LESEDI SOLAR PARK TRUST

2024 Annual report

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY 2023-2027

Principal Noluthando Zipho Phoolo & Deputy Principal Pamela Balepile of Danielskuil Intermediate School at a Common Good meeting

"As a Trust, we prioritise engaging communities in a meaningful way, ensuring that they both participate in and benefit from the development process."

JANET DU PREEZ
Trustee

COVER: *Grade R Wordworks session at Refentse Primary school in Groenwater*

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THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION TO ENDING INTERGENERATIONAL POVERTY.
Ensuring that community members can reach their full potential requires coordinated programmes that address the needs of life at each developmental stage, as well as interventions to facilitate safe and enabling environments within which these lives can be lived.

The Lesedi Solar Park Trust seeks to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by creating life-changing opportunities in the communities of Postmasburg, Danielskuil, Jenn-Haven, Groenwater, Skeyfontein, and Lime Acres so all children, adolescents and adults can thrive in every area of life. The Trust was established as a result of the Renewable Independent Power Producer Programme's (REIPPP's) mandate to invest in black communities within a 50 km radius of Lesedi Solar Park. This investment should contribute towards South Africa's potential for growth and development.

Since 2012, the DG Murray Trust has led the strategy and implementation of the Lesedi Trust, working alongside adjoining communities to inspire a long-term vision for community change and commitment.

As a trust, we value transparency. We undergo an annual financial audit with audited figures for the 2024 financial year accessible on our website.

Botlhale Gwaza, Tshepiso Saul and Aobakwe Lekwene at a Siyafunda Foundation session at Refentse Primary school in Groenwater

The Trust **structure**

Letter from the Trustees

THE LESEDI SOLAR PARK TRUST is governed by a board of trustees composed of independent trustees, representatives from beneficiary organisations, and community-based trustees.

As a Trust, we hope that a critical mass of individuals within our communities receive quality services to radically change their lives and shift cultural norms away from those which perpetuate dysfunction toward those that support healthy human development.

Our current strategic cycle (2023-2027) has been in full swing, and the trustees are continuously inspired by the work done by every person and entity operating in the project's region. Our Lesedi Solar Park Trust ecosystem, comprising surrounding communities, implementing partners, and government and municipal officials, is creating a better future for all through collaboration and resourcefulness.

Warmly,

Janet du Preez

On behalf of the Trustees of the Lesedi Solar Park Trust

Our **vision**

Our vision is to have hopeful communities where residents actively participate in the change required for them to realise their potential.

Our **mission**

Our mission is to help end intergenerational poverty in the Tsantsabane and Kgatelopele local municipalities through comprehensive, evidence-based programmes that create opportunities for children and families to go beyond survival to thrive in school, work, and life. From early childhood education and career programmes to community outreach and wellness initiatives, the Lesedi Solar Park Trust opens pathways to social and economic mobility.

Lesedi Trustees visit various community-supported organisations and activities

Our theory of change

At the core of our approach to human development is the understanding that there is no single solution to ending intergenerational poverty. Ensuring that community members can reach their full potential requires coordinated programmes that address the needs of a life at every developmental stage. We also recognise that the right investments in early childhood development allow for less expensive investments at later stages, while acknowledging that programmes with an isolated focus on children risk being ineffective.

Strong families are key to healthy human development, but even the strongest families can only flourish within a safe and enabling environment. Therefore, an effective human development approach needs to build the community at large.

Schooling

100% of children complete school and enter pathways for post-secondary education and training

Tertiary education

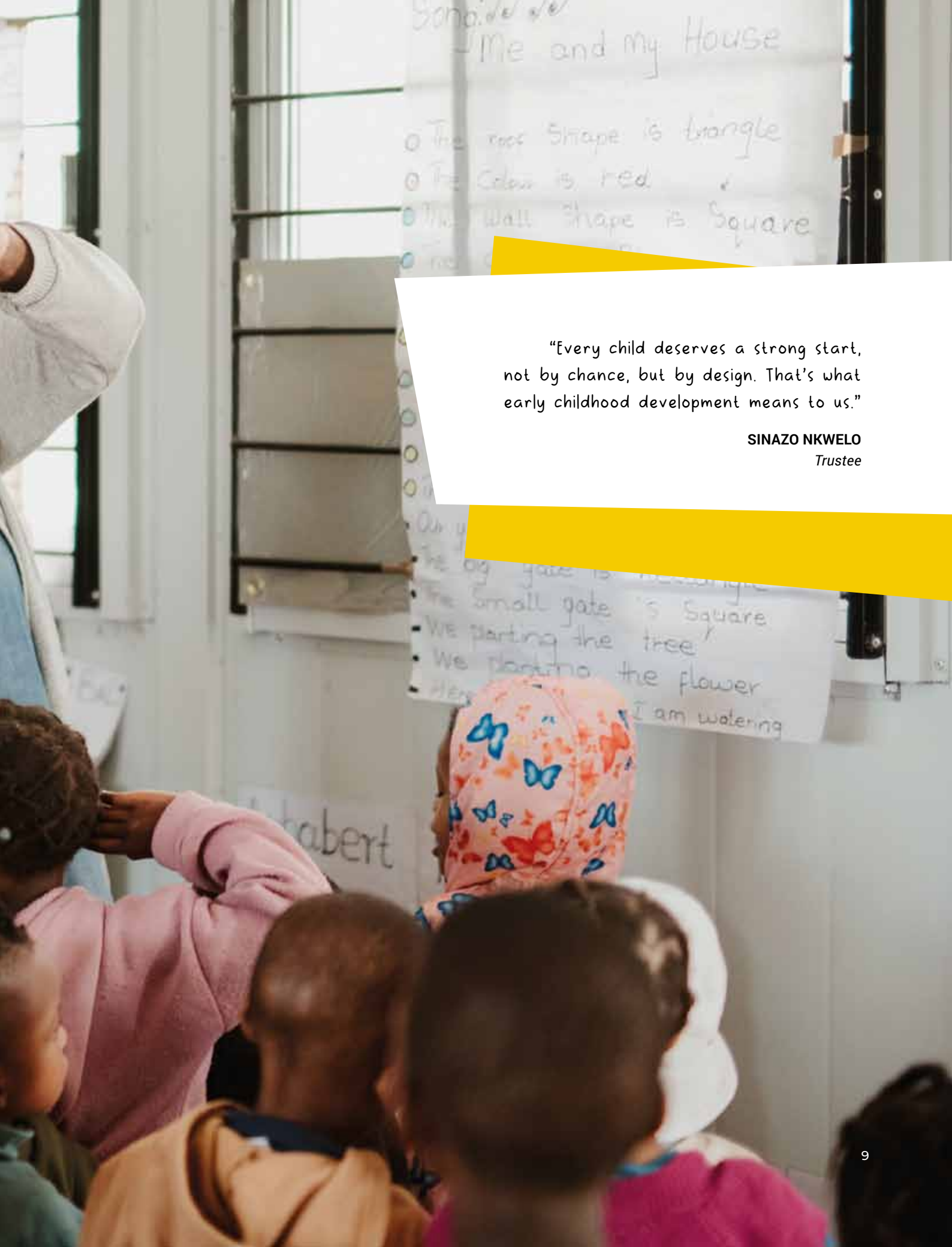
Family

Families enjoy both social and and economic capital

A community with a critical mass of individuals actively involved in its success

Continuing generations of children who achieve better life outcomes

SmartStart practitioner Mme Precious Seleka with her class



"Every child deserves a strong start, not by chance, but by design. That's what early childhood development means to us."

SINAZO NKWELO
Trustee

STRATEGY #1

Cultivate community engagement and ownership

Betina Mqhonqho (in front) and Atlarelang Nku (behind) at Postdene Library during a Teacher and ECD Practitioner workshop by Nal'ibali

OUR FIVE-YEAR GOAL

Improved inclusion and collaboration with local stakeholders, with evidence that local organisations and leaders have become more effective in driving developmental change.

THE STRATEGY'S ESSENCE

- Growing the number of community champions and leaders
- Having vibrant and effective local organisations
- Better or new uses for public spaces and venues
- A robust community vision

HOW?

- ✓ Community leadership development programmes for adolescents, young adults and councillors
- ✓ Support for local organisations
- ✓ Regular community events and meetings
- ✓ Active citizenry and public participation
- ✓ Agenda setting and mobilisation
- ✓ Community-led programmes

> "One of the most striking outcomes of Module 1 was the transformation in the participants' mindsets. They became more intentional in their actions, whether it was finding employment, starting their own initiatives, or actively participating in community meetings. It was inspiring to see them embrace the idea of being the change they want to see in their communities."
>
> **PHILADELPHIA SANZINZA**
> *ACD In-Community Project coordinator*

To date, our work within this strategy has been done in partnership with the Social Change Assistance Trust and Activate! Change Drivers to nurture community leadership.

For the Lesedi Solar Park Trust, community engagement and ownership are not just values that guide our work but intentional strategies with activities and targets. This involves putting our resources behind community-led initiatives in partnership with local community-based organisations (CBO). In instances where no local CBO meets a local need, we partner with innovators from outside the communities to upskill locals and drive change in those areas effectively. It's about creating opportunities for individuals to shape their own future and be active participants in their own growth.

A key initiative under this strategic goal has been our support of six local CBOs in partnership with the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT): Tsantsabane Women Community Centre, Tsantsabane Alcohol and Drug Services, Tsantsabane Centre of Hope, Kgatelopele Social Development Forum, Therapists on Wheels, and Agape Community Upliftment Projects.

COMMUNITY BENEFICIARIES REACHED THROUGH SCAT-SUPPORTED COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Organisations reach women, children, those needing psychosocial support, substance abuse sufferers and those wanting to learn new skills for improved livelihoods.

TSANTSABANE WOMEN COMMUNITY CENTRE(TWCC)	**571**
TSANTSABANE ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES (TADS)	**3950**
TSANTSABANE CENTRE OF HOPE (TCH)	**490** *(approximately)*
KGATELOPELE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM (KSDF)	**1200**
THERAPIST ON WHEELS	*Between* **210-230**
AGAPE COMMUNITY UPLIFTMENT PROJECTS	*Between* **130-140**
	= 6 581 beneficiaries
	(an increase from 5735 in 2023)

The objective of this partnership is to build effective local organisations with effective leadership to manage their own resources, achieve their own successes and drive their own goals and objectives. This is achieved by providing these organisations with training in areas like governance, funding, and resources to achieve their goals, as well as ongoing mentorship and support. A SCAT mentor works closely with each organisation, offering guidance and support to ensure accountability. SCAT, through funds provided by the DGMT, disburses grant funding to community organisations.

Meanwhile, Activate! Change Drivers a multisectoral youth development programme supported young leaders with the necessary skills and tools to drive meaningful change in their communities. Our young “changemakers” participated in the Active Youth Course and Innovation Suite, gaining invaluable knowledge and resources to connect, share ideas and take action in addressing pressing social challenges.

Our changemakers are now part of the wider Activate! network. With ongoing support through this network, young leaders draft formal proposals to address specific issues in their communities. The proposals outline their envisioned projects, the steps required to bring them to life, estimated costs, and potential funding sources.

In exciting news, the US-based Fair Foods programme has employed four Activate! Change Drivers from Postmansburg, Groenwater, Danielskuil, and Lime Acres as interpreters and translators in Setswana, Afrikaans and English. The programme aims to increase awareness about human rights in the agricultural sector. The Activators awarded this opportunity are gaining essential skills and experience for other work opportunities. Moreover, they are partaking in important rights-based advocacy for their communities.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

17 young leaders graduated from the Active Youth Course and will effectively address pressing challenges in their communities.

Thandeka Mazibuko, the Trust's communication and marketing officer, has grown the organisation's social media presence and raised awareness about the vast and colourful activities undertaken by our communities and implementing partners.

Chief Marotobolo of Groenwater attended the graduation after being involved in the participants' journeys from the start. This revealed that skilled learners, particularly in the fields of innovation, leadership and governance matter to the broader community and are acknowledged as future role models and change makers.

6 581 people benefited from the work done by the six local CBOs.

20 community-based organisations (CBOs) were capacitated in governance, financial management, strategic project planning, fundraising, networking and collaboration.

4 graduates from the Active Youth Course were connected to an employment opportunity with the Fair Foods programme to be translators and interpreters.

R2 061 000 was distributed to CBO as grant funding. These funds have enabled the CBOs to consistently meet their financial obligations, deliver essential services, and implement community-based projects.

CASE STUDY

Valentine Serati, 28 years old, Activator!

Valentine Serati is now an active Activate! Change Drivers member

"GROWING UP IN DANIELSKUIL, *my childhood was chaotic, due to a series of traumatic experiences that led me down a dark path. Like many other young people in my community, I got caught up in addiction and crime, eventually landing on the wrong side of the law. Somewhere inside me, there was always this drive to change, and do better. It was through participating in Activate! In-Community training that I began to have hope of making that happen.*

I was thrilled to be selected for the training. I feel that all of us were exposed to the necessary tools and methods to feel capable of making changes in the community. My life has completely changed. I am now working as a translator and am talking with farm workers. This kind of work really speaks to me.

I really think we need a society where fair treatment exists. Since graduating from the programme, I no longer think of community development as a big concept. Before, I was overwhelmed with where to begin and who to help. There is so much to do. But Activate! helped me see that community development is as little as taking R10 and giving it to your neighbour. I see the importance and value of doing the small things, not that big things don't matter. I am also so grateful for the information I can share with my fellow community members.

Today, I'm working as a translator for the Fair Foods Program, engaging with farm workers and advocating for fair treatment. This work speaks to me. It's about ensuring that people's voices are heard and their stories aren't lost. My story is not unique to me but is one of 5000 fellow Activators across the country who I can lean on, learn from, and grow with. We're a family, a network that keeps getting stronger."

CASE STUDY

New premises for local organisation means expanded impact and care

PART OF CULTIVATING community ownership is putting our resources behind community-led priorities. Most often, this means investing in the long-term change that local organisations are driving. But it also means showing up for immediate needs—whether it's fixing a fence, supporting a local campaign or equipping a classroom. These responsive investments build trust, signal respect, and strengthen the foundation for lasting change. The Tsantsabane Centre of Hope (THC) in Postmasburg moved into a new facility in 2024, five years after a humble start. Now, the organisation's building is clean, secure and modern. The transformation was made possible through a collaboration between Lesedi Solar Plant, the Lesedi Solar Park Trust and Kolomela Mine.

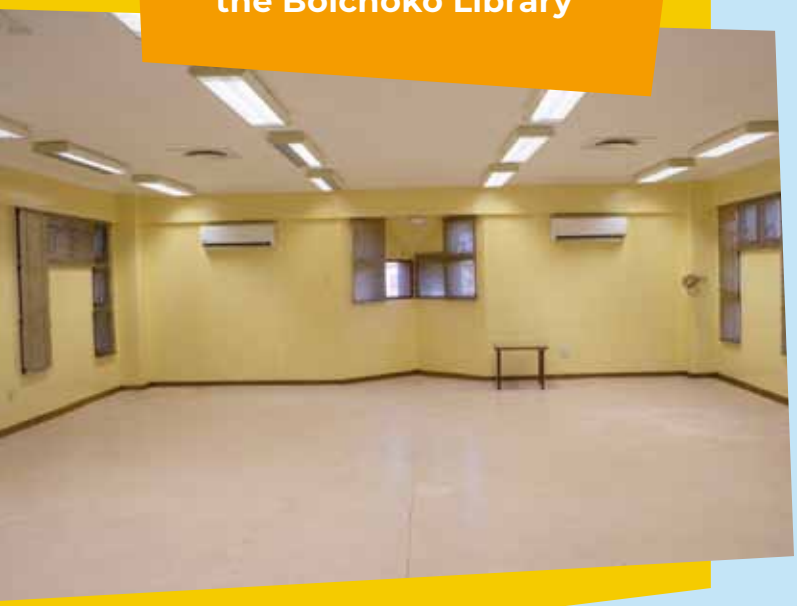
When TCH started in 2019 to care and support children in need, it operated out of the home of one of its founders. Despite being severely under-resourced, TCH has always been a safe haven for children. But needing to expand meant that the space had to adapt. Today TCH has a safer, more suitable container space, together with new toilets, a generator and JoJo water tank. TCH's new headquarters are also fenced in.

"TCH has more of a functional space in which to operate. This means we can help more people and hopefully build a more resilient future for all," said Marilyn Hael, co-founder of TCH.

The new Tsantsabane Centre of Hope building in Greenfield

CASE STUDY

Where readers can become leaders: Fixing the Boichoko Library



THE BOICHOKO LIBRARY is a critical anchor in the community. Not only is it a haven for reading and learning, but many events, training courses, and gatherings take place there. At Boichoko Library, reading clubs take place, and the Nali'bali Tuk-Tuk is stationed there.

When the roof started caving in, this community gem was under threat. But the Lesedi Solar Park Trust stepped in. The roof was fixed and the entire space was given a much-needed facelift. This allows literacy, leadership training and community cohesion to continue.

The Boichoko Library hall in Postmasburg, post-repairs

CASE STUDY

A new exam room at Kuilsville High School

MATRICULANTS STUDIED FOR and wrote their exams in a new private oasis at Kuilsville High School. The revamped exam room made a world of difference for students when studying for one of the most critical milestones in their lives. The exam room allowed students to comfortably write their exams without distractions and noise. For many matrics, a quiet, private exam centre is a gift in the context of overcrowded home and school environments.

Kuilsville is an under-resourced school with learners struggling to pass exams and others dropping out of school early. A new exam room has been conducive to learning and wellbeing. It is also an indication of the community's wider care and support, becoming an asset and investment in the area.

Kuilsville High school in Danielskuil hall with new privacy doors installed

CASE STUDY

Moving for mental health

IN THE EARLY MORNING of September 20, 2024, people of all ages and abilities joined the **My Journey Walk for Mental Health Awareness**. Lesedi Solar Park Trust was a partner at the event, assisting with t-shirt printing and branding and coordinating the walk.

The walk came at a crucial time, following major mining retrenchments. Mental health must continuously be promoted, monitored and advocated for in Northern Cape communities.

The event was a testament to community initiative and leadership, with the Trust supporting this, and encouraging more outreach events in the future. The event also showed that health priorities, such as mental wellbeing, are gaining traction.

RIGHT: *A participant of the My Journey Walk for Mental Health Awareness*

Danielskuil Intermediate School educators Matshidiso Matlhaba and Rebecca Segoje at a Common Good meeting

"Community engagement is a dynamic and ever-continuing conversation. Our goal is community ownership, which requires leadership. Investing in local NGOs to fulfil their missions sustainably is key, particularly if they have historically been under-resourced."

AMEEN AMOD
Trustee

STRATEGY #2

Implement integrated human development programmes

Venolia Kitchen at her SmartStart class

OUR FIVE-YEAR GOAL

Effectively drive human development outcomes for all stages, from pregnancy to employment, by investing in integrated and systematic programmes focused on local needs.

Ensuring children from poor communities grow to healthy and self-reliant adulthood is a complex and costly task. A number of things need to work well simultaneously and throughout one's life.

THE STRATEGY'S ESSENCE

- Building love and connections for children
- Reducing nutritional stunting and foetal alcohol syndrome
- Giving every child the benefit of early childhood development
- Improving the quality of education, including foundation phase literacy and numeracy development
- Creating new connections to opportunity for young people
- Building and expanding student-to-work linkages

> "We have 20-plus years here and we see that as a wonderful opportunity to really try and close gaps, from pregnancy to employment, and shift outcomes so that children born today will have better outcomes than their parents in 20 to 30 years."
>
> **SINAZO NKWELO**
> *Trustee*

The first thing to get right is investments early in a child's life, otherwise known as early childhood development (ECD) investments. Research shows that making the right investments early in a child's development not only sets up a child for developmental success later but can also reduce the cost of intervening in adolescence and adulthood.

Investments at later stages of human development also matter. Quality schooling can reduce the risk of poverty, but it doesn't eliminate it. Employment opportunities need to be created for young people so that they become self-reliant economic agents.

HOW?

- ✓ Models are implemented to increase social capital for poorer families.
- ✓ Provide pregnant and new moms with antenatal and postnatal support.
- ✓ We partner with the Department of Health's community health workers to support growth monitoring and access to health services for children in the first 1000 days of life. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are critical for brain development, setting the foundation for physical, cognitive, and emotional growth that influences lifelong health and well-being.
- ✓ We introduce a non-centre-based early learning programme to close the early learning access gap. A non-centre based model focuses on learning and development outside of traditional ECD centres, often within the home and community.
- ✓ Reading and numeracy accelerator catch-up programmes are implemented to improve foundation phase literacy and numeracy.
- ✓ Academic and non-academic interventions (e.g. sports for development) are introduced to prevent school dropout.
- ✓ A whole-school intervention is rolled out to support poor-performing schools improve their performance.
- ✓ Access to targeted and relevant information is provided to help young people find opportunities.
- ✓ A work-readiness programme is implemented and ongoing training for young people is provided.
- ✓ Poorer students are supported in completing post-school education.

"The children will remind me if I don't read to them. They will tell me it's time for me to read to them."

MOTHER WHO READS NALI'BALI BOOKS TO HER CHILDREN
(translated)

Christiano Mogabeng at his SmartStart class

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Healthy pregnancies and child nutrition

692
pregnant women and mothers were supported with antenatal and post-natal care

At baseline, only 53% of moms felt confident about being a parent; at endline this was **89%**

93%
of mothers were not consuming alcohol at the end of the programme, while almost all of them were using alcohol at the beginning of the programme

At baseline, only 56% of moms felt they had enough information about mom and baby services in their area.
All of them now report knowledge of services

Early childhood development and school readiness

Closing early learning access gap through SmartStart
Supporting literacy development in Early Learning Centres through Nal'ibali
Supporting caregivers as their child's first teacher through Nal'ibali

1 471
children attended trust-funded early learning playgroups

294
children in playgroups completed their final year in the early childhood development phase

83
caregivers were trained in WordWorks "Every Word Counts" programme, to support them to improve literacy and language development in the home

57
early learning practitioners were supported to close the early learning access gap

1 563
children benefitted from the support provided by Nalibali. Activities entail reading aloud, shared reading and play-based learning practices

All parents
All parents reported being more patient with their children owing to shared reading time and bonding

21
ECD centres were supported with weekly story sessions for the children, facilitated by a Story Sparker; weekly mentorship for the ECD practitioner from the Story Sparker; and a once off donation of Nal'ibali resources

128
community caregivers were trained as Story Sparkers (including those from Flourish)

177
books were stocked in Nali'bali reading tuktuks

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Foundation and intermediate phase literacy and numeracy

Bonolo Nyosi from Danielskuil Intermediate School during a TARL session

14
Reading Clubs were supported, reaching 532 children. Reading clubs involve meeting in a safe space to read and tell stories

7
schools received Story Spark Sessions, which entail interactive storytelling and reading activities to foster a love of reading and literacy. 2021 learners participated in these sessions

18
educators were trained in the Teaching and the Right Level (TaRL) methodology

2
Community-of-Practices were established between 28 Nali'bali trained practitioners

High school completion and reduction of NEET youth (not in education, employment or training)

98
educators were mentored

After an 18-month cocreation process and Service-Level Agreement,

1 high school
in the Lesedi area is working with Common Good to transform their schools systematically. School governing bodies, school management, teaching and non-teaching staff undergo a programme that includes leadership and governance training

The National Association of Child Care Workers supported

6 373
school learners from HTT Bidi Memorial, Refentse, Assmang Primary School, to remain in school with psychosocial support, homework assistance, group counselling, and external support referrals

1 766
high school learners identified as being at risk of dropping out of school were provided with psycho-social supported

315
students in grades 10 to 12 took part in the Post-School Readiness programme where they were prepared for post school phase

The Kgatelopele Municipality Mayor

Irene Williams, honoured Nal'ibali at the Women's Day Gala Dinner on 30 August 2024 with a certificate of appreciation, recognising the significant impact of the literacy development work in the communities of Kgatelopele.

4
libraries were restocked with books and 8 librarians trained

2
TaRL refresher trainings for past trainees were held

200
learners in grades 4-6 were reached in the pilot of an accelerated catch up programme in literacy and numeracy skills

18
educations from 4 primary schools were trained in the Teaching At The Right Level (TaRL) methodology

Learners initially on Beginner level at baseline has been reduced from 16.1% to
2.5%

Each pupil attended between
45-60
literacy sessions and numeracy sessions

All learners moved at least
2 levels up
in their Home Language from baseline to endline

5
local community members were trained in the TaRL methodology

29 421
multiliteracy supplements were distributed in newspapers and at post offices

Post-school enrolment / completion

41
matric students were assisted to apply for TVET and University

8
students were supported through University

28
students were supported through their TVET studies

Support for young people who are NEET

1
local CBO supported to establish a platform for supporting young people who are NEET

4
young people served in the steering committee of the newly established Youth Collective platform, which seeks to strengthen local services for young people

CASE STUDY

From underperforming to effective schools through leadership development

THE COMMUNITY BECAME CONCERNED about the quality of education and persistently low learner outcomes in schools based in the Lesedi Trust's catchment area. Many of the 17 schools in the vicinity are under-resourced and have poor pass rates. This primes school leaders and those in governance roles to be mentored and supported to increase their leadership efficacy and, in turn, improve their schools.

The Trust, therefore, identified the Public Schools Partnership (PSP) as a framework for whole-school-improvement. Their methodology is designed to support no-fee public schools, often struggling with low learner achievement, to achieve high-quality education. The partnership is formed between a no-fee public school, a provincial education department, and a non-profit civil society organisation that specialises in whole-school support. The non-profit partners with the school to increase its capacity, accountability and flexibility. The core focus is to create and sustain excellent management structures in schools, which includes supporting governance, instructional leadership, teaching, learning and operations.

The Common Good Foundation was chosen as the non-profit partner and a service-level agreement to establish a partnership between the provincial education department and the schools.

In 2024, Common Good began implementing the co-created vision with tailor-made packages for each of the schools they worked with: Ratang Thuto, HT Bidi Memorial and Danielskuil Intermediate School.

RESULTS

3 395

Learners impacted by improved school governance

98

Educators were mentored to work in partnership with their school governing bodies, school management team, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and learners to tackle school challenges systemically and not in isolation. Whole-systems training and guidance is provided.

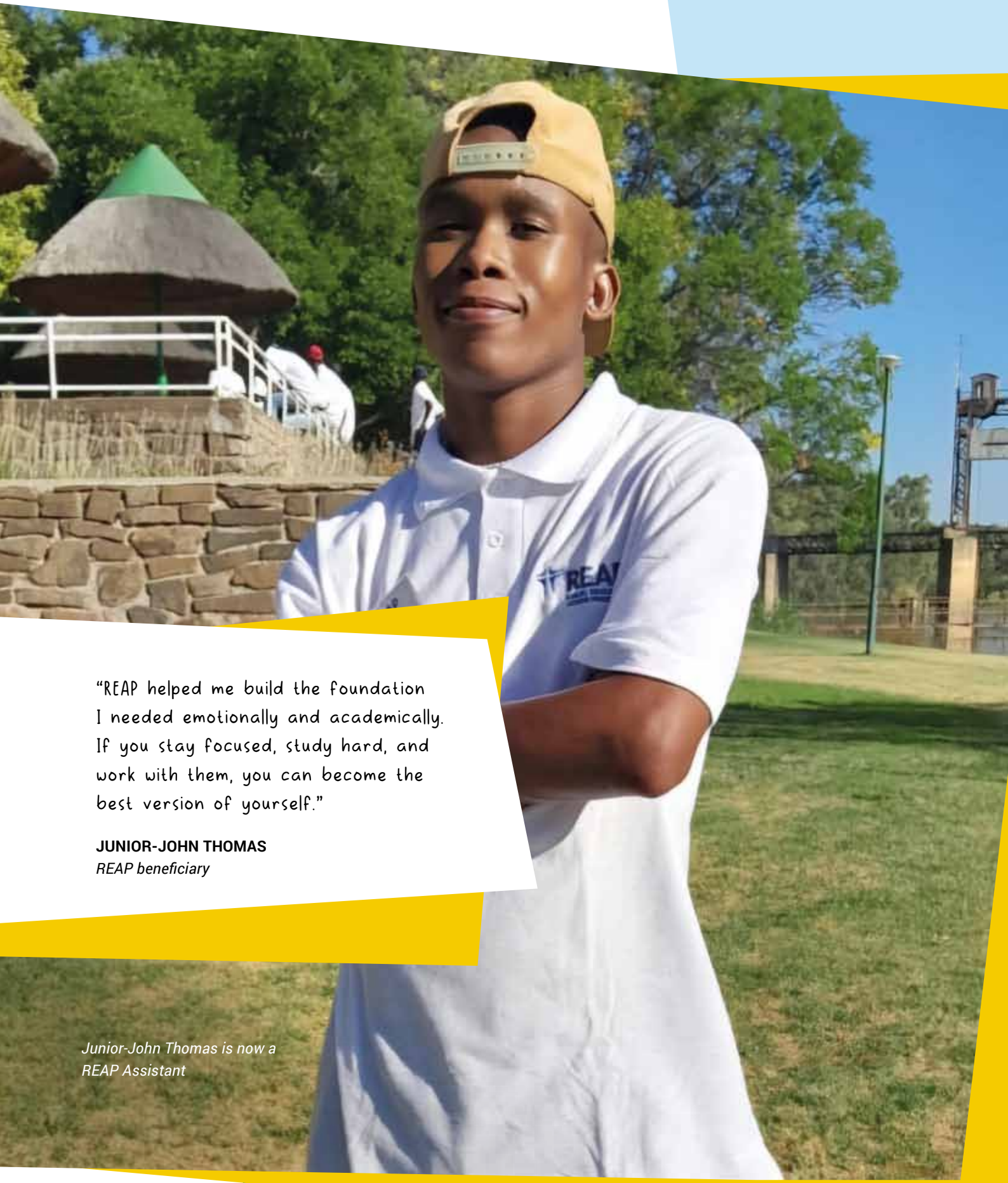
MsThuli Ngema - a teacher from Danielskuil Intermediate School - is assessed by Ms Nolu Yawa, a High School Instructional Coach for Common Good

"I learnt that we can build on the skills and systems we already have, and look to improve our governance and processes in areas that are not doing well. This meant we had to look at school budgets in a better way. We had to find where difficulties were experienced by every member of the school community and properly address those.

We feel lucky to have the support of a close mentor from Common Good who visits us every month. I enjoy our other weekly leadership meetings, too. We listen to speakers on the different facets of leadership and their experiences in their leadership roles. We also have a team supporting us with the school's finances. We have a robust budget and know how to do our monthly reports now because we have a much better online management system.

What is so great about this partnership is that everybody gets individual attention. The School Governing Body, for example, is assisted with strengthening its governance and oversight of the school."

ZIPHO POOLO
Danielskuil Intermediate School's headmaster



"REAP helped me build the foundation I needed emotionally and academically. If you stay focused, study hard, and work with them, you can become the best version of yourself."

JUNIOR-JOHN THOMAS
REAP beneficiary

Junior-John Thomas is now a REAP Assistant

CASE STUDY

Building social capital to thrive in the world

"MY NAME IS JUNIOR-JOHN THOMAS, *and I grew up in Danielskuil, where I attended Kuilsville High School. I am one of the beneficiaries of the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP), which provides academic support to high school learners between Grade 10 and 12.*

I joined REAP when I was in Grade 10, and as uncertainty about life after school surfaced. By Grade 12, I still wasn't sure what I wanted to study, but at least I felt supported to get there with REAP guiding me by helping me explore my options. REAP isn't just about career fairs and general advice. They provide one-on-one guidance, the kind that makes learners feel seen, heard, and capable. They helped me set goals, build essential skills, and make a plan, even when my future felt unclear.

In 2023, I started college. I wanted to study electrical engineering, but my matric results didn't meet the requirements. It was tough to accept, but I had to be realistic. My second option was management assistance, a field I hadn't initially considered but one that I qualified for. I started with an NQF Level 4, and now, I'm proud to say I've worked my way up to an NQF Level 6 certificate.

Getting to this point wasn't easy, but I couldn't have done it without REAP. They didn't just support me academically; they were there physically and emotionally too. And that made all the difference. Having someone to talk to, someone who believed in me, kept me going.

Looking back, my advice to others who want to join the PSET programme is simple: Be eager to learn and do your part. Stay off the streets, stay home, and put in the work. I have been fortunate to not only participate in the REAP programme but also contribute the same support I received to other young people - this time as an employee of REAP, coming full circle with the programme that enabled the milestones I have achieved in my journey."

CASE STUDY

Starting well, ending well: Olga's story

"MY NAME IS OLGA FREEMAN, *and I run a playgroup in Danielskuil. What started as a small group of children has now become a space where little ones are nurtured, loved, and given the best possible start in life. Today, some of the children who pass through my playgroup go on to excel in primary schools in our area. That fills me with so much pride because it shows that the foundation we are laying here is strong and lasting.*

I believe that when we invest in young children, we are investing in the future of our community. As a SmartStart Early Learning Practitioner, I have been trained to deliver a programme that ensures every child in my care is prepared for school and beyond. It is more than just teaching numbers and letters; it is about making sure that each child feels seen, heard, and valued.

My playgroup is not just a place to learn; it is a place where children feel safe and loved. I go the extra mile to meet each child where they are, giving special attention to those who need it. This way, no one is left behind. Parents contribute R100 a month, which helps with small essentials, and every little bit goes a long way.

The community has been so supportive of my work. Parents tell me how much their children love coming here. One parent recently said, 'Our children receive plenty of motherly love and look forward to coming to the playgroup every day. We can see the difference in them.' Hearing that reminds me why I do this work.

Being a part of the SmartStart network has not only allowed me to earn an income but also to give back to my community by shaping the minds and hearts of the next generation. And as long as there are children who need a safe space to learn and grow, I will keep opening my doors and giving my best."

"Since I've run a SmartStart school my life is so fulfilling. It is my passion to work with children. I reach many of them and really make an impact. I am grateful for the resources and infrastructure that SmartStart has given me. It really helps me to stay positive when things are tough. If I were still in a shack or shanty house, it would get flooded if it rained. Now, with our container, we don't have this problem. We also have proper toilets. Our container is also beautifully decorated and our learning materials are effective and a lot of fun to work with. All these things support teaching and learning,"

OLGA FREEMAN
SmartStart practitioner

Olga Freeman with one of the young children in her SmartStart playgroup in Danielskuil

CASE STUDY

No child left behind: The case for accelerated learning programmes

IN SOUTH AFRICA, nearly eight in every 10 learners struggle to read for meaning. This has implications for critical thinking because learners may be able to read words aloud or recognise vocabulary, but they struggle to understand the main idea, details, or inferences in a text. They may not grasp the sequence of events, cause-effect relationships, or the author's intent.

Understanding the crucial role of language in learning, TARL adopts a bilingual approach in schools served by the Lesedi Solar Park Trust. By ensuring learners understand the language of instruction, TARL not only enhances literacy skills but also facilitates success across all subjects.

In partnership with the Zero Dropout Campaign, the Trust launched the Reading for Meaning and Maths Matters programmes based on the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) method in response to this. Recognising the multifaceted nature of the challenge, TaRL adopts an accelerated catch-up approach designed to equip learners with essential skills within a short timeframe. TaRL focuses on bridging foundational literacy and numeracy gaps that hinder academic progress. By condensing essential learning objectives from grades 1 to 3 into a comprehensive six-month programme, TaRL empowers learners who are now in grades 4 to 6 to catch up on missed milestones and build a strong educational foundation.

Central to the success of the programme is the dedication of well-trained facilitators who receive ongoing mentorship and guidance. To ensure a whole-child approach to learning and to plug educational gaps, schools work with the National Association of Child Care Workers, which provides personalised support to learners. Each facilitator works with 40 children and tailors instructions accordingly.

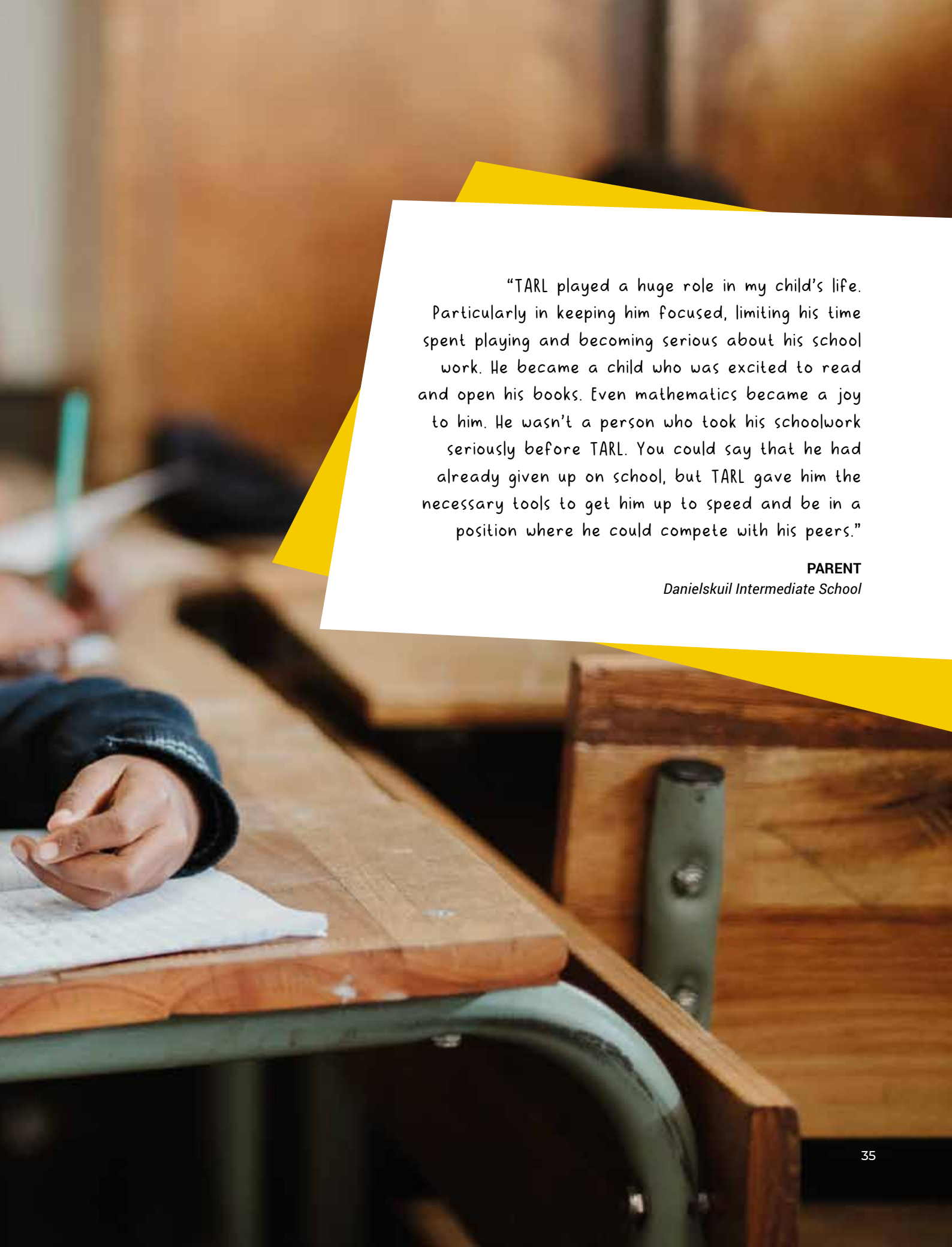
Claudia Stanfield, Project Lead for Reading for Meaning, says a learner's poor academic performance is an indicator that they are likely to drop out of school. *"Through our programme, we see a massive improvement in the children's performance. It's heartening to see that children who were really struggling are now receiving academic prizes. We know the methodology works because all children improved two levels in both their home languages and English."*

"In TARL we got to learn about Maths; they taught us the bundle and stitch method and did multiplication tables and money games. The money game had division and subtraction in it and it was a lot of fun! We also did syllabus and reading charts in both Setswana and English. TARL helped me to pass my grade and improve my marks in Setswana, English, and Maths."

GRADE 5 LEARNER
Danielskuil Intermediate School

Danielskuil Intermediate School learner Boichoko Mosimanyana participating in a TARL session

Danielskuil Intermediate School learner Gosego Seinolo during a TIMCA session



"TARL played a huge role in my child's life. Particularly in keeping him focused, limiting his time spent playing and becoming serious about his school work. He became a child who was excited to read and open his books. Even mathematics became a joy to him. He wasn't a person who took his schoolwork seriously before TARL. You could say that he had already given up on school, but TARL gave him the necessary tools to get him up to speed and be in a position where he could compete with his peers."

PARENT
Danielskuil Intermediate School

STRATEGY #3

Create opportunities for economic participation

OUR FIVE-YEAR GOAL

Create access to new job opportunities and optimise our investment injection as an economic stimulant and job creator.

OUR THIRD STRATEGY focuses on the labour demand side of the economic equation, ensuring that there are meaningful employment opportunities and other economic activities for the talent we develop.

Most importantly, we want our local communities to become a valued source of human capital and potential.

However, unemployment is rife in the Northern Cape, as it is elsewhere in South Africa. While Statistics South Africa's labour market statistics showed marginal improvement in employment in 2024's fourth quarter, the facts remain sobering. Indeed, 8 million people are unemployed, 3.5 million are discouraged job seekers, and 13 million are not economically active.

Unemployment is a structural issue in this country, with a mismatch between the skills and qualifications of the available workforce and the requirements of available jobs. It is also a matter of stagnant employment opportunities, coupled with high population growth and net inflows (many people entering and not leaving) into the labour market.

To break the cycles of poverty and unemployment, we must equip the market with the right skills and drive growth in labour-absorptive industries. Without this, economic stagnation will persist. In response, the Trust is committed to being a catalyst for sustainable development through a focused strategy aimed at delivering impact in three key areas:

1. **FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP** by nurturing the growth of both formal and informal small businesses, unlocking local innovation and job creation.
2. **DIVERSIFYING LOCAL ECONOMIES** by investing in new labour-absorptive industries, reducing over-reliance on mining, and laying the groundwork for long-term resilience and sustainability in these communities.
3. **STIMULATING LOCAL MARKETS** through our investment choices, we prioritise local suppliers across all our operations to ensure our spending directly benefits the communities we serve.

Marina Plaatjies and Keromeng Kolberg at the Bomajakathata Food garden in Groenwater

The Trust, through its funded projects, ensures that community economic ventures are supported and mobilised. In particular, 3 micro-enterprises were supported - two in Danielskuil and two in Postmasburg. All small businesses completed our small business training, which included entrepreneurial skills, computer skills, budgeting, tendering, and new venture creation. All businesses received basic equipment for running their business, while some received business-specific equipment.

One of the key project implementations in 2024 was the cultivation of small-scale agricultural projects and food gardens for four community-based organisations, the Kgatelopele Social Development Forum, Agape Community Upliftment Projects, Bomaja ja Thatha Cooperative (the Groenwater Garden), and SmartStart.

In the Northern Cape, food household insecurity and poverty coexist with harsh environmental conditions, such as drought and intense heat. However, the community-based organisations that were part of the food garden initiative found a way to work with the resources they had to start addressing, both meaningfully supplementing their diets with nutrient-dense food and plotting a path forward to create an income stream. Skills imparted included permaculture techniques, water saving, garden management and sales of excess produce.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ Increased vegetable production for household consumption, donations, and sales.
- ✓ Improved soil quality, transforming from light brown to dark brown, enriched with organic matter.
- ✓ Empowerment of beneficiaries with technical skills to grow their food and train others.
- ✓ 29 people were trained in permaculture methods
- ✓ Training focus areas were soil and water management, compost making, mulching, bed preparation, interplanting, vermiculture, and the development of production plans and planting calendars.
- ✓ SCAT provided funding, capacity building and technical support
- ✓ R643 499,15 was spent on two boreholes to sustain the gardens.
- ✓ Ensured high-quality vegetables for local markets, fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth within the community.
- ✓ Installed essential infrastructure such as water tanks and shade nets, improving garden sustainability and resilience.
- ✓ Provided guidance and mentorship to beneficiaries, empowering them with knowledge and skills for successful gardening.
- ✓ Fostered a culture of peer learning, where farmers teach each other, creating a network of agroecology educators.

Marina Plaatjies, Kedilatile Grace Seleka and Sophie Van Rooi are co-founders of Bomajakathata Food Garden in Groenwater

"With permaculture, we embrace whole-systems thinking. We care for the earth so that life systems can thrive and multiply. We care for people and train them to access and harness natural resources. We also believe in the 'fair share' principle: people should take what they need and reinvest the rest. Waste is also returned directly in the system."

COLLEEN ALEXANDER
Senior Programme Officer at SCAT

FOOD GARDEN ACHIEVEMENTS

Kgatelopele Social Development Forum (KSDF) food garden feeds:

350 beneficiaries **216** households **46** children
PLUS **6 671** cooked meals over two months

Groenwater food garden helps feed:

1 800 children in surrounding schools
PLUS sells vegetables to **20-30** people

Agape Community Upliftment Project feeds:

62 children **25** senior citizens **50** unemployed youth volunteers
PLUS distributes vegetables among **130** people during harvest

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Jobs and livelihood opportunities created in 2024 by trust-funded activities

SmartStart — 57 practitioners and 1 project coordinator

Grow Great Flourish — 7 hosts and 1 Project Coordinator

Nal'ibali — 2 Literacy Mentors and 7 Story Sparkers

DGMT — 1 communications officer

Accelerated Catch Up — 1 mentor, 10 facilitators and 1 coordinator

Split Second Science — 8 robotics teachers

Captain Fanplastic — **8 Youth Facilitators** Composting Bins (hand-made) **and 1 local supplier** Recycling Bins | Build-It Postmasburg + Bins delivery **and 1 Waste Manager**

NACCW — 15 child and youth care workers

Activate! — 4 participants of the current cohort of the ACD In-Community programme have been connected to an employment opportunity with the Fair Foods programme

FETCH — 4 coaches employed offering personalised support to under-served youth

Brumilda Malaat at a Flourish session in Danielskuil

CASE STUDY

Our Daily Bread: Food for subsistence, income and community care

"MY NAME IS DOROTHEA WILLEMSE. *My journey began with SCAT's food garden project. They introduced us to permaculture, a way of growing food that works with nature, recycles waste, and creates gardens that can take care of themselves over time. It's perfect for our community because it doesn't require expensive tools or fertilisers - just patience, effort, and a love for the land.*

I started my garden in 2023. Back then, I was buying seeds from the local Spar and learning through SCAT training. Today, I'm growing enough vegetables to feed not only my family but also the children at my ECD centre. Four days a week, they receive a nutritious, home-cooked meal made from what I harvest right here in the yard.

I'm more than just a gardener; I'm also a SmartStart practitioner. My playgroup is right here, within the same yard as the garden. The children play, learn, and eat surrounded by the food I grow. It's a full circle that keeps me going, knowing that what I plant in the ground ends up nourishing young bodies and minds.

I also sell vegetables to people in the community who buy from me regularly. And when there's more than enough, I share it with other SmartStart practitioners so they can also provide meals for their children. The dream is to keep growing until I can bring in other practitioners to join me in cultivating food. Imagine a network of SmartStart gardens, each one feeding our little ones. That's where I want to go.

Each season teaches me something new. Each harvest reminds me that even the smallest seeds can grow into something powerful and life-giving. And one day, I hope this garden will do more than just feed a few — it will feed many. Because when we plant seeds in the soil, we're also planting seeds of hope in our community."

Permaculture is a sustainable way of growing food that works with nature, not against it. It uses local resources, recycles waste, and designs gardens that take care of themselves over time. This makes it ideal for poor communities because it reduces the need for expensive tools, fertilisers, or constant labour while improving soil health, saving water, and providing healthy, long-term food sources.

Dorothea Willemse is a SmartStart practitioner and food garden owner

STRATEGY #4

Foster safe and enabling environments

Onthatile Kgaladi (in front) and Keamogetse Leburu (behind) at a REAP session in Kuilsville

OUR FIVE-YEAR GOAL

Work collaboratively with community stakeholders, government, and other funders to drive positive social and environmental change.

"We aim to drive lasting change by fostering collaboration and creating safer, more inclusive spaces."

FRITZ STEENKAMP
Community Trustee

Thriving communities require food security, access to clean water and sanitation, less exposure to toxic psychological and environmental stress, and safety and security.

In 2023, the Trust wanted to understand the broader social environments influencing children's development. This research data formed the basis for implementing activities and nurturing partnerships in our fourth strategic area: Fostering safe and enabling environments. The work is still in its early stages, but our participatory action research, which explored the local experiences of gender-based violence and substance abuse, yielded important insights into how to create safe, supportive environments.

In essence, our strategy focuses on creating safe, supportive environments by addressing key social challenges such as gender-based violence and substance abuse.

Neighbourhoods marked by concentrated poverty significantly affect youth outcomes. In such areas, limited access to safe recreational spaces, positive role models, and essential services can contribute to adverse behaviours, particularly during adolescence—a period marked by a desire for independence.

We collaborate with local municipalities to improve infrastructure, including waste management, and enhance community well-being.

While tackling the scourge of social ills, the goal of our work is to empower and offer opportunities to local community members. Together with our implementing partners, the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA), Southern African Alcohol Policy Alliance (SAAPA) and the Rural Development Support Programme (RDSP), community members were trained in substance abuse methodologies and approaches. The participants were equipped to work with select CBOs offering substance abuse outreach.

A parent of learners at Danielskuil Intermediate School picks up her children from school

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

22
participants were trained in substance abuse prevention

16
participants were educated in the broad range of substance use disorders

16
professionals were trained in drug testing and the Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) methodology

17
participants were helped to understand and refine the Guidelines for the Management of Psychoactive Substance Intoxication and Withdrawal

22
local CBO leaders were capacitated with undertaking organisational baseline assessments

22
participants were briefed on talk-based mentoring

19
participants had ongoing monthly virtual mentoring sessions

18
CBO staff participated in an alcohol policy strengthening programme to improve legislation and access to rights

CASE STUDY

Turning a life around: From addict to active helper

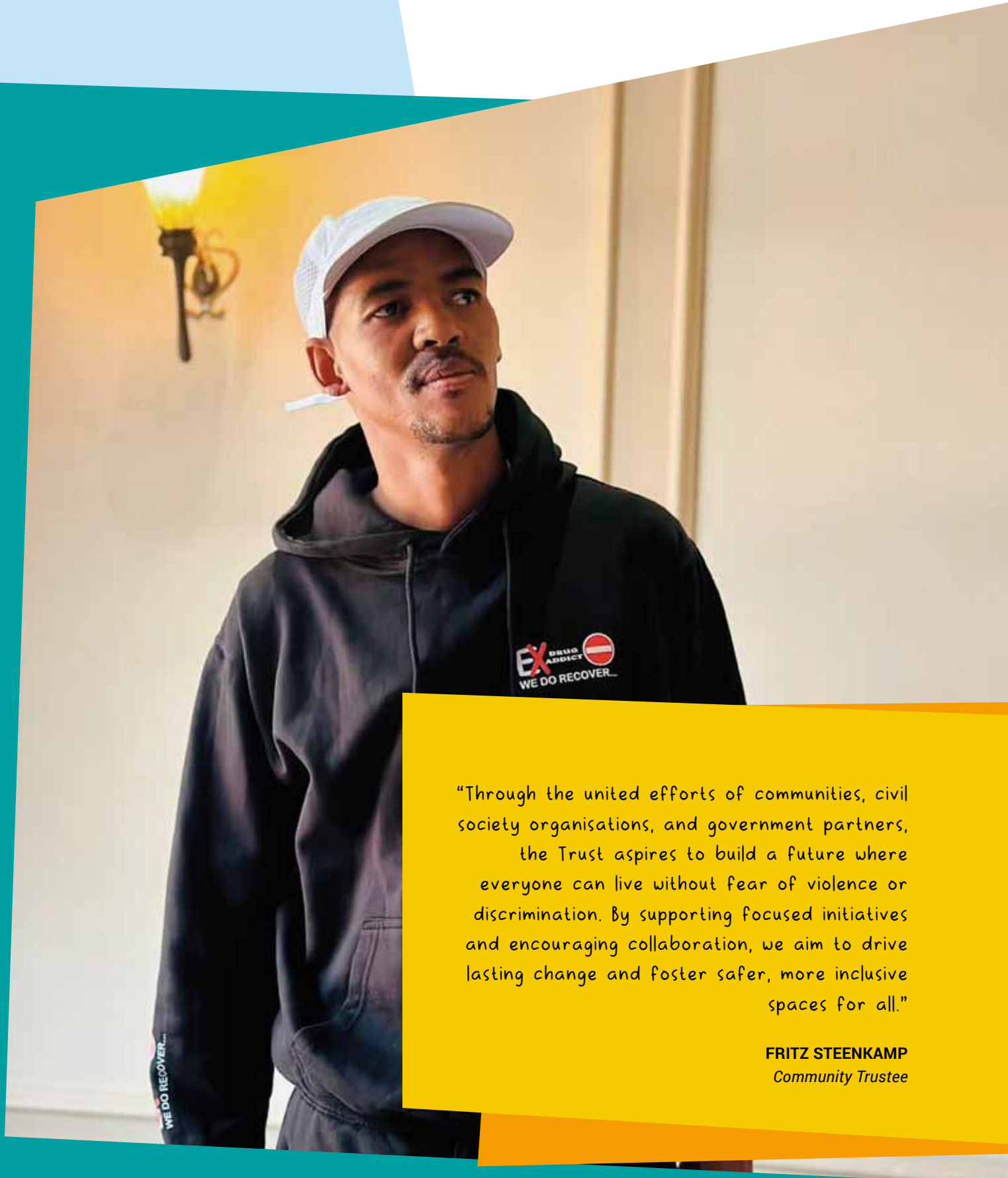
"MY NAME IS MCDONALD MATTHIAS MARÈÈ, *and I live in Postmasburg. I am a recovering drug addict, and after 11 years of being trapped in addiction, I finally found my way out. It was not easy, but I discovered a new purpose I want to help others find.*

I learned about the Tsantsabane Alcohol and Drug Services (TADS) through the Vroue Aksie Soup Kitchen. TADS gave me the tools and training to speak to others about substance abuse, what it is, how it affects our lives, and how to fight it. Most people in our community do not know the dangers, and that is where I come in. I tell them, 'There is life after drugs.'

I co-founded Gift of Desperation with another former addict, Quinton. It is a support group where we reach out to those who feel lost and hopeless, just as we once did. We share our stories, our struggles, and how we are rebuilding our lives. For me, faith has been my anchor. I believe I am called to let people know that no matter how far they have fallen, there is still a way out.

At Gift of Desperation, we do not just talk about recovery; we live it. We do outreach in schools, churches, and hospitals, sharing our stories and connecting people to TADS for support. My mission is simple: to spread the message that life after addiction is not only possible, but also beautiful. When we surrender our lives to God, we do not just heal ourselves; we can help heal others too."

Tsantsabane Alcohol and Drug Services youth workers with local learners at a recent career exhibition they participated in



"Through the united efforts of communities, civil society organisations, and government partners, the Trust aspires to build a future where everyone can live without fear of violence or discrimination. By supporting focused initiatives and encouraging collaboration, we aim to drive lasting change and foster safer, more inclusive spaces for all."

FRITZ STEENKAMP
Community Trustee

McDonald Mattheus Marèè participated in alcohol and substance abuse training and went on to co-found Gift of Desperation

"Our communities are hopeful, vibrant, and co-creating solutions to end intergenerational poverty and systemic exclusion"

BRONGENE CLOETE
Trustee

Learners of Danielskuil Intermediate School at the end of their school day

Financial overview

TABLE 1

Funds received and disbursed by DGMT from the Lesedi Solar Park Trust

	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024
OPENING CASH POSITION	R16 754 602,82	R6 435 121,76	R19 780 949,27	R9 470 594,77
Dividends received	-	R17 812 653,30	R650 000,00	R8 538 400,00
Interest Income	R 285 632,68	R329 364.19	R300 852.38	R128 924.31
CASH INFLOWS	R285 632,68	R18 142 017,49	R950 852,38	R8 667 324,31
CASH OUTFLOWS	-R10 664 660,56	-R4 757 398,80	-R11 321 036,09	-R10 762 760,33
CLOSING CASH POSITION	R6 375 574,94	R19 819 740,45	R9 410 765,56	R7 375 158,76

TABLE 1 shows the funds received and disbursed by the DGMT from the Lesedi Solar Park Trust

FIGURE 1

Distribution of the funds managed by DGMT per area as contained in our four strategy areas

AREA	AMOUNT
ECD	R6 341 026,00
Education	R8 941 128,14
Psychosocial Support	R3 273 928,00
Post School Education	R4 124 000,00
CBO Support	R6 835 000,00
Communications	R530 303,53
Waste Management	R415 000,00
SMME support	R55 220,00
Youth development	R1 804 000,00
Access to data	R488 000,00
Monitoring and Evaluation	R281 882,50
Substance Abuse Programmes	R3 489 453,00
Sports Programme	R600 000,00
Donations	R146 485,23
Stakeholder engagement	R121 158,24
Banking costs	R59 271,97
TOTAL	**R37 505 856,61**

FIGURE 1 shows the distribution of the funds managed by DGMT per area as contained in our four strategy areas. We have also included details of the support we provide, including communications and monitoring and evaluation.

Nthabeleng Mogolegeng is a young learner at Danielskuil Intermediate School

FIGURE 2

Distribution of funds managed by DGMT across the four pillars of the strategy

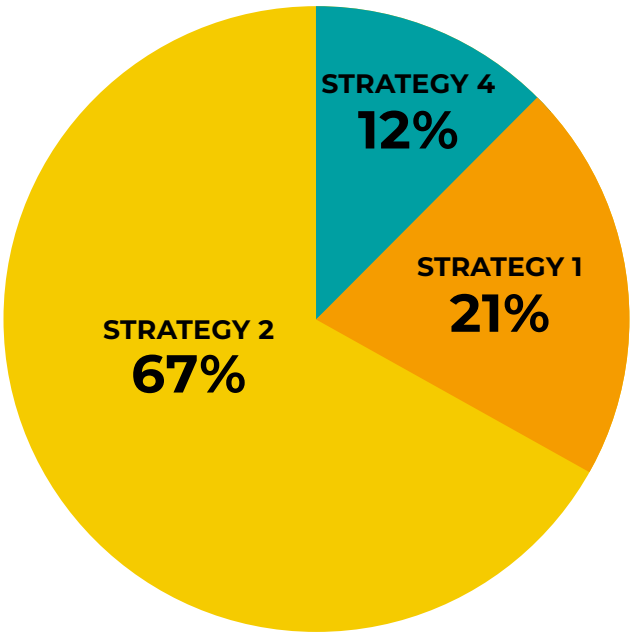


FIGURE 3 shows that the bulk of our investment have been in **STRATEGY 2**: *Implement integrated human development programs from cradle to employment*. This aligns with the table able above, which shows that investments in Education and ECD have been the greatest.

The second biggest area of spend is **STRATEGY 1:** *Cultivate community engagement and ownership*. The greatest drivers of spend in this area have been our support to community based-organisations via SCAT, our investment in communications, and donations we make through our relief fund allocations. The other two areas of strategy are still nascent, and investment will continue to grow over time.

In summary taking a deeper look at spend, specifically in 2024, DGMT received funding from the Lesedi Solar Park Trust quarterly, following approval of funding proposals at each board meeting. In total, R27 million was received in 2024 from the Lesedi Trust dividends, and R37 million of this was distributed to implementing partners and service providers by the end of the calendar year.

Looking ahead

Driving collective action for lasting impact

OUR WORK HAS always been grounded in making accurate assessments of community needs and directing impactful investments that shift outcomes for those we serve. As we look ahead, we remain committed to this approach. However, we recognise that achieving impact at scale and ensuring long-term sustainability requires deeper collaboration with key stakeholders, including mining companies, independent power producers (IPPs), and local government. Equally important is fostering shared ownership of the vision for change within the broader community.

A critical part of this effort is fostering more dialogue with communities to ensure shared responsibility and ownership for their future. Parents must take up their rightful role as their children's first teachers. Government departments, such as the Department of Social Development (DSD), need to support the rollout of adequate social services. The National Development Agency (NDA) must step in to strengthen and fund local NGOs.

We cannot achieve the change that is needed alone. Moving forward, our priority will be to establish shared agendas with communities around key strategies and to facilitate collective action toward achieving these outcomes. By working together, we can build stronger, more resilient communities that thrive beyond our interventions.

Tamia Du Plooy at a Flourish antenatal class which addressed the importance of exercise during pregnancy

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Letlotlo Goitsilwe and Elvecha Zacharia during a REAP session at Kuilsville High School