivated about their studies. They have a positive and cooperative attitude which they apply to understand and solve complex mathematical and scientific concepts. To them, and their tutors, commitment to hard work is



**Over the period that N3TC has partnered PROTEC Pietermaritzburg, hundreds of learners from the uMgungundlovu District have successfully passed through their programme, many of whom are now qualified professionals.**

everything, with the ultimate reward being to open doors to further education, career opportunities, and brighter futures.

According to the students, they have not only cemented study techniques, gained knowledge and understanding of their



subjects, and built their confidence but they have also grown as individuals. “I have even been able to resolve a few personal problems thanks to the skills I picked up at our Grade 10 camp,” said one student.

Mrs Smuts is extremely proud of PROTEC Pietermaritzburg's matriculants who overcame many challenges, including power outages, economic hardships, and in this group, a global pandemic, to reach the pinnacle of their schooling careers.

“The results speak volumes of the quality of education, and the commitment of our students. We are greatly indebted to our well-qualified and highly experienced tutors who drive our intensive academic programmes within the Saturday- and Vacation Schools, and our donors, such as N3 Toll Concession (N3TC), without whom PROTEC Pietermaritzburg Academy could not function.”





Over the past 32 years, S.M.I.L.E.'s mission has been to meet the current and envisaged education challenges facing schools across South Africa.

## One Teacher - One Textbook - Many Learners

3 Pietermaritzburg, Wartburg, Estcourt, Ladysmith, Vryheid, Newcastle, Dundee, Harrismith

Since its incorporation, S.M.I.L.E. has developed and implemented a variety of programmes to build learners' proficiency in English First Additional Language as well as Home Language and instil confidence in educators to meet the rigorous demands of English language teaching.

S.M.I.L.E.'s commitment to stay at the cutting edge of English teaching and learning is ongoing and 2023 was no exception as S.M.I.L.E. welcomed 39 new primary schools and 12 new high schools into the English Home Language Programme.

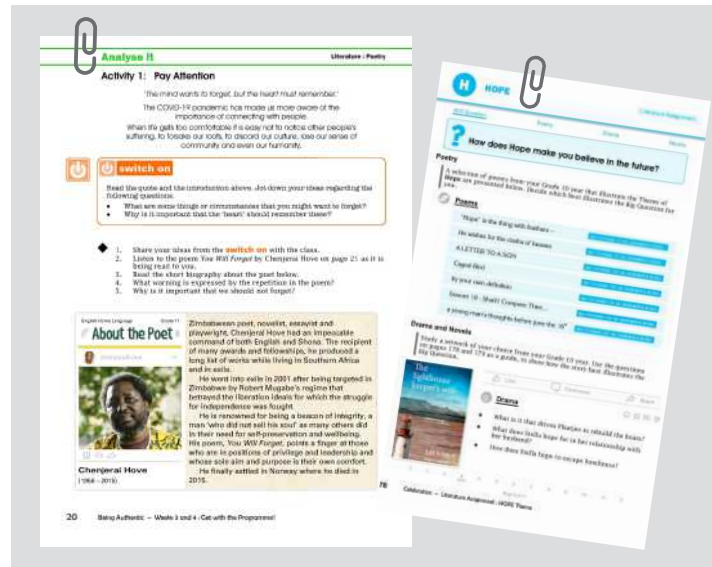
With the funding support received, S.M.I.L.E.'s updated Grade 10 and Grade 11 English Home Language Programme has been implemented in a number of schools in KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State.

The number of high schools that requested to join the programme increased from 12 in 2022 to 13 in 2023. The programme has been a resounding success in all participating schools located along the N3 Toll Route in Pietermaritzburg, Wartburg, Estcourt, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Vryheid, Glencoe, Dundee, and Harrismith.

S.M.I.L.E.'s One Teacher One Textbook Many Learners – English Home Language Programme was established in 2016 to meet critical needs in high schools where English is being taught as a Home Language subject.

Most learners studying English as a Home Language subject are not English Home Language speakers and struggle to meet the education standards required. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that many of the teachers themselves are not English Home Language speakers.

N3TC has participated in S.M.I.L.E.'s English Home Language Programme since 2018 contributing to the distribution of more than 1800 Grade 7 learner books and over 12 000 Grade 8 – 12 learner books to beneficiaries in 23 primary- and 21 high schools.



S.M.I.L.E. is committed to providing the best possible materials to learners and teachers to enhance the studying of English Home Language as a subject in schools across South Africa. This commitment requires the material to be revised and updated on an ongoing basis to keep it current.

During 2023, the N3TC English Home Language Piloting Programme focussed on two areas:

- Extending the distribution of S.M.I.L.E.'s Updated Grade 10 English Home Language Learners Books and Teacher Guides into more high schools along the N3 Toll Route, and
- Introducing S.M.I.L.E.'s new Updated Grade 11 English Home Language Learners Books and Teacher Guides into the participating high schools along the N3 Toll Route.

The response of the teachers to the updated publications was overwhelmingly positive, with the inclusion of all the prescribed poems and the “ominous” Literature Assignment especially appreciated.

**N3TC contributed to the distribution of more than 13 800 books to 44 schools.**

Assessment feedback from the Grades 10 and 11 teachers has been most complimentary and is evidence that S.M.I.L.E. provided current, exciting materials and much needed guidance for the English Home Language classrooms.

“We are thrilled with the response from teachers and learners. The expansion and growth of the N3TC English Home Language Programme across Grades 7 to 12 has been an all-round motivating experience. S.M.I.L.E.'s work would not be possible without the generous support of its donors.

On behalf of the various school communities who benefit from N3TC funding, I extend my sincere gratitude. Thank you for your belief in all that we do address the ongoing education challenges in South Africa,” said S.M.I.L.E.'s national director, Daniela Browne.





**The picturesque mist-belt grassland and forest biodiversity areas in southern KwaZulu-Natal provide natural habitats where several of South Africa's most endangered bird species feed and breed.**

## Protecting South Africa's endangered bird species

4

Richmond, Ixopo,  
Donnybrook,  
Harding, Howick



These include the endangered Cape Parrot and Secretarybird, the endemic and vulnerable Southern Bald Ibis, and the critically endangered White-Winged Flufftail and Blue Swallow. These sites also support strategic water source areas (SWSA), which provide 50% of the regions water from 8% of the land, making them incredibly important to conserve in a water scarce country such as South Africa.

The mistbelt grasslands and forests are currently under-represented in the protected area network and face fragmentation and substantial habitat loss and deterioration due to timber and dairy farming as well as other human activities in the area.

As part of its Landscape Conservation Programme, BirdLife South Africa runs various projects to protect these habitats and ecosystems, and the threatened species within them. All of which is being made possible, in part, through funding received from N3TC.

#### **Target species and ecosystems**

The mistbelt grasslands support the last remaining 35 breeding pairs of Blue Swallow in South Africa, and are home to the regionally endangered Cape Parrot. Although private landowners and communities act as custodians of the grasslands and consciously support the Blue Swallows, the sites are not currently protected from change, or specifically

Photo by Willem Kruger



### **BirdLife South Africa runs various projects to protect habitats and ecosystems.**

managed for the protections of these birds. Thus, BirdLife South Africa runs projects to monitor the species and manages important areas of mistbelt forests in southern KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **Biodiversity stewardship**

Biodiversity stewardship is a unique, internationally recognised framework to expand protected areas and conserve landscapes. It is a legislated, policy-led programme that allows the expansion of South Africa's protected and conserved areas network on privately-owned land. Progress on this project includes implementing the KwaZulu-Natal Blue Swallow monitoring plan and conducting annual monitoring of Blue Swallows to assess population trends and identify new breeding sites. This monitoring effort has significantly benefitted from



the employment – thanks to N3TC funding – of two full-time monitors Dr Ntiki Senoge and Dr Mfundo Maseko. They play a critical role in monitoring Blue breeding. BirdLife South Africa plans to upskill more students through the Blue Swallow monitoring effort.

N3TC has been a long-term sponsor of the KZN Mistbelt Conservation Project and BirdLife South Africa in collaboration with Conservation Outcomes and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. “We are extremely grateful for their support of our eandeavours to protect the Mistbelt Grasslands and Blue Swallows,” says Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, head of Conservation, BirdLife South Africa.







Research from Harvard Medical School shows that the architecture of a human brain is built during early childhood. Good nutrition, early stimulation, and loving relationships start children on a road to success in every aspect of their lives.

Bringing hope and growth to Sweetwaters

5

Sweetwaters



iThemba Projects partners with the people of Sweetwaters, a rural community located on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal, to help them bring about lasting change in their community. Together, they implement projects focussed on sustainable nutrition, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and youth mentorship.

**Strong local networks  
are excellent conduits  
for the transference  
of skills and knowledge.**



“ECD is the key foundation for achieving success in primary-, high school, and tertiary education years,” stresses Stu Walker, director of iThemba Projects.

In its efforts to create a sustainable ECD system, iThemba joined forces with N3 Toll Concession, as well as other local and international donors to deliver an extensive list of programmes.

Strong local networks are excellent conduits for the transference of skills and knowledge. Connected communities lay the foundation for growth and development.

Their shared lives, hopes and dreams are the fertile soil from which new opportunities sprout.

iThemba's success stories include the following:

**The Asidlale “Let's Play” Programme**

Under the banner of the Asidlale programme, skilled ECD practitioners from iThemba partner with existing daycare centres in Sweetwaters to provide site-based training, curriculum support, mentorship, and access to educational resources.

Educators are mentored weekly. iThemba's ECD mentors visit them in their classrooms for one-on-one discussions and curriculum planning, to assist with problem solving, and to hone their teaching skills.

Annual assessments of children from crèches participating in the Asidlale programme, who are preparing to start Grade R, indicate that these learners are better prepared for school than their peers, who have not been exposed to similar opportunities.

**Proper nutrition is a cornerstone of learning**

iThemba's nutrition mentors work with ECD sites to help them establish food gardens to provide nutritional meals to children and curb impaired growth.



During 2023, iThemba's nutrition team mentored 31 schools (including 19 early childhood development centres), and 418 homes in permaculture food gardening. This group of volunteers and their community influencers are changing the nutrition landscape of Sweetwaters as they transfer their passion and skills to others. Thanks to them, preschool children enjoy fresh garden vegetables daily – spinach, peppers, potatoes, onions, and even fruits like granadillas or peaches are on the menu.

### Home-based support

Through iThemba's Early Childhood Home-based Support (ECHS) programme, parents and/or caregivers are mentored at their homes to teach them how to better stimulate and care for their children. Participants join parent-child play groups where they interact with their children, learn about child development, and get support from other parents. They are taught how to craft homemade educational resources, and they also borrow toys from the toy-lending library. Community mentors make weekly visits to monitor their progress.

“We greatly appreciate N3TC as a long-term partner who understands the importance of investing in the very early years of a child’s life, and who supports our ECD programme,” ends Mr Walker.

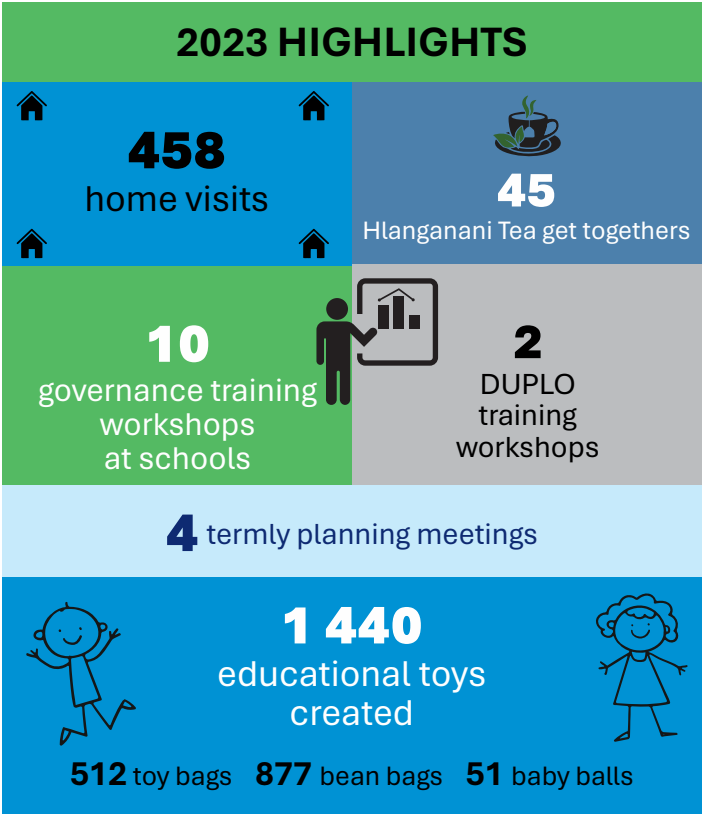


*“This place is different now because I am different”*

### A teacher's story of hope

Nokuthula started Spring Valley Crèche three years ago. Four months later, she joined iThemba Projects. Since then she has regularly attended the Hlanganani Teas and planning meetings, and particularly enjoyed last year’s DUPLO training workshop.

“This house (my school) was empty before iThemba came. It lacked colour and life, and we were clueless. It was tough for the children. We spoke of things they could not understand. I could see that they were tired. iThemba helped us to make learning fun. They brought books and toys and showed us how to teach. Now the children understand us. We play a lot more, and they blossom,” beams Nokuthula.



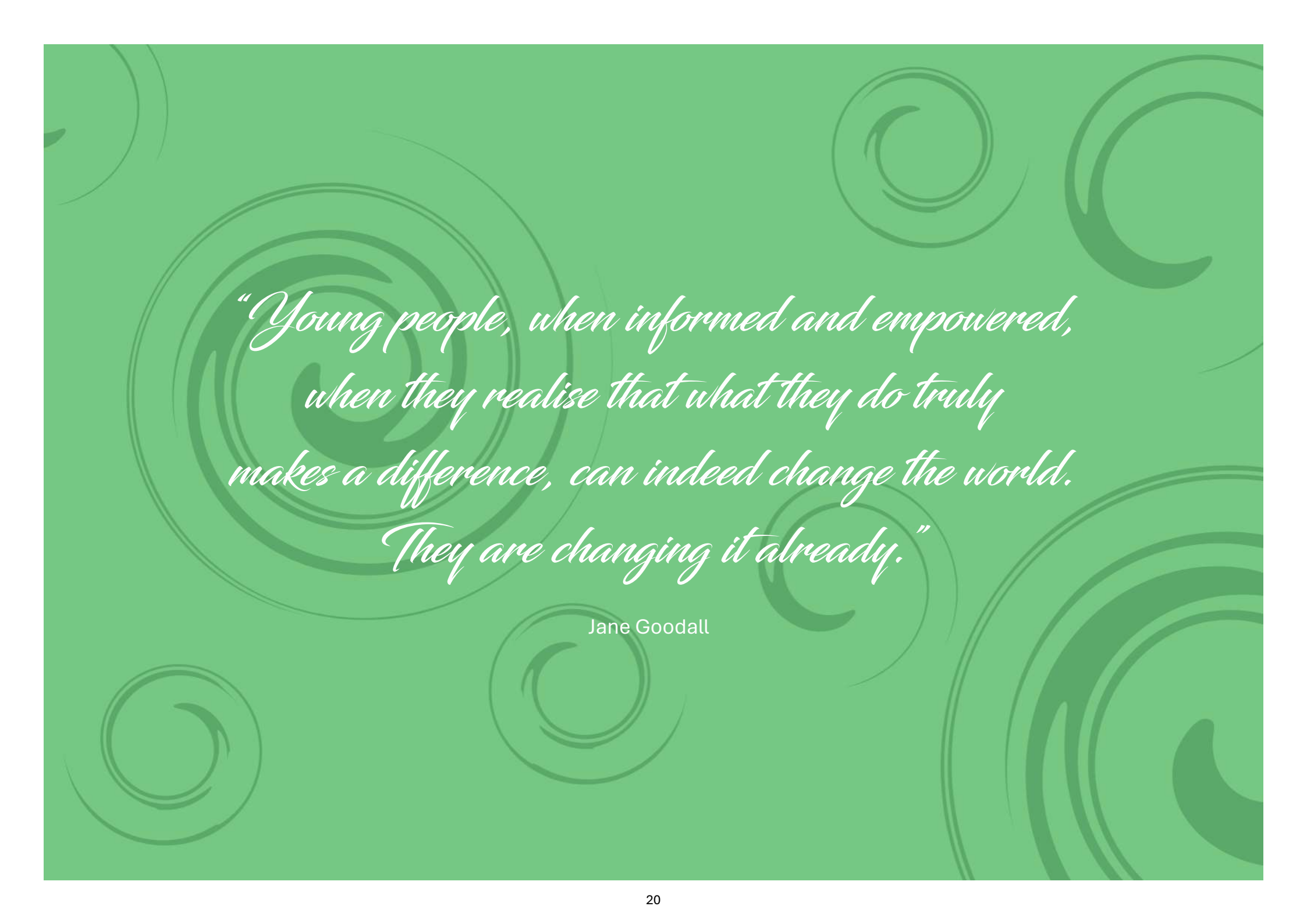
*One of the volunteers, Gretta, an ECD matriarch from Sbokusezwe Crèche in Zayeka, understands that good nutrition is essential to holistically serve children.*

*“Children need to eat well if they want to learn. And we have the soil to grow food!”*

*“This tree was a gift from a parent years ago,” says Gretta. “Plant it! See what happens!” the parent told her.*

*“Now our children eat bananas from this tree year after year.”*





*“Young people, when informed and empowered,  
when they realise that what they do truly  
makes a difference, can indeed change the world.  
They are changing it already.”*

Jane Goodall





**South Africa's shortage of skilled Maths and Science teachers is widely acknowledged in the education sector, with many township and rural schools bearing the brunt of the shortfall.**

Addressing the Maths and Science skills shortage in KZN



In an effort to alleviate this problem in the Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal, Hilton College, a top-tier private school, offers the Vula Mathematics Academy (VuMA) as well as Vula Maths and Science projects. The college donates the time and energy of its highly qualified and experienced educators, and use of its facilities, to upgrade the skills of rural Maths and Science educators and the capabilities of their learners.

Hilton's annual VuMA residency is essentially an immersive 11-week technology-based educator training initiative. Funds from N3TC were used to procure laptop computers for the educators, allowing them to fully participate in all the teaching and learning activities. The laptops also allowed them to electronically accumulate a vast array of teaching resources during their time at VuMA, which they now use in their own teaching back at their schools.

Since 2014, a total of 231 educators have attended VuMA. Of these, about 200 are still engaged in teaching approximately 30 000 learners throughout KwaZulu-Natal. Many of the VuMA recipients have been promoted to senior educator positions within their schools. The results obtained by them continue to significantly surpass the provincial and national averages.

In 2023, VuMA hosted two intakes of educators in the first and second terms of the year. Each intake spent 11 full weeks in



### “An immersive 11-week technology-based educator training initiative.”

residence in the Vula Lodges, attending the mathematical enrichment programme every school day for the full term.

Also falling under this project is the Vula Maths Club – an enrichment initiative for 10 carefully selected Grade 11 learners from schools in the Edendale valley. This group meets regularly on Saturday mornings.

With the support of N3TC and other funders, Hilton College was able to assist educators and learners in cluster groups in and around Wartburg, Edendale, Sweetwaters, Impendle, Wembezi, Loskop, Bergville, and Camperdown.

Vula programme coordinators made regular visits to these schools to assist with teaching and practicals while some learners also attended Saturday morning classes at the Hilton College laboratories.

For the past two years, the project has been active in supporting the 11 Technical Science subject advisors from all educational districts in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as 46 teachers of the subject.

In addition, an annual Science and Maths teaching and revision week for the Grade 12 class of PROTEC Pietermaritzburg was hosted during the winter school holidays. This included hands-on laboratory experiments required by the national syllabus but often disregarded by rural schools as they don't have the necessary laboratory equipment.

“What I enjoyed the most was the Science practicals. All along I have been seeing these in a book and I had to imagine the chemical equation rather than seeing it for real,” said one participant, while another commented, “I am really grateful for this chance to study and learn new information. I would like to thank our educators for giving up their holidays to be here with us.”



# Creating supportive and rich learning experiences to help children grow

Since 2010, Singakwenza Early Childhood Education has been working with some of our most vulnerable children. First in the rural towns of Howick and Mpophomeni, and now also in KwaQanda, Weenen, and Taylor's Halt in KwaZulu-Natal.



Hilton, Howick,  
Mpophomeni, KwaQanda,  
Weenen, Taylor's Halt



“Children often become enormous burdens in communities where families are struggling economically and socially,” says Julie Hay, founder and executive director of Singakwenza. “Getting to work with these little ones, and helping them to thrive, is one of the most rewarding privileges.”

**Small steps, giant leaps**

“In one of our toddler groups, a little boy aged three was not reaching standard development milestones, and could not progress from his class at crèche. He was still in nappies and could only speak in grunts. Thanks to the occupational therapy training the group's practitioner previously received through Singakwenza, she realised that this little boy may benefit from professional intervention.

He was subsequently assessed by Singakwenza's occupational therapist to determine where the problem areas lie, and what type of additional support and therapy would be required to improve his capacity to play, learn, and grow.

Parental support for children who present with difficulties is often lacking. Yet, their support is crucial to successfully helping a child in need. “Educating parents on the importance of early intervention is critical,” explains Ms Hay.

Thankfully, the little boy's parents understood his needs and committed to the proposed treatment plan. Without fail, they took him to appointments with a paediatrician and speech therapist at the local public hospital. Now, at five years old, the little boy is fully capable of expressing himself verbally, and has successfully progressed to Grade R with the rest of his age group.

**Play and learn**

Children develop gross- and fine motor skills, and acquire numeracy- and literacy capabilities through purposeful play activities. Educational toys help to stimulate brain development and learning. However, the cost of these often prohibit rural childhood centres from accessing these vital aids.

This is where Singakwenza's 'Meet 'n Make' volunteers stepped in. Ms Hay explains: “Our early childhood development centres need approximately 300 to 400 learning items per lesson plan.



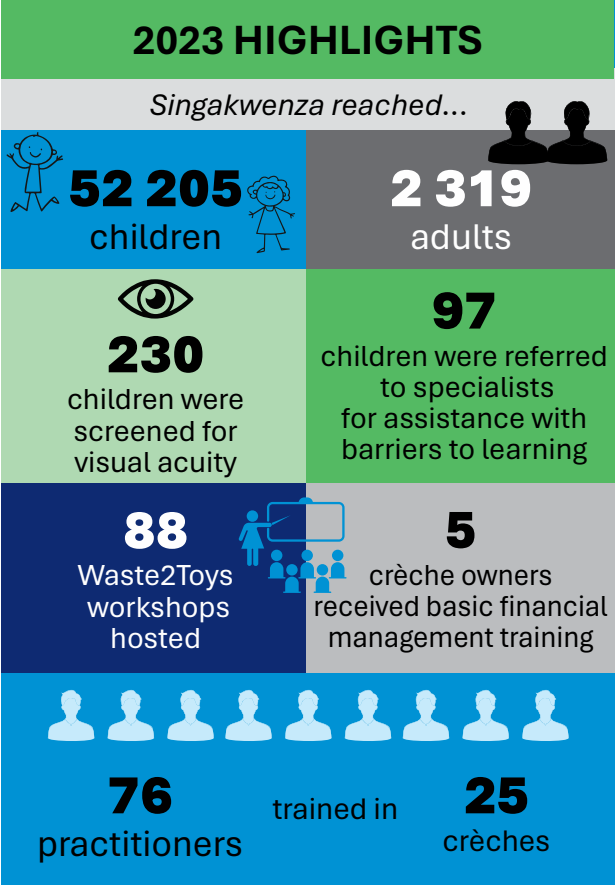
These learning materials are made from recycled waste, but to produce these items is time-consuming.”

Nine years ago, a group of volunteers stepped in to offer their helping hands to craft educational toys from bread bags, bottle caps, plastic bottles, egg containers, and many more. Over a cup of tea, regular volunteers – mostly retired women – meet weekly at different sites in and around Howick to lighten the toy production load.

“Mary South, aged 93, is one such volunteer. She offered her creative services right from the start, and still joins the group weekly to tie bread bag loops. The contribution her handiwork has made over the years is immeasurable,” says Ms Hay.

A group of 30 women from the Senzokuhle Senior Citizens' Club in Edendale also joined Singakwenza's volunteers in 2023. According to them, they had “lots of fun making these toys”, and knowing they served a much greater cause made it all the more worthwhile. “We feel blessed to be contributing to the development of our future leaders.”

The Singakwenza team is grateful to all our partners for helping us constantly strive to be the best we can be, and to N3TC who has walked this path with us since 2012. “We are delighted to see the fruits of our labour, and looking forward to touching many more lives. It's not a job, it's a passion,” says Julie Hay.







## It's Friday in Mpophomeni...

Hundreds of children are walking their dogs – all heading in the same direction – towards a catchy tune blaring over loudspeakers. The Funda Nenja song is calling, and the anticipation is palpable.



Mpophomeni



Fridays are Funda Nenja Days – meaning afternoons filled with wagging tails, excited barks, and children's laughter as young dog owners are guided on how to train their four-legged friends to sit, lie down, and walk with them. It's a sight to behold!

Funda Nenja translates to 'learning with a dog' in isiZulu, and the mission of this non-profit organisation is inspiring.

It is guided by the One Welfare principle which acknowledges the interconnectedness of animals, humans, and the environment, and aims to improve the quality of life of township children and their dogs by incorporating animal welfare with the development of young minds.

Funda Nenja believes one cannot look after dogs without looking after their owners too. And so, while the children learn about animal behaviour, and how to care for and train their dogs, values of kindness, respect, self-discipline, and compassion are also instilled in them. Through positive reinforcement training of their dogs, personal growth and a sense of self-worth start to flourish. Children's attitudes and emotional responses change for the better.

The dog school runs throughout the year during the school term and classes are led by volunteer instructors, some of whom are from the local community, having been upskilled through Funda Nenja's training programme, and all capably filling leadership roles. An animal welfare officer is in attendance to treat the dogs for fleas and ticks, deworm them, and administer rabies vaccinations; and dogs with serious conditions, or who require sterilisation, are referred to the SPCA.

#### **Pop-up shop**

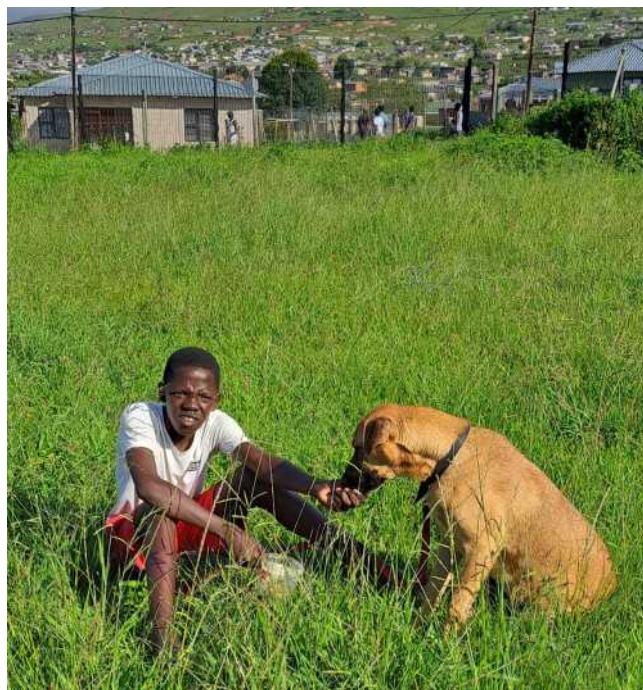
Funda Nenja runs a pop-up shop that sells items to the community for their dogs. With N3TC's help, the shop is stocked with items which children can purchase for their dogs, such as food, kennels, beds/blankets, collars, leashes, toys, brushes, bowls, etc.

Children are encouraged to make use of the shop as it teaches them about being enterprising, to budget, and making good spending decisions, while they also learn that responsible pet ownership entails incurring expenses to take care of them.



#### **Food poverty remains a stark reality**

Funda Nenja's outreach work is having a broader effect on the Mpopomeni community. Funding received from N3TC enables them to employ a very valuable social worker and an animal welfare education officer. The work that they do in the community is highly appreciated.



**As they care for their dogs,  
values of kindness, respect,  
self-discipline and compassion  
are also instilled.**

“Our Friday dog school has become a portal into the community. The registration process to join the programme allows Funda Nenja opportunities to conduct home visits. Our social worker accompanies the team on these visits to assess home circumstances and the needs of children, their families, and pets. In this way, we can provide much-needed resources,” explains project administrator, Lisa Button.

Funda Nenja's social welfare programme assists many struggling families with clothing, food parcels, school shoes, and other basic needs. “Our social worker also offers counselling services to families; a service no one else in the community provides,” says Ms Button.

Last year, the social worker hosted a workshop for parents in the community, and subsequently, a group of ladies established a feeding scheme to provide weekly meals to children in desperate need.

Funda Nenja oversees the feeding scheme. “Thanks to donations received, we have been able to supply them with ingredients and cooking utensils; and we have introduced a Food Parcel Registration system, where families can apply for food assistance. Each family's needs are assessed, and a record of support kept to ensure that the most vulnerable families get the support they need,” explains Ms Button.



**Underberg's famous uMzimkhulu River and its thunderous rapids are home to the popular annual N3TC Drak Challenge canoe race.**



# Paddling for prosperity



Underberg



In 1994, the first edition of what has now become the N3TC Drak Challenge canoe marathon was held, attracting many enthusiastic paddlers keen to try this race. The weather gods dished up a week of storms that left the river in spate with around three-quarters of the paddlers in the debut edition never making it to the finish line - but a legend was born...

January became Drak season, with keen canoeists taking to the uMzimkhulu to enjoy challenging rapids, clean mountain air, spectacular views, and the all-too-rare luxury of clean water to paddle on and drink from. The 30th N3TC Drak Challenge was held this year to ever-growing popularity.

### **Everyone gets on board**

The N3TC Drak Challenge is all about community. Organised by Underberg locals, they run a slick and highly efficient event underpinned by warm hospitality.

Annually, this event delivers the single, biggest economic injection to the region. All visitor accommodation sites, including camping grounds, are fully occupied, while local businesses, supermarkets and fuel stations do brisk business, and restaurants are packed to the rafters.

All proceeds from the event are channelled back into the local community.

A series of beneficiaries – all from Underberg – and all who contribute significantly to the general well-being of the district,



## **The N3TC Drak Challenge is all about community.**

rely primarily on public funding to exist. Pevensey Place, Underberg Primary School, the Family Literary Project, and Underberg Emergency Medical Services benefit directly from this event.

Community organisations also earn money by selling food and drinks, running vehicle shuttles, and providing staff to man key race points.

The N3TC Drak Challenge creates employment opportunities, as an event of this magnitude requires months of preparation



and a large contingent of temporary, but paid, staff to help get the job done. The large volunteer base who assist to organise and stage this event is the foundation of Underberg society, while the race forms the cornerstone of their connection.

On an environmental level, the N3TC Drak Challenge contributes toward maintaining the health of the uMzimkhulu River which includes the ongoing removal of alien vegetation such as Black Wattle.

When this iconic weekend comes to an end, and traffic turns back to Howick and the N3 Toll Route, the mood remains upbeat for having been part of such a popular sporting event.

“Without N3 Toll Concession as a partner, this race would simply not be possible. The cost of staging events such as these are prohibitive, and cannot be covered while at the same time producing funding for the respective charitable beneficiaries, or the race,” explains race organiser, Stu Berry.



# Preparing for Life

Following a highly participative approach, the Reach Out to Read team works under the auspices of the Family Literacy Project in remote rural villages situated in the Southern Drakensberg in Kwa-Zulu-Natal to advance literacy skills in these remote areas.

new pics



Underberg



Families are the first and most important teachers of young children, but in deep rural areas, adult caregivers often lack the skills and opportunities to fulfil their role adequately. They tend to share information orally, and access to the written word is limited.

Children's literacy skills are developed early through exposure to language, printed materials, meaningful interactions, play, music and sounds. Literacy skills are not limited to reading and writing, they encompass the ability to comprehend and effectively communicate, and thus form the basis of cognitive, emotional, and social development.

It was against this backdrop that Reach Out to Read stepped in to strengthen adult caregivers' knowledge and confidence to help develop their children's literacy in early childhood. A wonderful spinoff of the programme was that as soon as the adults felt confident enough to support their children's needs, they requested adult literacy sessions to improve their own reading and writing skills.

People need books, preferably in their mother tongue, to learn to read. Thus, Reach Out to Read embarked on a mission to make more books available to more villagers. Boxes of books are now being shared at literacy sessions, and both children and adults borrow books from these box libraries, or from brick-and-mortar libraries which have since been established at some schools.

According to Cheryl Taylor, project director of Reach Out to Read, the next phase would be to develop more community libraries. This will allow project champions to reach entire communities from one central venue. "It would revolutionise literacy intervention for rural communities."



## People need books, preferably in their mother tongue, to learn to read.

"Thanks to our partnership with N3TC, we continue to make inroads in the literacy and training space in deep rural homes, schools, libraries, crèches, and community centres. Community members are being upskilled and offered new opportunities. Our joint project enables knowledge transfer in early childhood development, and in-service training for teachers and community caregivers. Combined with additional libraries, tremendous value is being added to the interactions children are receiving in literacy. Our programme further provided for expansion into more education centres, and the employment of Reading Champions – previously unemployed youth – who are now our project partners in schools," explains Ms Taylor.

Reach Out to Read's year-end results for 2023 intervention groups were positive. Overall, excellent progress was made in literacy, and specifically reading comprehension levels in all Grades. Grade R and Grade 1 learners have established solid foundations of the pre-reading skills required for successful reading fluency in their next grades. Their progress will continue to be monitored with standardised and scholastic testing, and intervention strategies will be implemented as may be required.

"To read is to open doors to the world," says Thania Dhoogra, operations manager of N3TC, "and to be in a position to help unlock young potential is an honour."







Since 1972, Pevensey Place in KwaZulu-Natal's Underberg, has provided a safe, secure and social place for adults with Cerebral Palsy or mental disabilities.

Ensuring quality care and social interaction



Underberg



Set on a beautiful 84-hectare farm, Pevensey Place is run on a system which requires every resident to play as much of a part as they are able to, in the running of the home. For some, this means interacting with visitors at the Pevensey farm store, for others tending to livestock or making handcrafts for sale at the store. Because everybody is responsible for Pevensey's day-to-day functioning, a sense of ownership and social cohesion is created.

Residents participate in numerous stimulating social and sporting events in the close-knit Underberg community to which they belong. These include the N3TC Drak Challenge, community cycle rides, social events and parties to celebrate anniversaries, birthdays, and many more.

While Pevensey has several income streams, they still rely on assistance from the residents' parents or caregivers. However, in instances where assistance is unavailable, funding from N3TC subsidises 'orphan' residents to ensure that they also enjoy the same level of care and social activities as everyone else.

With the needs of its 'orphans' taken care of through the N3TC Touching Lives Programme, Pevensey can afford to run a range of other income-generating projects, including the annual Pevensey Fete, which raises funds through the sale of meat, eggs, embroidered items and pot plants. All of these items are made or collected by the residents. The fete is a popular social event for the

entire Underberg community and raises about R100 000 a year for Pevensey. The local community also benefits from the fete as donations that cannot be used by Pevensey are passed on to the local village.

“Our project goals remain the same, to provide a safe and secure environment for adults with disabilities. We are very conscious of creating a more sustainable organisation and are currently looking into the green energy programmes available to see how these can help turn Pevensey Place into a more sustainable organisation over the long term,” says director, Mark Whitson.

## Residents participate in numerous stimulating social and sporting events.







Photo by Amanda van Blerk

The background of the slide is a solid blue color with a pattern of concentric circles in a slightly darker shade of blue. These circles are of varying sizes and are scattered across the entire page, creating a subtle, textured effect.

*“Travel is fatal to prejudice,  
bigotry, and narrow mindedness,  
and many of our people  
need it sorely on these accounts.”*

Mark Twain





**“Whether we're on a Marimba Tour to Cape Town or taking a talented violin trio to Johannesburg to celebrate their skills at the Linder Auditorium, we are so appreciative of the opportunities we can provide. As Music Voyage, we hope to continue working with the children in our communities for years to come,” says director, Katherine McClelland.**

Opening a world of possibilities

12

Howick



Music Voyage is a thriving, grassroots music initiative, which focuses on teaching children living on farms and informal settlements in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands to play musical instruments. During art and culture lessons at schools, Music Voyage's facilitators teach the basics of music, rhythm and choir singing, which provides them with an opportunity to identify talented young people who may benefit from further music development.

Many of these children go on to join Music Voyage's school of music where they are exposed to more comprehensive music lessons and theory and learn to play specific instruments, from piano to violin, saxophone, and many more.

From the school music lessons, marimba groups, brass bands, choirs, and individual artists are born. These young artists go on to delight their audiences in their neighbourhoods, communities, and beyond with moving performances. Learning and playing music and being in a group, creates a feeling of belonging, builds confidence, inspires creativity, and develops entrepreneurial potential.

Three of Music Voyage's young violinists were invited to perform at the Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg in 2023. They excelled. The tour inspired their confidence, and when they returned they took to busking in their neighbourhood, where they even earned some pocket money from their appreciative audiences. Music Voyage's senior and junior marimba bands are often booked for gigs in



**These young artists go on to delight audiences in their communities.**

the area, where their performances inspire other young musicians to also join the school.

"It is good to see our students taking initiative, honing their talents, and inspiring others," says Mrs McClelland. "N3TC's funding makes it possible for us to not turn students away, but to invest in their development and futures."

The healing and emotional benefits of the Music Voyage journey are tangible. Students are exposed to mentoring relationships where they learn trust, respect, discipline, focus, accountability, time management, organisational skills, and teamwork. It is often noted how their newly acquired skill sets, discipline and focus impact their approach to other subjects, fields of interest, and relationships.







Over the years, the funding awarded to Crystal Springs Primary School in Lidgetton, on the outskirts of Howick in the uMgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal, has helped to transform the school from a basic prefabricated structure to an inviting centre for education excellence.

Stepping into the digital age

## Crytal Springs is gradually moving towards digital teaching.

N3TC's impactful investments through the Touching Lives Programme have brought about enormous changes to the school's infrastructure and security systems, and most recently contributed to technology developments at the school.



The company has also funded the appointment of eduhelpers from the local community to support the management team and educators. Eduhelpers play a vital role in the smooth running of a school. They assist the management team with administration work while giving computer classes to learners, and helping educators with the integration of technology into their lesson plans.

With the many IT improvements facilitated by N3TC, Crystal Springs Primary School is gradually moving towards a digital teaching environment with both learners and educators embracing these developments.

During 2023, floor plug points were installed in the computer room and the WiFi range was extended to cover the entire school. Educators can now prepare and present their lessons digitally in their classrooms, while the school subscribes to, and effectively utilises, supplementary e-learning applications and videos.

“The IT project and our eduhelpers have had a tremendous positive impact on the entire school community. Our learners especially enjoy learning the basics of coding and robotics, and the access they now have to a vast new world of information and knowledge,” says principal, Thembi Ngubane.



**Our learners especially  
enjoy learning the basics  
of coding and robotics.**



The annual 1000 Walk Paws Walk is a multi-faceted fundraising project supporting three branches of the SPCA in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands region.

## Animal welfare gets a vital boost

Photo by Jennifer Miller





The 1000 Paws Walk is the largest fundraising event for the Pietermaritzburg, uMngeni, and Mooi River & District branches of the SPCA. The organisers follow a multi-faceted approach to ensure that they are not solely reliant on the number of attendees who arrive to participate in the event on the day. The raffle with quality prizes is a well-supported crowd-pleaser and a school collection drive helps to get young people involved. Schools across the region compete to raise money for the project. The class who is crowned top fundraiser wins a fun 'Paws Party'.

“The support we receive from the community, local businesses, shopping centres, institutions, and veterinary practices is vital to our operations, explains Vicky Pollock, volunteer chairperson of the Mooi River & District SPCA. “We receive no financial support from national, provincial, or local government institutions and every month is a battle to keep our doors open and pay our bills.”

No SPCA branch may collect funds outside of their region which places a difficult burden on

Photo by Mark Preston-Whyte



Photo by Jennifer Miller



Photo by Mark Preston-Whyte



Photo by Jennifer Miller



## “The funds we receive from the 1000 Paws Walk are our saving grace and only real lifeline.”

rural branches where there are (almost) no large organisations or businesses to help sustain them.

“We are the only animal welfare organisation working in our area. The need is overwhelming, yet very few people are able to assist us. Our communities live far from urban areas. Transport is expensive. Unemployment is high. Food insecurity is rife and options are

limited. The funds we receive from the 1000 Paws Walk are our saving grace and only real lifeline,” says Ms Pollock. “It helps us to help all animals in distress, including livestock.”

According to the 1000 Paws Walk steering committee, N3TC's annual contribution towards the project plays a significant role in its success.



Photo by Gary Pollock



“Our partnership which extends over 14 years has given our project credibility. N3TC gives us the confidence to continue under the most challenging circumstances. They make us feel worthy. It is an honour to serve people and their animals in this way, and to be able to assist N3TC when called upon to help animals in transit that may have been impacted by emergencies or crashes on the N3 Toll Route,” ends Ms Pollock.





**Lions River Primary School's partnership with N3TC stretches back several years when the principal of the small primary school - originally set in a plantation on the outskirts of Howick - took it upon herself to move the school to the nearby Engonjeni community where most learners reside.**

From humble beginnings to a proud 4IR-compliant school



In 2017, the 'new' school was established - from scratch - with temporary buildings erected on an open field, thanks to the support of the local community, donors, and friends. Since then, N3TC has supported Lions River Primary School with their infrastructure needs from helping to construct more classrooms to upgrading some auxiliary education facilities such as the newly established computer centre.

Of late, loadshedding has added another layer of challenges to the smooth running of this little rural school. "Apart from the impact it was having on the administration of the school, it was also limiting education opportunities for our learners," explains the school's principal, Slondile Mhlongo. "In our day and age, children who do not learn age-appropriate computer skills, immediately fall behind. Everything is digital. The world operates online."

To help resolve some of these challenges, N3TC assisted Lions River Primary School to install solar power at the school.

"This is making life so much better for all of us. Our teaching is not interrupted, we have Wi-Fi, and our administrative processes run like a well-oiled machine again, and we are feeling more secure as our security systems are fully



**Everything is digital.  
The world operates online.**

operational," explains Mrs Mhlongo. "Best of all, an absolute winner for our learners is that we now have an operational computer centre, fitted with laptops donated by N3TC, where our IT educator can teach our young ones much needed computer skills, and as an extra bonus, the IT centre has also become a hub for our community's IT needs. Our school is now 4IR-compliant. Isn't that something to be really proud of?"



Music Voyage, another one of the N3TC Touching Lives beneficiaries, runs string- and violin music groups at Lions River Primary School. During 2023, three of their violin players were invited to perform in the Suzuki National Concert at the Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg. Upon their send off to the concert, a proud Mrs Mhlongo said:

**"Nawe Lions River Primary School  
awumncinyane."  
"You, Lions River Primary School, are not  
small."**





**The Michaelhouse Community Partnership Trust (MCPT) is dedicated to educational upliftment in rural schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.**

**Building bridges to facilitate effective learning**





They have launched a number of impactful programmes, one of which is the placement of interns as EduHelpers in schools.

The EduHelper Programme aims to enhance teaching skills, bolster teaching capacity, and provide valuable learning experiences for educators moving into the world of work while ensuring more effective learning for partner schools.

During 2023, MCPT appointed 25 Eduhelpers, eight funded by N3TC, benefitting 11 schools.

EduHelpers are proficient and motivated role models who cater to the diverse demands and roles within community schools. Staff shortages, in both classrooms and administrative blocks, are a prevalent challenge in most schools. Consequently, activities such as reading classes, computer sessions, and sports often take a backseat, prioritising the more critical curriculum.

Through formal educational training and workshops, the EduHelper team has been equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to effectively facilitate and manage classrooms. They capably help to lighten the workload of other teachers by taking on classes and running computer labs. Their



## EduHelpers contribute to a fairer and more equitable society.

contributions further extend from revitalising school libraries to ensuring children have access to reading materials and incorporating library sessions into the school timetables to address gaps.

The recruitment strategy for EduHelpers was designed to align each individual with a school within their community. This approach has yielded numerous benefits. Parents now maintain continuous contact with schools through the Eduhelpers and their proximity allows them to gain a deeper understanding of the children's backgrounds, enabling them to identify possible issues. This helps to provide teachers with valuable context.

Moreover, their localised placement has proven advantageous in mobilising parents for school involvement. They utilise community communication platforms to disseminate notices, emphasising the importance of attending meetings and participating in school activities, effectively strengthening connections between schools and their communities.

“We have made a significant impact in empowering our youth through education. Working with an organisation that understands the importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty, we have been able to improve academic outcomes, and instill confidence and a sense of purpose in the younger generation,” says Sne Zondi, an MCPT EduHelper.

Her colleague, Goodness Ntuli concurs: “Closing educational gaps has been the single most important role that we as EduHelpers have. Inequalities in access to quality education have long been a challenge, particularly in disadvantaged areas. We work tirelessly to bridge these gaps by offering supplementary educational support, and afterschool programmes. Better-educated individuals are more likely to secure stable employment and become active, participative and informed citizens. By narrowing educational disparities, EduHelpers contribute to a fairer and more equitable society.”







**Curry's Post Primary School is situated high up in the hills of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, about 25km from Howick. The school caters for children from low-income families, and is a successful and shining example of what rural education in South Africa should be.**



Rural primary school filled with promise, imagination, and big hearts





Curry's Post has caring and enthusiastic educators, and learners whose imagination and energetic spirits know no bounds. The school is supported by the Curry's Post Educational Trust (CPET), formed in 1992 by residents from the area, who continue to raise money and administer funds on behalf of the school.

### Opening doors to technology

The CPET works tirelessly to develop and nurture educational partnerships that add to the school's learning environment. A case in point was the addition of an information technology facility – the IT Room – funded by N3TC. The IT Room has opened the world of technology to both learners and the broader community.

This led to another opportunity when Australian exchange students, who visited St Anne's Diocesan College in Hilton, chose Curry's Post Primary School for their outreach work. They were able to work with learners in the IT Room and share experiences, ideas and stories from Australia.

A local Michaelhouse student, who applied for the President's Award, also offered his time and expertise to the school. He uploaded the school's syllabus, as well as supplementary materials, onto the school's computer main frame.

“It has long been a desire of ours to enable our learners to take control of their learning, and now this is possible, thanks to the systems in the IT Room. Educators who are teaching mixed Grade classes utilise the IT Room for backup support and as an educational aid,” explains Amanda McCarthy, chairperson of Curry's Post Educational Trust.

Mondli Nomafo, the school's computer teacher concurs. “The fact that our learners are now computer literate opens doors for them, and builds their confidence. Learners are taking an interest in, and control of, their learning journey. They have a newfound enthusiasm to continue in the school system.”

Other highlights included the creation of experiential learning opportunities such as a vegetable garden which learners



**They have a newfound enthusiasm to continue in the school system.**

developed together with a local volunteer. In time, the garden may even generate some income but for now, the children are enjoying the fresh vegetables that are being added to their meals.

Through a partnership with another Touching Lives project, Singakwenza ECD, educators benefited from a 'Learning Through Play' workshop that was hosted at the school. “Often teachers – in their desire to teach as much as they can – forget to include play as a means to learning. Although the workshop was particularly pertinent to the Grade R-year, all staff gained from it. It was an eye-opener to learn how to create educational toys from waste,” said acting principal, Mrs Ngubane.

2023 ended on a high note with the news that all Grade 7 learners were accepted to various high schools in the area. The school celebrated their high achievers by handing out certificates for their outstanding dedication and hard work.

“It is always hard to bid farewell to school leavers, but the remarkable moments, lasting friendships and shared memories will be treasured. It is good to know our learners have bright futures ahead. We remain excited to nurture the curiosity, knowledge, and growth of the next generation,” ended Mrs Ngubane.

### Singakwenza ECD workshop 'Learning Through Play'







Despite the Drakensberg's World Heritage Site status and significant social, economic and environmental value, local communities struggle with poverty, food security and access to potable water.

Using the Drakensberg's rich biodiversity to improve lives



Nottingham Road,  
Mooi River, Harrismith,  
Van Reenen



There are, however, ways in which their social and economic challenges are being meaningfully addressed. With funding from N3TC, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is working with four local communities to use the region's rich biodiversity resources to improve lives.

EWT identified three core challenges impacting people's ability to be self-sustainable and resilient, namely: poorly managed land, food and water insecurity, and a lack of any formal protection (or proclamation) of ecosystems.



To address water insecurity, N3TC funding was used for EWT's "Spring Project" to build water infrastructure to ensure safe water in Mqatsheni and protect an important water spring from high levels of e.coli, a bacterial microbe which renders the water unsafe for use. This is of major concern to the 3,300 people living in this remote area where basic amenities such as water, electricity and healthcare facilities are not easily accessible.

When areas are formally deemed "protected" by the government, communities can thrive. In another N3TC funded project, EWT was instrumental in getting new Protected Environments (PE) declared in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. This contributes to South Africa's protected area network and as a result, 75,000 hectares of



**The EWT believes that  
it is important to  
encourage self-sustaining  
and  
resilient communities.**

protected grassland may now be used to increase landowner income, in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

EWT's "Carbon for Conservation" project aids landowners to develop carbon projects on their properties to offset carbon emissions. Grasslands can generate carbon credits by preserving habitats and avoiding the climate impacts of impeding protected areas.

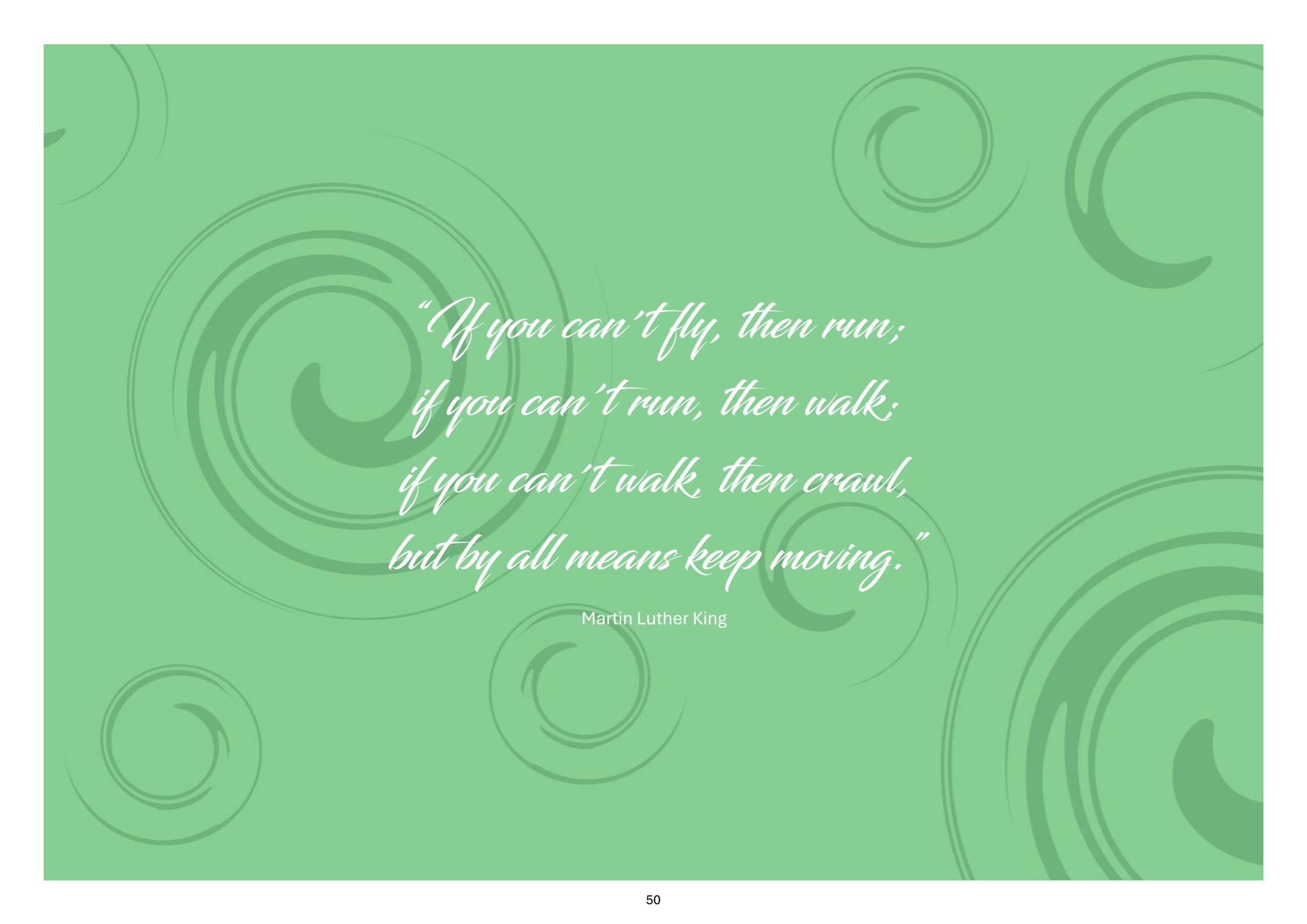
The EWT believes that it is important to encourage self-sustaining and resilient communities who can take the lead in identifying local environmental issues, formulate intervention measures and implement solutions.

"The funding provided by N3TC contributes significantly to our ability to build on and expand the scope of such work in the Drakensberg," explains Dr. Lara Jordan, project coordinator of the Drakensberg Grasslands, Wetlands and Communities Project.





Photo by Susan van Zullekom



*“If you can’t fly, then run;  
if you can’t run, then walk;  
if you can’t walk, then crawl,  
but by all means keep moving.”*

Martin Luther King





In the uMgungundlovu and uThukela districts of KwaZulu-Natal, Grade 10, 11 and 12 learners and their educators are reaping benefits from the Mobile Science Laboratory Project developed by the Midlands Community College (MCC). The project was launched in 2000 and over the years, tens of thousands of Physical Science experiments have been demonstrated to thousands of students.

## Fostering a love of Science

The mobile science laboratory enables Physical Science learners to have immersive experiences with their curriculums. It encourages peer learning as the technicians are young and energetic, relate well to the learners, and help to foster a love for science in schools.

These technicians, as well as the Physical Science educators from various resource-constrained schools, are the driving force behind the ongoing success of the project.

The laboratory's technicians receive ongoing mentorship and guidance under the supervision of Midlands Community College's project coordinator, Jeanne Phillips, with additional support provided by the head technician. All technicians are also actively encouraged and supported to further their studies.

The College's technicians all come from disadvantaged backgrounds. As valuable members of the mobile science laboratory, they are leveraging these experiences and their knowledge to provide valuable guidance and support to their peers and learners, while also crafting their career paths.

Their achievements serve as a remarkable source of inspiration, and their ability to share personal challenges while assisting learners, adds a motivational dimension to the educational experience. Their narratives foster an enriched learning environment as they successfully bridge the gap between theory and real-world application.

### Professional development of physical science educators

Midlands Community College also hosts an annual workshop for educators from their partner schools to give them exposure to new equipment, and valuable hands-on experience with experiments. The educators receive curriculum materials, worksheets and classroom resources to support them in class.

This is an official workshop, accredited by the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which serves as a comprehensive review of the academic programme for the coming year. In 2023, educators were introduced to cutting-edge equipment essential for three specific experiments. The equipment incorporated advanced technology, providing a real-time visual representation of object motion. Educators could experience

**In November 2023, two technicians, Andile Nxumalo and Lungiswa Ngcobo, were invited to attend the 'Mobile Laboratory Workshop and Training' hosted by Osizweni Science Centre at the Sci-Bono Science Centre in Johannesburg.**

**The workshop, spanning three days, was a valuable opportunity for them to be exposed to and network with other professionals in their chosen field of science education. The interdisciplinary nature of the attendees, including chemistry, physics, and mathematics professionals, provided a rich environment for cross-disciplinary learning.**

the intricacies of the equipment and its application in the experiments first-hand, enhancing their proficiency to utilise these innovative tools in their classrooms.

The Mobile Science Laboratory Project is a valuable academic resource. It impacts learners' interest in science and gives them



## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



**64**  
schools registered



GRADE	LEARNERS REACHED
12	6 609
11	5 358
10	5 251



Several additional schools received assistance throughout the year increasing the total number of learners reached.



Areas from Ladysmith and Bergville to Pietermaritzburg, as well as Richmond and Wartburg were covered.



confidence and the ability to grapple with subject content. There is an enormous appreciation for the deep understanding this initiative fosters of scientific theory and practical application.

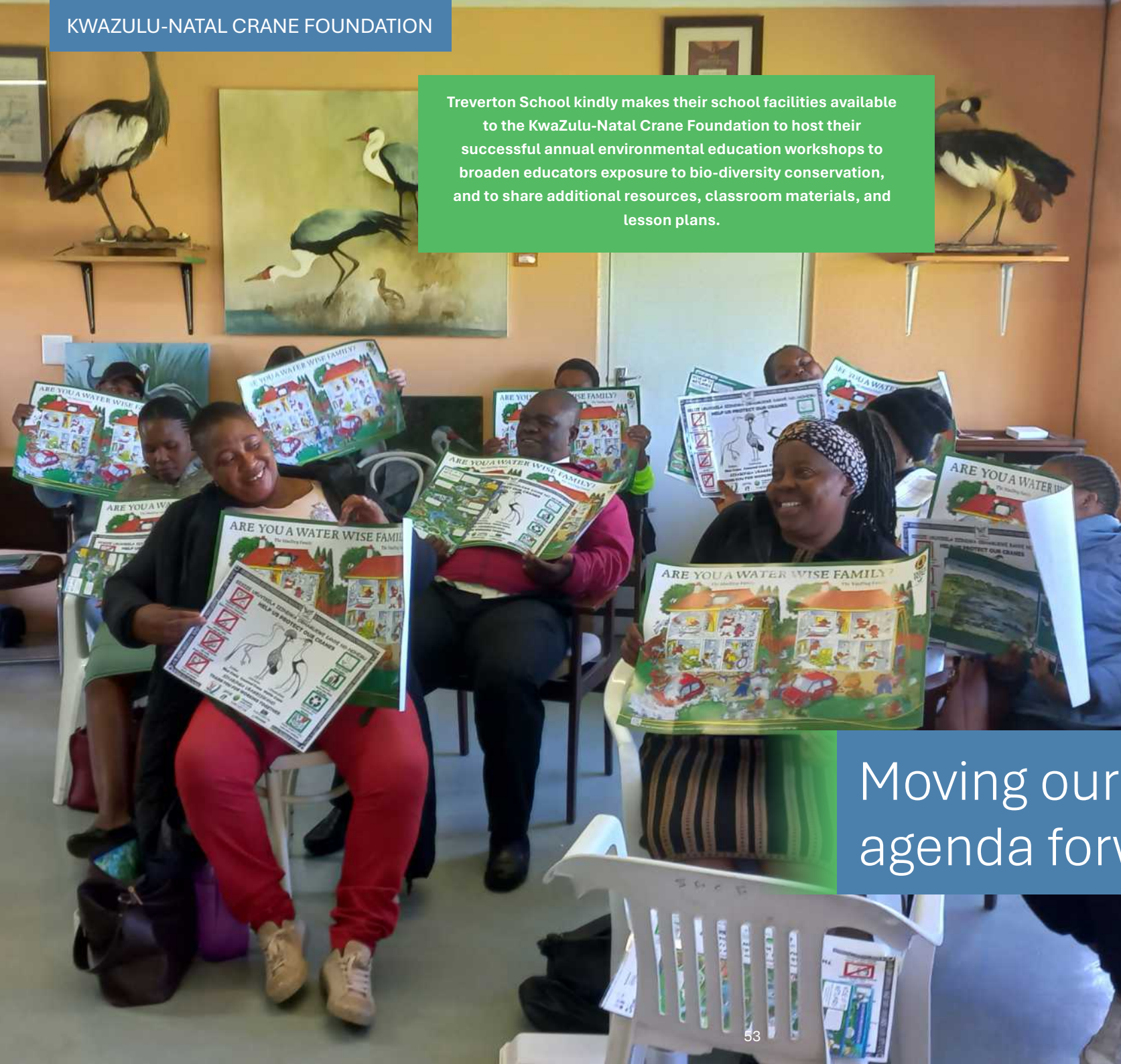
The Midlands Community College would not have been able to complement the curriculum in this way without the support of its private sector partners.

The project is jointly funded by N3 Toll Concession, Joan St. Leger Lindbergh Trust, C & T Cross Fund, and the Norman Wevell Trust. Thanks to their support, the Mobile Science Laboratory continues to be a resounding success in the rural high schools of KwaZulu-Natal's Midlands region.



Treverton School kindly makes their school facilities available to the KwaZulu-Natal Crane Foundation to host their successful annual environmental education workshops to broaden educators exposure to bio-diversity conservation, and to share additional resources, classroom materials, and lesson plans.

According to James Berning, chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Crane Foundation (KZNCF), one of their most rewarding activities is one of their most rewarding activities is the Nature-based Education Programme for school children and their educators.



Moving our conversation agenda forward

Annually, hundreds of learners from local primary schools visit the Usher Centre and Bill Barnes Conservancy to attend lectures and walk the three kilometres education trail.

“Most, if not all the children have never experienced a wilderness area. Their lives have been restricted to towns or townships with the ever-present challenges of pollution, noise, and anti-social behaviour,” writes Mr Berning in the KZN Crane Foundation End of Year Newsletter 2023.

Nature-based Education (NbE) is a critical dimension of education systems, building capacity and training practices to help address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of conservation, climate change, and water-related protection. In this regard, the KZNCF identified a major gap in the region's education system which led to the creation of the KZNCF Education Project – to expose more local educators and learners to environmental education.

Thanks to the funding received from N3TC for this component of the Foundation's work, a Professional Learning Community was established with regular workshops being held during the last two years. The KwaZulu-Natal Crane Foundation is a longstanding beneficiary of the N3TC Touching Lives Programme.

During the first workshops, it became apparent that basic first aid skills were sorely lacking in schools. Educators are required to be qualified in first aid before they may accompany learners on excursions. Subsequently, workshops were developed to fill this gap. In 2023, all educators completed a Level 2 First Aid Course. They now meet the basic first aid requirements for school excursions, and have acquired a vital life skill.

Valuable conservation knowledge and new teaching practices were shared with educators during various other workshops. They also received additional learning materials and resources such as the 'Cranes in the Classroom' booklets, and excursion worksheets which they can use with their learners.

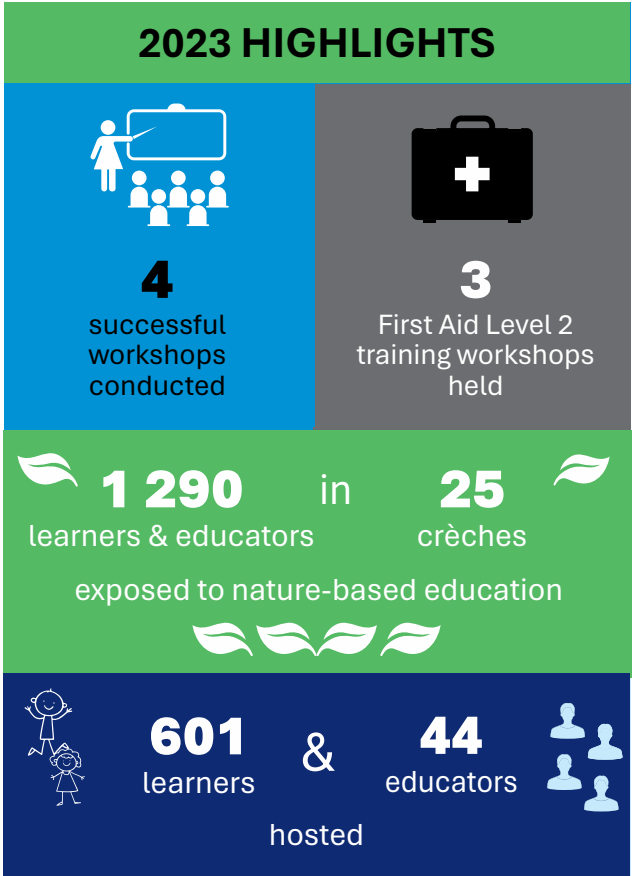
An excursion at the end of 2023 afforded learners the

### Nature-based Education is a critical dimension of education systems.

opportunity to learn about different soil types, particularly in sensitive wetland areas, incorporated with visits to the Bill Barnes Crane Conservancy and Oribi Nature Reserve. Groups were ably guided by the KZNCF's newly appointed educator-facilitator, Malwande Dlalisa.

People who are exposed to nature-based education tend to have a keener interest and deeper understanding of man's place in the planet's living systems. “I believe these learners and their educators are more likely to protect earth's environmental integrity,” says Ms Dlalisa.

KwaZulu-Natal Crane Foundation is guided by one overarching truism: “Give young people an experience of the wild, the wetlands, the clear running water. Let them hear the calls of birds as the only auditory disturbance. See the Oribi and the Reedbuck on the wide and open grasslands. For children at an impressionable age, it is an experience that will be embedded forever. The understanding of the need to conserve and protect the environment will remain with them throughout their lives”.





With the support of N3TC, the Midlands Meander Emerging Artist Project (MMEAP) was founded by the Midlands Meander Association in 2014.

Artists and crafters are the heart of the Midlands Meander



Since its inception, this initiative has supported previously disadvantaged artists/crafters with a high standard of work, helping them to bring their goods to market and earn a living from their crafts.

Participants of the programme enjoy full membership of the Midlands Meander Association (MMA) which opens up numerous marketing opportunities to them. In addition, they also benefit from a business-skills training programme and ongoing mentoring.

The project supports enterprise development and job creation and helps to transform the local economy through its support of rural tourism development initiatives. Visitors to the area have the opportunity to engage with local artists and crafters, and to acquire some of their beautiful handcrafts and artworks.

The unemployment rate in KwaZulu-Natal's rural areas is high. Here, many families rely on the monthly social grant from government just to get by. For the MMEAP beneficiaries, the opportunity to expose their wares to broader markets, and to receive basic business support, is invaluable.



A member of Sensokuhle Primary Co-Operative, one of MMEAP's beneficiaries, explains: "The opportunities we get belonging to MMEAP helps to add to the contributions we can make to our homes. Even when it is little, it gives us the courage to wake up with pride every day and to try again."



Last year, the MMEAP stepped into the digital age with the development of its first online store. The project experienced some teething problems, but they are set to continue building and marketing the store to promote responsible gift buying and sustainable shopping in South Africa.

"Our beneficiaries, however, continue to benefit from their products being marketed and advertised through MMA's various platforms. Many of them are able to supplement their income, or earn sufficiently to enable them to continue doing what they love while providing for their households and dependents," says Marian Evans, manager of the Midlands Meander Association and the Midlands Meander Emerging Artist Project.

Under the MMEAP umbrella, N3TC supports six co-operatives and more than 70 families in the region:

**Themba Creations** supports seamstresses and crocheters, who specialise in Shweshwe products.



**Senzokuhle Primary Co-Operative** is a co-operative group of local women who are crochet high-quality handicrafts.

**Siyaphambili Disabled Weavers** practice a craft handed down from generation to generation for more than a hundred years. Their organic hand woven products are each a one of a kind piece.

**Senzakahle Co-Operative** is a textile and clothing manufacturer. They use high-quality fabrics to produce a quality product range including linen, curtaining, fleece products, and various items of clothing.

**Lidgetton Crafters Guild** is an uplift group who produce a wide range of goods, from crochet rugs to hand crafted pottery and ceramics, thanks to the sewing and knitting machines, as well as a complete range of pottery equipment that were donated to them.

**Babenentse Primary Co-Operative** manufactures clothes, embroidered products, school uniforms and jerseys, tracksuits, and much more.

"The support we receive from N3TC helps to put us on the map. We appreciate your backing. It shows that you believe in us. This is a big encouragement to keep on doing what we love. Thank you," ended one of MMEAP's beneficiaries.





The tenacity and willpower of the women involved in Senzakahle, under challenging circumstances, is an inspirational example to young entrepreneurs.

Women-owned business shows tenacity

22

Bruntville

The Bruntville community is situated adjacent to the N3 Toll Route, near Mooi Toll Plaza, and as such, it is vitally important that N3TC partner with them to maintain good relations and ensure business continuity.

According to Ntombizodwa Khoza, project coordinator of Senzakahle Primary Co-operative, their partnership with N3TC has been a key driving force helping them to “push through a struggling and unstable economy, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.”

N3TC funding has been instrumental in unlocking access to an expanded supply chain, while also contributing to skills development and the empowerment of members of the local community.

Through the co-operative, many young people have been afforded the opportunity to gain experience in the clothing and textile manufacturing industry, and to learn skills such as embroidery, machining, cutting, sewing and fashion design.

These training initiatives are creating a bigger work pool for



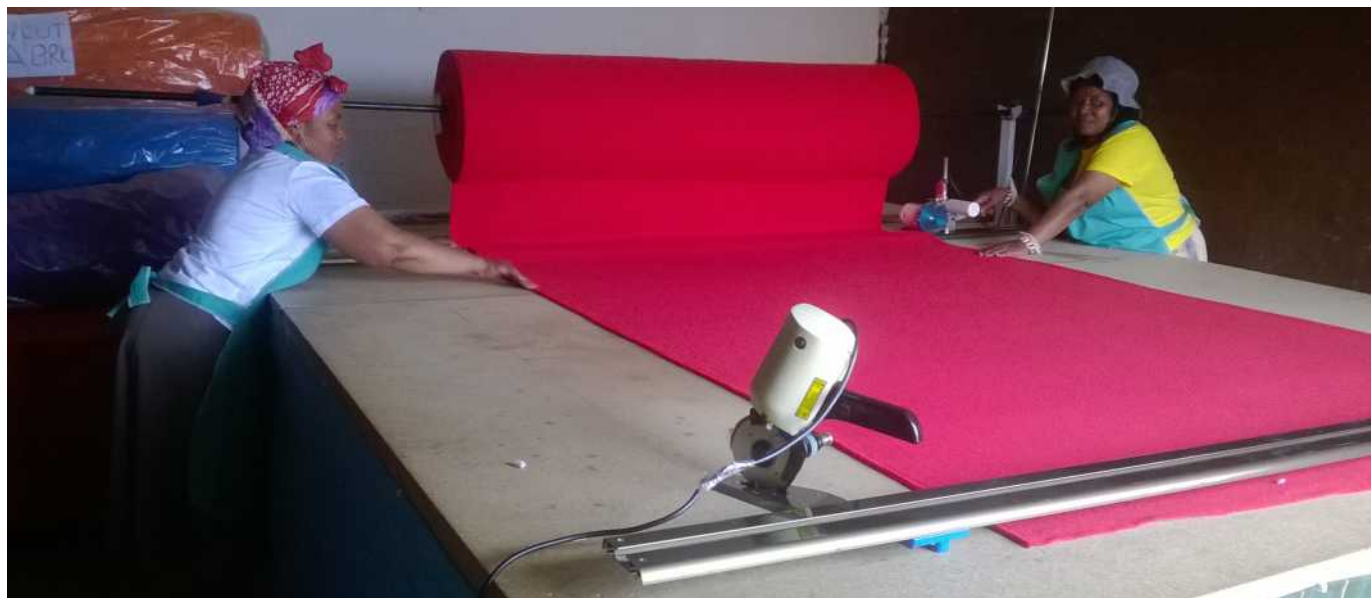
**To learn skills such as embroidery, machining, cutting, sewing, and fashion design, changed lives.**

Senzakahle, which they are using to manufacture and sell quality products at affordable prices.

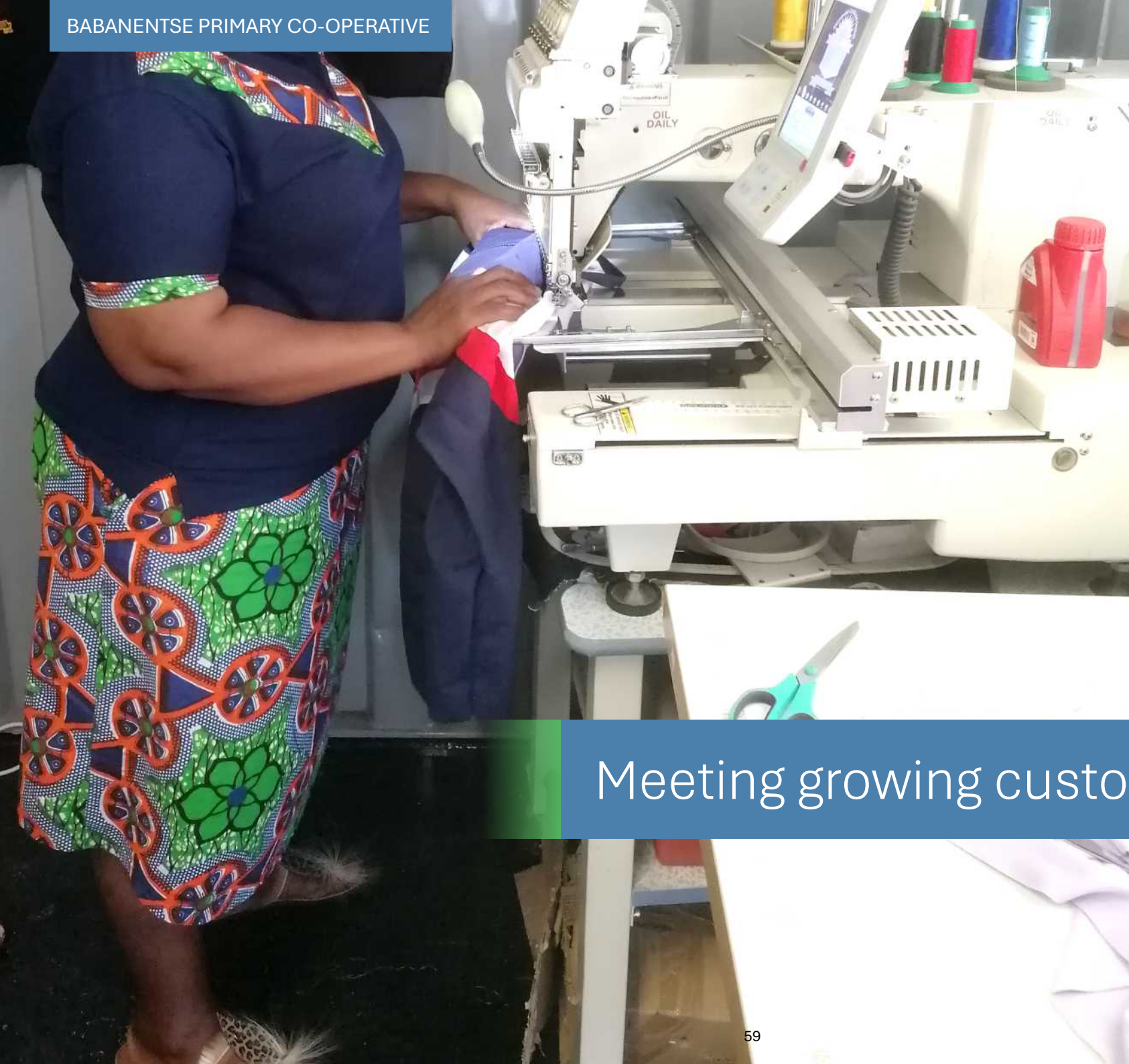
“It is good to know that we can meet our orders for uniforms from

security companies, church groups, and soccer teams on time and to their expectations,” says Mrs Khoza.

Her colleague, Jabu Dube, who found a home at Senzakahle after being retrenched from another textile factory is the only provider in her family. “I want to thank N3TC for trusting us, and helping us to fight unemployment and poverty. Your support gives us dignity.”







From their modest start, the team of accomplished seamstresses at Babanentse has successfully established themselves as a co-operative with outlets in Bruntville and Mooi River.

Meeting growing customer demands

## We added more industrial equipment and machinery.

Through funding received from the N3TC Touching Lives Programme, Babanentse was able to add more industrial equipment and machinery, such as sewing, embroidery, fabric printing and silkscreening machines, to their business.



“These assets are essential to meet our growing customer demands. As our business expands, quality machinery helps us to save time and money, and to increase our production lines,” says Mrs Madlala. “One of the biggest benefits of our expansion, thanks to N3TC's support, is that we can now afford to keep stock on our shelves.”

As the orders for school uniforms, branded clothing and promotional items stream in, Babanentse continues to expand its product range.

“Our steady growth allowed us to gradually make tweaks to our business model and to add things that make us more professional such as the new Babanentse labels that are now sewn into all our clothing items.”

With the N3TC funding received in 2023, Babanentse could also upgrade the branding of their shopfronts and add shop fittings to their two outlets.

While their fingers continue to fly at their sewing machines to supply quality finished products to their customers, the Babanentse team are aware that they are setting an example to their families and community of what can be achieved when a team works together.

In a rural area where the majority of people suffer from extreme poverty, Babanentse shows that one can hope to emerge from debilitating circumstances with consistent hard work. “Keep at it, especially when it looks impossible,” adds Mrs Mdlala.



The Babanentse Primary Co-operative is a shining example of 'doing the best you can, with what you have, where you are'. They are teaching us how to move our communities and country forward.

**“Keep at it,  
especially when it  
looks impossible.”**





For many members of the Bruntville community, near Mooi River in the Mpofana District of KwaZulu-Natal, life is a daily struggle. Unemployment, poor living conditions, and food poverty are constant threats fuelling uncertainty and conflict.



Healthy gardens inspire growth



According to Reel Life NPC's managing director, Dineo Mahasha: "Food poverty is the inability of vulnerable households to regularly access healthy and nutritious food, and it negatively impacts on the socio-economic welfare, health and wellness of communities. Constant hunger goes hand in hand with inequality, instability, and insecurity."

"It was against this backdrop that we approached N3TC to partner Reel Life NPC in a project to alleviate hunger through the development of household food gardens, explains Ms Mahasha.

The project targets food poverty and hunger in the Mooi River area, with the Bruntville community being strategically selected for support through skills training and the creation of an environment conducive to increasing food security. The project's first food garden was rolled out at the Bruntville Primary School. Now in its second year, the school's



## Crops of cabbage, spinach, beans, and carrots have been harvested.

garden serves as a feeding scheme and a training facility for learners and community members who each receive their own Household Garden in a Box kit, which includes pre-packaged seeds.

One hundred Bruntville residents participated in the pilot phase, and vegetable gardens started sprouting at various homes around the village. To date, crops of cabbage, spinach, beans, and carrots have been harvested. A further 400 garden kits were distributed in 2023 to increase the number of sustainable household gardens in the community. Bruntville Primary School continues to be used as a node and training facility for the project which is currently expanding to the Town View area of Mooi River. Learners are encouraged to visit the garden often and make sure there aren't any weeds growing among the vegetables.

Alongside the school and household garden initiatives, a new Income Garden project is currently being developed with the goal

of empowering the community to use their newly acquired skills for financial benefit. By becoming agripreneurs, who plant a continual rotation of quality crops, community members can generate income and improve food security by selling vegetables in Bruntville and surrounding areas.

"Our initiative is not without challenges, and participants have had to battle extreme weather conditions, roaming livestock and wildlife which threaten to damage or destroy plants. But, despite these challenges, it is heartening to notice how lives are slowly being transformed.


The overall aim of the partnership between N3TC and Reel Life is to effect social change in the Bruntville community. Together, we are creating a healthier, more connected, and happier community – and that's a good thing."







Photo by Francois van Jaarsveld

The background of the slide is a solid blue color with a pattern of lighter blue, concentric circular swirls or ripples, resembling water or a galaxy, scattered across the surface.

*"If all difficulties were known  
at the outset of a long journey,  
most of us would never start out at all."*

Dan Rather





The funding contributed to St. David's Diocesan School through the N3TC Touching Lives Programme made it possible for the school to offer high standards of education in a safe and secure environment to seven deserving bursary recipients.

Learners make good progress in supportive environments



Greytown



St. David's catchment area covers Greytown, and the surrounding villages and rural areas. The excellent reputation of the school attracts many scholars from these areas.

Parents with financial constraints who wish to give their children quality educational opportunities in a supportive environment are assisted in doing so through the school's various fundraising initiatives. St. David's offers an alternative to the local English-medium public schools which are at full capacity or rural schools located in out-of-reach areas.

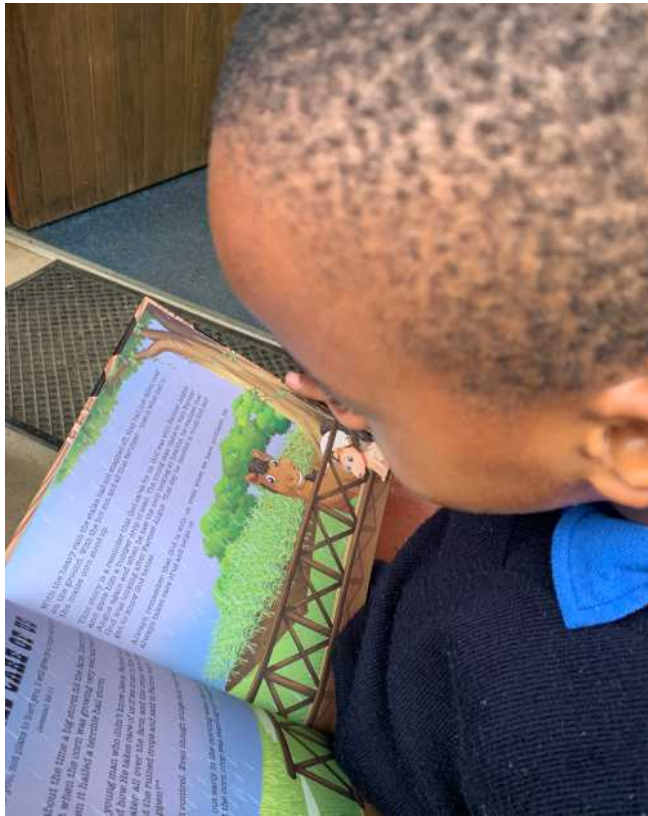


The seven beneficiaries of N3TC bursaries are fully integrated into St. David's culture and the community. They enjoy everything the school has to offer, especially their favourite academic subjects and the end-of-year prize-giving ceremony. They have an excellent school attendance record and good pass rates per grade.

Pupils who experience difficulties receive additional support to make progress. Learners from St. David's Diocesan School are readily accepted into the secondary schools of their choice.

They demonstrate leadership skills, with many chosen to be prefects, receiving top academic honours and excelling in sports.

St. David's alumni stand a good chance of completing their tertiary education and one day succeeding in their chosen careers.





Trevorton College generously supplies the venue, facilities, IT support and catering required for Envirolearn to facilitate their Rhodes University Short Course Certificate training workshops.

Studies have shown that educators who do not understand content simply do not teach that component of the curriculum. This means that learners often go into national exams with sections of their curriculum never having been taught.

Professional development is key to sustainable environmental education

The Educators' Skills Development Project aims to develop the competencies and confidence of science and environmental educators in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands region. Courses offered by Environment Learning and Training (EnviroLearn) vary from life sciences to natural sciences, agriculture, food security, water conservation, geography, and many more. As UNESCO clearly states: “Sustainability starts with teachers.”

Educators who attend higher education institutes obtain their qualifications with very little classroom experience. It is only once they start working that they are exposed to the complexities of classroom management, addressing curriculum requirements, assisting their learners and school management while also establishing their own education systems – i.e., the realities of true teaching set in. This is where a senior educator, rich with experience and guidance, can step in to broaden the teaching experiences of both educators and their learners.

“The EnviroLearn team is passionate about assisting in-service educators with their teaching practices, in order to deepen their experiences,” explains Janet Snow, head of EnviroLearn.

The Fundisa for Change network considers EnviroLearn a leader in in-service training. The Fundisa for Change programme is a national multi-stakeholder and collaborative learning community with the aim of enhancing transformative and sustainable learning through ongoing teacher education.

EnviroLearn (and the courses offered through the funding received from N3TC) received a special mention at the international conference of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa in November last year. Lessons learnt from the courses are now being shared on national platforms.

In-service training courses focus on scientific and environmental content, and include pedagogical assessment practices. Educators who are exposed to these approaches experience a variety of teaching methods which they can apply to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. They have



## EnviroLearn teaching courses arm educators with vital methods to teach science effectively.

been shown to be far more willing and confident to implement the most appropriate methods in their own teaching.

Said an educator who attended the EnviroLearn Teaching Biodiversity course in 2023: “I regularly attend EnviroLearn courses and find them to be very effective in my professional development. All of them provide me with vital methods to teach science effectively but the recent biodiversity course really ignited my interest. I cannot wait to implement this in my classroom in 2024.”

The significance of EnviroLearn's courses and network now extends beyond regional borders to a national level. EnviroLearn, with the support of N3TC, is influencing national curriculum developments and decisions. “Our programme's reputation extends far and wide, and it enjoys the full support of the Department of Basic Education,” ends Mrs Snow.





**Treverton College & Prep is an independent co-education school located in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands near Mooi River. It caters for the education needs of learners from 3 – 18 years of age.**

Education - the pinnacle of impact investment



Mooi River

The need for quality education is extensive but for many families, affordability is a major barrier. Many learners attend Treverton College on social responsibility grants, funding sourced from friends of the school, or supportive family members. In 2023, eleven Treverton-learners were selected as recipients of N3TC funding. “They are deeply appreciative of this opportunity. The impact N3TC is having on their lives and futures is incalculable in monetary terms,” said principal, Kean Broom.

“In our catchment area there is a strong believe that children who receive their education at our school are being well-equipped to contribute to the economic and social upliftment of their communities in time to come.” The community considers a good education to be the best investment that can be made in their children's lives and futures. Against this backdrop, local families actively support and encourage their children to grab every opportunity and make the best of their education, in- and outside the classroom.

One of the school's current funding recipients is a talented netball player who was selected to the Midlands Under 16 Indoor Netball Team last year.



**The community considers a good education to be the best investment.**

Without the support from N3TC, her parents would not have been able to afford to allow her to pursue this opportunity.

Another funding recipient was very involved in helping with the school's 'Santa Shoebox' project in 2023. She reflected that the project provided her with an opportunity to express her appreciation for the privilege of attending Treverton by “paying it forward to others in a small way”.

“For us at Treverton College, our inclusion in the N3TC 'family' is a source of daily gratitude.

In this tough economic climate, the N3TC scholarships contribute significantly to the sustainability of our school. It is this type of involvement that helps us to maintain our relevance and opportunity to serve,” ends Mr Broom.







**Regular maintenance of school buildings is a costly affair, one which often falls by the wayside in disadvantaged rural communities where school management teams battle to make ends meet.**



Creating a welcoming learning space



Schools generally also receive less attention in the national budget than other public infrastructure facilities, despite the known direct links between the condition of schools, a lack of motivation, compromised discipline, and educators' ability to teach.

The ability of students to learn is greatly hindered when constantly faced with broken equipment, outdated technology and dilapidated classrooms.

When Christopher Kheswa, an N3TC project manager, visited his former school, Zola Primary School in Wembezi, near Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal, he noticed that his alma mater was in a state of disrepair. "I attended Zola Primary as a child and later worked here as a teacher. To see the school falling apart made me realise that it is in our power to make the difference they so desperately need," explained Mr Kheswa.

He encouraged the school management to apply to N3TC for support to revamp the school. Their application was successful and on 30 September 2023, the refurbishment of Zola Primary School commenced. Minor repairs were made to the school's

## The project turned into a community affair, with parents and residents encouraged to lend a hand.



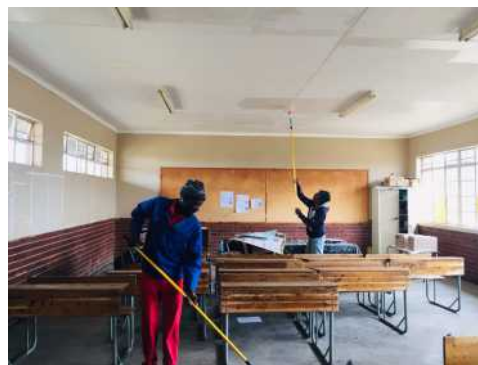
structure, and the school was repainted from top to bottom. All facilities, including the classrooms, hall, computer room, kitchen, administration buildings, door frames, ceilings and even the roof were painted. Only the ablution facilities did not

receive a fresh coat of paint as plumbing repairs were still required.

The project was managed by a school staff member, Mr Naidoo, and was turned into a community affair, with parents and residents from the area, encouraged to lend a hand.

Less than 2 months later, the project was completed, and soon thereafter, Zola Primary School was handed back to the management, learners and community of Wembezi.

"Building strong relationships with the community and local stakeholders is crucial to the successful management of a school. This project has shown us that schools and their communities can not only improve the overall condition of a school but can also build shared connection and pride through their involvement," ended Kheswa.







The Fundisisizwe Bursary Fund was created to support schoolgoing children from the Ephangweni Mission near Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal who live with physical, intellectual- or learning impairments.

Dare to dream



Estcourt



As beneficiaries of the N3TC Touching Lives programme, 26 learners received bursaries in 2023. Their bursaries covered school and hostel fees, as well as some of their auxiliary aids and services such as assistive devices, transportation and social support. It was their lifeline to be able to complete their education and play a meaningful role in society.

It is a sad truth that many children with disabilities are likely to live in poverty and to deal with inequality throughout their lives, but N3TC is helping to change this reality for them, along with



**People with disabilities also have the right to dream,  
and when given a chance they too can reach their dreams.**

the misconceptions that exist around their disabilities, at least for the beneficiaries of the programme.

The willingness of these learners to grab every opportunity, and their dedication to their education send a strong message to all and sundry that people with disabilities also have the right to dream, and when given a chance they too can reach their dreams and fulfil their potential.

One of Fundisisizwe's learners is currently enrolled at a local university for a BSc in Engineering. He is tackling this challenging degree with gusto, daring many other learners to dream of following in his footsteps.

The majority of the Fund's learners come from the uThukela District and attend the KwaZamokuhle Special School in Estcourt, after which most of them (21 in 2023) proceed to the Adelaide Tambo Special School in Soweto, Gauteng for their senior school years. High standards, quality education, and therapeutic support for learners are of prime importance here.

By the time learners reach Grade 12, they are armed with the best foundation, tools, and knowledge to become financially independent and responsible citizens of society.

“Simply put,” says the Fundisisizwe Bursary Fund Steering Committee, “our learners are tearing down stereotypes. We are exceptionally proud of them. Thank you to N3TC for making this possible.”





As children grow and develop, their needs change. This is especially true of children living with disabilities. Their assistive devices are the most important aids they require to participate in society and lead healthy, independent, dignified and productive lives.

“Leave no one behind”



Children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in society. They often face seemingly insurmountable battles to access, obtain, and afford the support and devices they require to navigate their daily lives.

In 2015, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted. At the core of the Agenda is a pledge to “Leave no one behind”, and to reach those that are furthest behind first.

Fundisizwe strives to provide quality, and durable assistive devices which are appropriate for the needs of the children under their care. Suitable assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, prostheses, orthotic boots, cognitive aids, or other adaptive devices, are often costly but essential for the successful rehabilitation and independence of disabled children. The funding received from N3TC has gone a long way towards helping Fundisizwe access the required devices, and improving the functional abilities and quality of life of the children under their care.

The confidence that children (and their families) gain when it dawns upon them just how capable they are, and that



they contribute to their households and communities, is encouraging and gratifying.

However, maintenance of the children's assistive devices continues to be a longstanding challenge. The children mostly

had to rely on their therapists' knowledge to make adjustments and repairs, and these could only be done sporadically when there really was no other option available to them – it was ineffective and debilitating.

To address this challenge, N3TC funded the training of two general workers from the local KwaZamokuhle Special School by a specialist technician in Durban in order for them to maintain and repair different types of wheelchairs, including various manual and electronic/automatic versions. The workers' newly acquired skills have already been put to good use.

“It is often a frustrating process to acquire appropriate and timeous support for rural children living with disabilities. A lack of knowledge, resources, and access to healthcare facilities often get in the way but the support of caring individuals and donors from the private sector, and the joy of a child who has newfound hope, make it all worthwhile.”





The mission of the Drakensberg Boys' Choir School (DBCS) is to prepare boys for life and leadership through excellence in music, academics, physical development and social enrichment.

Supporting South Africa's singing ambassadors



“This choral music school, with an international reputation, is situated near Winterton in the majestic uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park in KwaZulu-Natal, a world heritage site.

DBCS is an independent boarding school which has been in existence for more than 55 years. It uses choral music as a vehicle for an holistic education. As a middle school, for approximately 120 boys from Grades 4 – 9, DBCS is well positioned to 'bridge the gap' between primary and high school and to equip its scholars with general education and training skills that will stand them in good stead for their high school years, and thereafter.

Due to its unique location and nature, the boys (or Drakies as they are fondly known) are privileged to enjoy a rich educational experience. The school offers its learners a well-structured school day, a modern IT laboratory, excellent housing and other facilities, a library, and numerous other supportive educational tools to facilitate a first-class academic experience.

At Grade 9 level, an aptitude assessment is facilitated to assist boys with their subject choices when they leave DBCS. At the end of the year, Grade 9 boys also write the national, standardised assessments in English, Afrikaans and Mathematics set by the Independent Examinations Board.



## DBCS uses choral music as a vehicle for holistic education.

DBCS is an exciting environment where boys can participate in adventure sports and outdoor activities such as mountain biking, running, cross country, open water swimming, horseback riding, hiking and tubing on the river. They are encouraged to take an active interest in their natural surroundings through educational outdoor excursions.

To be part of the Drakies experience is an honour only reserved for musically talented, and academically astute.

Applicants, between the ages of 9 and 13, who are invited to proceed to the admission process, first undergo voice auditions. If they pass, their latest academic records are assessed. Drakies are required to be above average academically to keep up with the demanding requirements of the school. Finally, prospective members and their parents attend an open weekend and information sessions to familiarise themselves with the school environment and to assist them in deciding if the school is the right fit for them

At least 25% of DBCS' scholars are supported through a bursary scheme. This allows the school to accommodate very talented boys who cannot afford the full fees.

Through its Touching Lives Top-Up Bursary Programme, N3TC has strong, long-standing bonds with Drakensberg Boys' bursary recipients. Thirteen Drakies received N3TC bursaries in 2023.

“We are very proud of them and our alumni recipients, many of whom have gone on to fill various leadership positions at their respective schools and tertiary institutions, have excelled academically – here and abroad – and are making a name for themselves in their careers. It is an honour to be associated with young people of this calibre. Our involvement in this internationally renowned institution is a source of great pride and joy,” says N3TC operations manager, Thania Dhoogra.





**BabyBoost Outreach areas:**

- eNkosini in Mpumelelo
- Emsenit in Sivukile
- Zamokuhle in Okhombe

The Royal Drakensberg School is situated in the Northern Drakensberg. It is an independent school which caters for children from Grade 000 to Grade 4.

Holistic, quality educational support



In support of the school's feeder communities, The Royal Drakensberg Education Trust was established to develop and manage initiatives to help rural children reach their full potential.

“We are very aware that it is the learning and grounding in a child's earliest years that will result in transformed futures,” says the Head of the Royal Drakensberg School, Thobani Ndlovu. “Teaching conditions in rural areas, however, are often poor with educators lacking basic resources, infrastructure and support.”

The Royal Drakensberg School is the springboard from which its Education Trust approaches its endeavours. The School operates as a centre of excellence in the community and offers mentorship programmes to support early childhood development centres in the greater amaZizi area. The Trust, supported by N3TC and others, follow a multi-faceted approach.



### Practitioner Workshops

Four workshops were hosted for practitioners from 18 Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD) to support and upskill crèche owners and practitioners to implement cost-effective, practical and creative teaching plans, providing a platform for sharing ideas and best practices required to engage children on a much deeper level in their crèches – all aimed at ensuring that the children are adequately prepared for the formal school system. Approximately 50 educators attend each workshop.

### Mentorship Programme

Additional support is provided to practitioners through a mentorship programme. Three local teachers from the amaZizi Village run the mentorship programme. They provide in-class guidance to practitioners to assist them with the practical implementation of what they've learned in the workshops, whether it's making improvements to the class set up, or adding teaching aids and resources to make learning more meaningful and fun.

### BabyBoost Programme

Of course, learning is not limited to children of classroom age. Babies start absorbing information the moment they enter the world. The BabyBoost Programme promotes learning in the first 1000 days of a child's life by teaching mothers how to respond to their children in meaningful ways during play, bath and feeding time, laying the foundation of the child's future education from infancy.



### Partnerships across projects broaden exposure and reach

The Royal Drakensberg Education Trust's three mentors attended a Singakwenza DUPLO training session in 2023 which added a very useful resource to their practitioner workshops.

As an educational resource, DUPLO is versatile and can be used for various activities. In areas where resources are scarce, such a multi-purpose learning tool is beneficial for both practitioners and children.

### Intern Programme

The Royal Drakensberg School's internships have become much coveted positions in the community.

“Interns are nurtured by experienced classroom mentors, and their engagement in extra mural activities and charity initiatives further expands their knowledge base. They are making great strides in their development thanks to their exposure to quality learning environments. It will stand them in good stead in their future careers,” says Mr Ndlovu.

### Top-Up Bursaries

N3TC funded top-up bursaries for eleven learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. This provided them with the opportunity experience quality education and actualise their full potential.

“One of the beneficiaries received the Highest Achiever award in Grade 3. It is an honour to have witnessed her growth and achievements. Bursaries can change the trajectory of people's lives,” ends Mr Ndlovu.

The Royal Drakensberg School story is a compelling one. It proves that our biggest strength lies in like-minded individuals, institutions, and organisations coming together to effect lasting change by taking our communities forward.





Photo by Chris van den Heever

The background is a solid green color with several concentric circles of varying sizes and shades of green, creating a ripple effect. The circles are centered around the text.

*“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap,  
but by the seeds you plant.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson



In the small town of Van Reenen, bordering the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, the N3TC Khanyisile Community Trust is changing lives, one school child at a time, by serving the region's community of learners – about 3000 in 10 schools.

Changing lives one  
school child at a time

33

Van Reenen



The schools are each located approximately 60 kilometres from any meaningful infrastructure and facilities, which means that they rely on the N3TC Khanyisile Community Trust to support their food security, health, maintenance, and development needs.

Local municipalities, which are responsible for providing services to rural areas, often face capacity and infrastructure challenges. This has resulted in the slow pace of service delivery, and the further marginalisation of rural communities. Khanyisile is therefore a critical player in providing key services to poorer populations in the region.

#### **Community engagement is the cornerstone of the Trust**

The community co-designs and co-creates a development framework and Khanyisile assists to diagnose, address, build and problem-solve. The Trust also advises them on how to take advantage of existing community assets and opportunities.



### **“N3TC helps with infrastructure improvements to enhance our community’s wellbeing.”**



The Trust is strategic about the projects it chooses to invest in. Tangible benefits to the poorest members of the region must be evident and initiatives must align with the entity's priorities and values.

Core needs, such as functioning kitchens, sustainable food gardens, quality healthcare, water infrastructure, and building maintenance, have been identified as the Trust's focus areas, with five schools benefitting during the 2023 funding period, namely: Ebojeni Primary School, Van Reenen Entokozweni Community, Sand River Valley Community, Sand River Valley Primary School and Van Reenen Primary School.

The schools benefitted from vital maintenance work to their water supply systems, which entailed replacing old leaking pipes and taps in the town and at the school's water infrastructure.

In addition, the Trust donated emergency food supplies to the KwaZulu-Natal Schools Feeding Scheme and donated food parcels to community members in dire need. The funding was also used to repair and maintain school grounds, and provide emergency medical care.

“N3TC funding helps to enhance our community's wellbeing. Not having adequate access to resources such as water, energy, land, health services, education, transport and markets, limits people's agency to improve and sustain their social and economic wellbeing,” says Ansie Jooste, regional manager of the Khanyisile Community Trust.



## Bolstering road safety and emergency resources

**During peak traffic seasons on the N3 Toll Route, volunteer groups, including paramedics and rescue workers, assist N3TC and its partners in the Road Incident Management System (RIMS) to protect and support road users, especially at emergency- or major crash scenes.**

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Van Reenen, Frankfort

Two highly qualified and dedicated volunteer rescue groups operate on the N3 Toll Route: **Community Medical Services (CMS)** has provided essential rescue services on Van Reenen Pass for nearly 40 years; and their sister group, **Volunteer Rescue Team (VRT)**, which operates from a facility located near Frankfort.

These are highly skilled and experienced volunteers. Their multi-disciplinary teams include medical doctors, paramedics, search and rescue officers, ambulance assistants, and a social worker.

They assist victims at crash scenes, provide emergency relief in dangerous situations, such as during snow storms or wildfires, and support communities along the route with food drives, basic healthcare, and social services.

“Our rescue teams are often the first to arrive at an emergency scene, and the only team with an advanced life support paramedic or doctor immediately available,” says Nick Dollman, paramedic and co-ordinator of the VRT.

Philip Hull, founder of CMS continues, “Our operation at Van Reenen is probably the longest-standing community project of its kind in South Africa. It is an honour to have the support of exceptional individuals who freely give their time and expertise,

and N3TC who values the work we do. I have the utmost admiration for every member of our team. Knowing that we have treated and assisted hundreds, if not thousands of people, and have saved many, many lives makes every sacrifice worthwhile.”

Volunteer teams travel to their satellite base stations before expected peak traffic periods such as the Easter long weekend or the December holiday, and remain there until the peak season has subsided. They also station themselves at their satellite bases when severe weather alerts are received, or when big events draw large crowds and a possible influx of traffic on the N3 Toll Route. Rescue volunteer groups help to ease the extra burden on local emergency resources during these times.

Other than saving lives, attending to critical patients onsite, or supporting traumatised families, this band of dedicated rescue workers have also undertaken several community outreach programmes during 2023. These included a winter warmer project where ponchos and beanies were distributed to



**Multi-disciplinary teams include medical doctors, paramedics, search and rescue officers, ambulance assistants, and a social worker.**



underprivileged children; a soup drive and food parcel distributions to outlying communities; and a special toy drive to bring some Christmas cheer to children who have very little else to brighten their days.

“Volunteer emergency rescue groups offer their services and time free of charge, but their fuel, accommodation, and equipment costs quickly add up to a hefty sum. Our partnership with N3TC, and the generous support received from their Touching Lives Programme, allow us to deliver this important life-saving service, year after year, to motorists on the N3 Toll Route. Our road safety collaboration can only be called a resounding success,” ends Mr Hull.



**Golden Gate Highlands National Park lies nestled between the towering Maluti mountains in the North Eastern Free State, a mere 75km from Harrismith and the N3 Toll Route. The Park extends over more than 32 000 hectares and borders Lesotho.**

The jewel of the Free State



Clarens



Golden Gate Highlands National Park (Golden Gate) falls in the Grasslands Biome of South Africa and represents the Drakensberg grassland bioregion and the Mesic highland grassland bioregion with five different vegetation types.

A variety of carnivores, antelope, frog- and toad species, reptiles, including sungazers and 171 bird species have been recorded in the Park. Golden Gate is a breeding site for vultures, especially the endangered Bearded Vulture and is home to two other red-listed bird species, namely Grass Owls and the Bald Ibis.

Judging by the primitive stone tools, rock paintings and cultural artefacts found at various places throughout Golden Gate, it represents a rich diversity of history spanning from the early Stone Age- and San people, to the influx of the Basotho tribe, early European settlers, and the Anglo Boer War.

Golden Gate was proclaimed a national park in 1963 and proudly celebrated 50 years of biodiversity stewardship in 2023. N3TC is honoured to collaborate with SANParks to protect this sensitive biome while also promoting eco-tourism in the region.



In 2023, N3TC's Touching Lives Programme funded structural upgrades to the sanitation systems at the reserve's vulture hide, which have been restored to functional condition, and created temporary job opportunities for members of the community directly bordering the Park.

“Our analogue radio system was also upgraded and improved, thanks to a donation from N3TC. This radio system is essential to effectively communicate with field rangers while they are working in hard-to-reach places to conserve and protect our natural history, fauna and flora. Without a robust radio system it would be far more challenging, if not impossible, to fulfil their daily tasks,” says honorary ranger, Marc Snyman.

**A variety of carnivores, antelope, frog- and toad species, reptiles, including sungazers and 171 bird species have been recorded in the Park.**







For a decade, N3TC has supported Free State Care In Action (FSCA) in Harrismith, as they look after the physical and emotional needs of children from disadvantaged households in the area.

A force for good in Harrismith



Harrismith





**"We feel honoured to be in a position to provide a safe haven to our charges."**

"N3TC is our primary funder. Their support enables the short- and medium-term sustainability of our project, and continuously helps to improve the quality of life of our beneficiaries," explains project coordinator, Gerda Louw. "N3TC's involvement has led to greater awareness of our plight in the community which motivated local businesses, groups and individuals to also contribute towards our efforts."



Local farmers regularly donate to food parcels which are distributed to desperately poor families. Donations of second-hand clothing, especially school- and everyday wear, also come in handy. "It makes a huge difference to children's sense of self to have school uniforms or shoes that fit."

Grade R to Grade 7 learners attend the After School Care Centre (ASCC). From Mondays to Thursdays, they are transported from school to the ASCC, and then again to their homes. When they arrive at the centre, each child receives a meal and, when available, fresh fruit and a glass of milk or juice.

Food parcels are handed out every two weeks for the children to take home. These usually consist of non-perishable food, fresh meat, fresh vegetables and fruit, toiletries, and other essential household items.

Children in the care of the ASCC are assisted with their homework, and receive professional educational and emotional support when required.

Medical care, occupational therapy, and eye tests are also available to them, and should a child be diagnosed with sight problems, they are supported with the correct, prescribed glasses.

"The fact that the After School Care Centre is still operational is nothing short of a miracle. We feel honoured to be in a position to provide a safe haven to our charges. It is humbling to experience the improvement in the well-being of the children under our care.

Thank you to N3TC for being the force behind our team. Your assistance empowers us to provide some stability to the vulnerable children in our care who are only trying to find their way in an uncertain world," ends Mrs Louw.



# HARRISMITH

# PRIMER

# PRIMARY

Shaping brighter futures

**“The light in a child's eyes, their laughter – free and unfettered, their energy revived, and their confidence restored are some of the most beautiful things.”**



Funding awarded to Harrismith Primary School through the N3TC Touching Lives Programme afforded 11 learners the opportunity to be accommodated in the school's hostel in 2023, providing an opportunity for these boys and girls to benefit from the structured environment and additional support they receive under the wings of caring school staff.

“Providing vulnerable children with places of safety is crucial for their physical, emotional and intellectual development and overall wellbeing,” explains the hostel's housemaster, Hendro Pretorius. “With N3TC's support we can secure a nurturing environment for the children under our care, empowering them to reach their full potential.”

At the Harrismith Primary School hostel, all aspects of their young residents' well-being are taken care of including their physical- and mental health, nutrition, and cognitive stimulation. Away from external stressors, in a calm and loving



environment, the children's social abilities and interactions also start to blossom.

Mr Pretorius continues: “Witnessing the remarkable improvement in their social skills, the development of their resilience and trust, as well as their academic and



extracurricular achievements brings immense satisfaction and joy. It takes a village to raise a child, and we are honoured to have N3TC as part of our village,” he ended.





Helping to eradicate  
educational inequality -  
one learner at time.



Removing barriers to quality education



Far too many vulnerable children still cannot fully access and benefit from the public education system due to a lack of finances, limited transport, and poor support structures.

Children from disadvantaged households are often hit the hardest by the multiple barriers they have to overcome to access quality education and learning.

Notwithstanding their impoverished circumstances, many caregivers strongly advocate for the education of their young charges and are appreciative of any additional support.

By aiding a child's access to education, N3TC hopes to help tackle social and economic marginalisation, and to ensure a more equitable future for our young generation.

During 2023, N3TC awarded top-up bursaries to three learners who attended the Harrismith High School. The learners are all talented young people whose home circumstances are such that limited monetary or practical assistance is available to them and as a result, their academics suffered.

The funding received from N3TC made it possible for these three students to live in the school hostel during the school term, where they received academic support, participated in extramural activities, and were well taken care of both physically and emotionally.








Photo by David Mullin



The background of the slide is a solid blue color with a pattern of concentric circles and swirls in a slightly darker shade of blue. These patterns are scattered across the page, with some being larger and more prominent than others, creating a sense of movement and depth.

*“No journey is too great,  
when one finds what one seeks.”*

Friedrich Nietzsche



The lives of long-distance truck drivers are incredibly challenging, with demanding hours and extended periods away from home and loved ones. Added to this is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, high cholesterol and hypertension, which plague the trucking- and affiliated communities.

## Driving health and wellness

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Mooi River, Tugela,  
Harrismith, Warden,  
Villiers



Since its inception in 1999, Trucking Wellness has distributed condoms and provided healthcare education and various forms of treatment to long-distance truck drivers, sex workers and community members. As a primary healthcare delivery system, Trucking Wellness is dedicated to the health and wellness of those employed in the road freight and logistics industry.

As a long-term beneficiary of N3TC, Trucking Wellness ensures that high-risk individuals have access to quality primary healthcare. Five wellness clinics are strategically located along the N3 Toll Route and operate as facilities where sex workers and people interacting with sex workers can access quality treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other health concerns without fear or prejudice.

These clinics are further supported by mobile clinics which provide basic health services to outlying communities adjacent to the N3 Toll Route. Together, they help to promote community participation and the need for a non-gender-biased approach to healthcare within a broader socio-economic context.

Importantly, these clinics are open at times when government clinics are closed and truck drivers and community members can receive treatment at no cost. HIV-positive clients are counselled and referred to the nearest healthcare facility, or an appointed HIV management programme to receive ongoing counselling and ARV treatment.

N3TC funding contributes to the significant costs of essential medical supplies, including primary health medication and HIV and wellness consumables. These expenses represent a substantial portion of the wellness clinics' operational costs and include test kits for HIV, cholesterol and glucose screening.

#### **In 2023, the N3 Wellness Clinics:**

- Tested 3 530 clients for HIV (1 666 were from the community and surrounding areas)



## **Trucking Wellness ensures that high-risk individuals have access to quality primary health care.**

- Provided primary healthcare services for 7 682 clients, of which 1 614 were community members
- Provided health and wellness awareness education to 6 288 people
- Provided treatment to 440 individuals diagnosed with STIs
- Dispensed a total of 443,940 male condoms

**The Mobile Wellness clinics also participated in the N3TC Driver Wellness Days held during 2023, achieving the following:**

- Performed 182 wellness screenings, encompassing tests for blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels, and body mass index (BMI)

“We are very proud of this initiative to deliver health services to the trucking industry. It offers a convenient and safe way for truck drivers to know and manage their health risks, and to limit the impact an untreated health condition may have on their careers and safe driving abilities,” says Tertius Wessels, managing director of Trucking Wellness. “Thousands of truckers use the N3 every day, and their health and safety should be of great concern to all of us.”

The partnership between Trucking Wellness and the N3TC Touching Lives Programme ensures that appropriate access to effective primary healthcare interventions is within reach of some of the most vulnerable communities along the N3 Toll Route, and to the vital trucking community.



Nature's balance is being disrupted by rising temperatures and extreme weather patterns, including severe storms and drought. 2023 saw the highest recorded temperatures on Earth, dating back to 1850.

Building climate resilience and empowering communities



Villiers



Climate change is real and its impact is being felt most directly among the poorest of the poor, who already face key socio-economic issues such as high unemployment, insufficient healthcare, poor food security, and scarcity of natural resources.

One of the many areas battling these challenges, is Qalabotjha, near Villiers in the Free State. However, knowledge is power and for this reason the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) partnered with N3TC to create the N3TC Eco-Schools Project.

The project aims to promote climate resilience and sustainability and to empower students, educators, and communities to make informed choices. Incorporating activities like waste management, water conservation, and sustainable gardening into a school's curriculum helps students to understand the importance of environmental responsibility and prepares them to adapt to future environmental changes. By actively participating in these activities, students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their environment.



Four early childhood development centres (ECDs) and an additional five schools in the area have been incorporated into the Eco Schools Project. In 2023, the Eco-Schools Project reached 270 students from ECD level to high school across 21 climate change education sessions, and engaged 18 teachers in climate resilience workshops and activities.

WESSA's education strategy involves interactive, hands-on lessons that include plenty of play to engage young minds and create awareness about the significance of climate change. The puzzle activity, for example, allows students to gain a better understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of climate change issues. They gain a visceral understanding of how addressing one aspect of climate change alone is not enough; rather, it requires a holistic approach that considers the interplay between different factors.

Teacher workshops, meanwhile, provide educators with a comprehensive understanding of climate change and its implications, and equips them with the necessary knowledge and tools to incorporate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into their teaching practices. Topics include climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, emphasising the importance of incorporating these concepts into classroom teachings. Teachers are also introduced to innovative teaching methods and resources such as 'Wild Hearts', which comprises 21 carefully designed lessons to educate young children about environmental issues.

A highlight of the year was Arbor Week, which took place from 28 to 30 August. The WESSA Programmes and Projects team facilitated educational activities to raise awareness about the significance of trees and their impact on our environment at the nine N3TC schools in Villiers. It also included planting the "Tree of the Year", Buddleja Saligna or False Olive. This majestic tree symbolises strength and resilience, serving as a reminder of nature's ability to adapt and thrive even in challenging conditions.

"The WESSA Programmes and Projects team would like to express our sincere gratitude for the N3TC's dedicated efforts in making the WESSA Eco-Schools project a resounding success. Through the Eco-Schools Projects, N3TC is actively contributing



## Celebrating 20 years of Eco-School success

WESSA's Eco-Schools Programme was in the spotlight at the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) Conference held in Gauteng last year. WESSA was granted the privilege of hosting this auspicious event to mark the 20th anniversary of its successful implementation of the international Eco-Schools Programme in South Africa.

The EEASA conference is an annual convergence of environmental educators, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from around the world, united in their commitment to advancing environmental education and sustainability. 250 delegates attended the 2023 event.

to the transformation of mindsets and attitudes among teachers and students in Villiers. We deeply appreciate your unwavering commitment to invest in the future of education and your willingness to contribute to nurturing young children and fostering environmental awareness at an integral stage of childhood development," says Daniel Jackson, project coordinator of WESSA Eco-Schools.



## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

7 314

individuals  
received  
support  
services



40

households

&amp;

142



individuals

received food parcels



501

children received early  
childhood development resources  
to use at home



301



individuals received  
primary care medication



613

household gardens  
established



The Topsy Foundation is the only non-profit organisation of its kind operating in the Dipaleseng Municipality which includes Grootvlei, Siyathemba and Balfour in Mpumalanga. The N3TC Touching Lives Programme supports the foundation to provide much-needed support services to these vulnerable rural communities.

# Harnessing the collective power of communities

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Grootvlei, Nthoroane,  
Balfour, Siyathemba



More than 80% of Topsy's staff are recruited from the communities within which it operates, ensuring solid networks are established on the ground and more importantly, considering the high unemployment rate in the district, providing job opportunities to several people.

“The Topsy Foundation has been a partner of N3TC for many years. We can attest that their Touching Lives Programme is not merely an exercise in corporate social responsibility, but a true investment driving development, empowerment, and sustainability in the areas they operate,” says general manager, Marianna Pretorius. “Their support makes a tangible difference in communities facing challenges such as food insecurity, lack of nutrition, and limited access to quality early childhood development resources for children. Together, we have been able to respond to the desperate needs of children and families in our region through the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Project.”

#### **Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Project**

The OVC Project focuses on offering relevant assistance to families or caregivers who have taken in orphaned children, empowering them to cope with the many challenges that the situation will require them to face.



As part of the project, care workers carry out weekly visits to determine the needs of the families, and offer free health- and psychosocial services, food parcels and nutritional supplements where required, providing education resources and learning support, and general caregiver services.

Furthermore, with the assistance of Topsy's trained vegetable gardener, participating families are supported to develop their own vegetable gardens.



“The vegetable gardens are considered to be families' buy-in to the project. This commitment helps to restore families' dignity as they are OVC Project partners rather than mere recipients of handouts. But, while they are still establishing their gardens, and until they flourish, we continue to provide them with nutritional support and emergency relief. For three months, emergency food parcels are delivered to participants every month,” explains OVC Project coordinator, Zinhle Lukhele.

Purposeful collaborative partnerships, such as the Topsy-N3TC OVC Project, succeed because they harness the collective power and goodwill of communities to maximise the social impact of their investments, helping to transform societies for the better.







To the more than 70 adults with mental and physical disabilities in its care, the Sunfield Home Fortuna in Balfour, Mpumalanga, provides a loving environment that caters for their social, physical, and medical needs.

Establishing sustainable income-generating projects



Balfour



Rising costs of living and insufficient funds to meet its operational requirements are some of the challenges facing the NPO, highlighting the need for a sustainable operating model in order for them to survive.

This was a major concern for the recently appointed General Manager, Brenda Mendes, whose plans to generate income for Sunfield included growing vegetables, and selling clothing and goods that had been donated to the home over the years. Although she had secured temporary premises for this purpose, the pressure of simply keeping Sunfield's doors open was all-consuming.

N3TC is a long-standing partner of Sunfield Home Fortuna. They have weathered many trials and tribulations together over the years and the home once again relied on them for support through their Touching Lives Programme.

As an indirect result of the funding, Sunfield was able to hold its yearly fundraiser. “Our residents received presents and even certificates on the day. They were beaming. We also received donations of food, clothing and implements that come in handy when tending to our vegetable garden. We are ready to sow more



**The aim of this venture is also  
to benefit the broader community  
through employment.**

seeds and are looking forward to a good harvest,” says Ms Mendes.

“N3TC made it possible for us to better budget towards monthly operating costs and hugely reduced my stress levels,” says Ms Mendes. “We can now re-evaluate our situation and slowly start to roll out the projects we identified to bolster our coffers.

My vision and mission for 2024 is to become more self-sufficient. We need to optimally use the resources we have such as land and [donated] goods.”

The Sunfield Home Shop is key to Ms Mendes' sustainability plans. The aim of this venture is not only to provide a sustainable income for the home, but to benefit the broader Balfour



community through employment, and by providing a source of affordable produce and low-cost clothing.

“We trust that achieving financial independence will not only be a testament to our resilience but set a compelling example for other NPOs seeking to create long-lasting impacts.

It is a challenging time, but we are looking forward to collaborating with N3TC for a brighter future.”





The annual Meals on Wheels Cycle Race has become a popular event on the cycling calendar, attracting upwards of 700 entrants from across South Africa to compete in the tough 50km or 100km race.

Pedaling to help feed the vulnerable

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Heidelberg



In its 19th year, the race route was updated to wind through the rocky hills and valleys of the beautiful Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve in Heidelberg, Gauteng. Despite tough conditions, which often include heavy winds, the cyclists enjoyed breathtaking views from high up in the hills to the green and lush valleys down below, and the slower among them have the opportunity to spot various birds, baboons and small game. The 2023 race was again characterised by high winds which challenged the cyclists but did not deter them at all.

While spirits were high on the track, festivities took place at the starting gates, with food stalls and music to entertain the family members and Meals on Wheels representatives who had come along to support the cyclists. N3TC banners and branding contributed to the festive atmosphere and served as a reminder that it is through N3TC's support as the title sponsor, that the race has taken place for many preceding years.

Meals on Wheels is an established and well-known NPO that continues to do exceptional work in their respective communities. The result being that thousands of beneficiaries across the country receive warm cooked meals each week.



The income generated from the race helps to ensure that the Heidelberg, Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark branches of Meals on Wheels are able to provide more than 3000 nutritious meals a week to vulnerable elderly people and children. Representatives from the three beneficiary-branches were present on the day to showcase some of the work they do.

Beneficiaries of the race proceeds are immensely appreciative to the cyclists, organisers, volunteers and sponsors.

The organisers are already hard at work planning the 2024 edition of the race, which will also mark the 20th anniversary thereof.







Photo by Pieter Kotzee



The background of the slide is a solid blue color with several large, faint, white or light blue swirl patterns scattered across it. These swirls are of varying sizes and orientations, creating a decorative, organic feel.

*Live life with no excuses,  
travel with no regret.*

Oscar Wilde



**Education opportunities do not only improve the lives of individuals. Families of the recipients of these opportunities and their communities, especially in rural areas, also stand to benefit from their growth and development.**

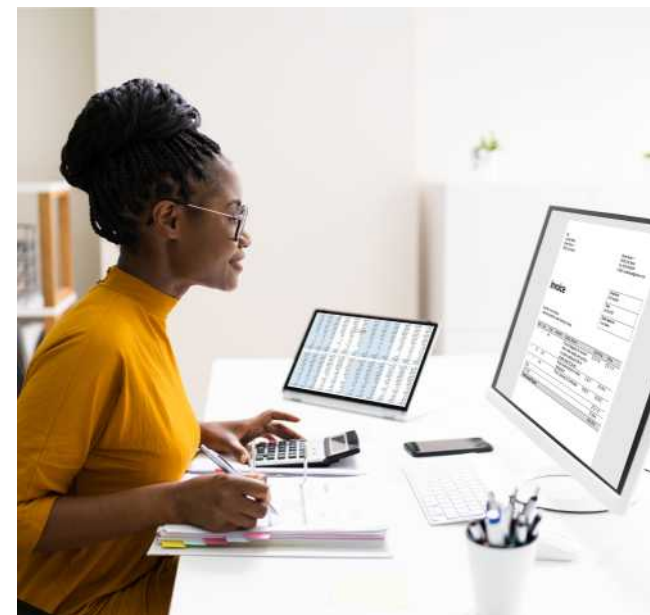
**Further education and training help close opportunity gaps**

In response to some of the challenges and lack of opportunities often faced by rural communities, N3TC adopted a comprehensive impact investment programme to broaden education opportunities for people living adjacent to the N3 Toll Route.

An important aspect of this programme includes the provision of further education and training bursaries to qualifying

recipients who have demonstrated their academic skill, determination, and potential.

Bursary applicants are either in the third or fourth year of their academic programme or enrolled for a post-graduate degree at any of the recognised South African tertiary institutions in one of the following fields of study: Civil Engineering; Accounting; Marketing; Information Technology; or Maths and Science Teaching.



Prospective bursary students apply through their local Public Liaison Committees (PLCs) which are established in the following local municipality districts: uMngeni; Mpofana; iNkosi Langalibalele; Alfred Duma; Okhahlamba; Maluti-a-Phofung; Phumelela; Mafube; or Dipaleseng.

Successful bursary beneficiaries are required to consistently maintain an average of 60% or above. Various mentorship programmes are implemented to help them on their way, including an array of care services such as self-empowerment and mental health support, assistance with financial planning or work readiness guidance.

During 2023, N3TC funded 11 bursary students (six female and five males) at various recognised tertiary institutions. One student, Prof. Qhapela Dlamini (deferred in 2023), will be continuing with his studies in 2024. One student was unable to complete his studies in the allocated time and is not eligible for further funding from N3TC.



### **N3TC's bursary students who have successfully concluded their studies in 2023 include:**

- Anele Sediba, who completed a post-graduate qualification in Internal Auditing at the Durban University of Technology
- Boniswa Sithole, who finished an Advanced Diploma in Civil Engineering at UNISA
- Gift Masuku, who completed a degree in Maths and Science Teaching (PGCE) at the University of Free State
- Londiwe Mbhele, who completed a post-graduate diploma in Accounting at the University of Johannesburg
- Lwazi Tsotetsi, who finished his B Com Accounting at the University of Johannesburg
- Matshidiso Khanye, who finished a post-graduate degree in Accounting at the University of Johannesburg
- Ricardo Ramdhani, who completed a B Ed Honours in Education Leadership and Management at the University of KwaZulu Natal
- Samkelisiwe Hlatshwayo, who completed a post-graduate diploma in Applied Accounting Sciences at the Institute of Accounting Science.

In 2023, N3TC funded skills development learnerships for two disabled students. The year-long learnership programmes were facilitated by Training Force, providing innovative B-BBEE learnership solutions in a three-way partnership between the student, the training institution and the corporate funder.

This arrangement affords learners the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning an income, and at the same time contributes to the B-BBEE scorecard of both the institution and client in a meaningful and impactful manner.

The learnerships fulfil all the relevant Services Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) requirements.

Aphelele Mtolo and Xolani Ndubane were both unemployed when they entered the N3TC learnership programme. They have both completed the comprehensive contact centre training programme which included well-structured courses in customer service and communication, problem-solving and managing complaints, recording information, storing data, managing records, keeping statistics, and more.

Their newly acquired skill sets will not only make a significant difference in their own lives, but have set them up to be a valuable asset to their future employers and the customers they will serve.









DANKIE  
Enkosi

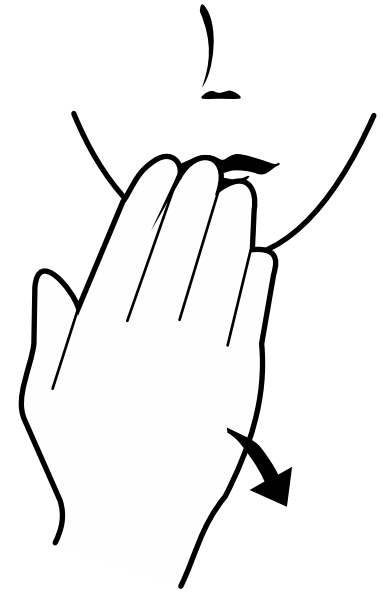
Re a leboga  
Thank you

Siyabonga

*Re a leboha*

Ro livhuma

Ndza khensa



**N3TC**

Safety. Convenience. Mobility.

*"The greatest danger  
to our future  
is apathy."*

Jane Goodall

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