

Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development Community of Practice Meeting Highlights 5 November 2020



SETTING THE SCENE

Penreach ECD Director, Thulile Makofane, facilitated the final Mpumalanga ECD CoP for the year 2020. The purpose of this CoP was to:

- Reflect on approaches to building multi-stakeholder partnerships, as per the Do More Foundation's Leave No Child Behind Initiative.
- Understand the Department of Social Development's (DSD) 11 September Directions for ECD Programmes and share insights on practitioners' approaches to the re-opening of ECD centres.



OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION: LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND –DO MORE FOUNDATION

Jabulile Mthembu-Dlamini presented on the Do More Foundation's Leave No Child Behind Initiative, which is geared towards the implementation of the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP) in Local Municipal Wards 16 and 19 of the Nkomazi Region, in Mpumalanga. The programme is multi-faceted; it touches on various aspects of NIECDP; and is multi-partnered, with various stakeholders playing an implementing and coordinating role. To this end, the Do More Foundation works with DSD, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as well as the Department of Health (DoH), in collaboration with the local community, the Nkomazi Local Municipality and local businesses in the area. The main objective of the Initiative is to concretise the NIECDP and make it tangible through application.

“We have seen the benefit of working in a collaborative way: we achieve more quicker; the impact is bigger and there is more benefit for the communities we are serving.” – Jabulile Mthembu- Dlamini, Do More Foundation.

The Do More Foundation implements the following services in line with the needs outlined in the NIECDP.

- **Maternal Health Services** - The foundation partners with the DoH and the Grow Great Campaign to workshop pregnant women on the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD).
- **Parental and Care-Giver Support** – This programme was developed with the aim of providing training and support services to Community Works Programme (CWP) participants on parenting, in line with the parenting support initiative by UNICEF and the DSD.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention Services for the protection of young children** – This is a programme to ensure that ECD personnel are checked against the Sexual Offenders Register, to maximise child safety. The Foundation has partnered with the South African Police Services (SAPS) in this regard.
- **Infrastructure and Services For ECD** - A programme that ropes in various partners to provide infrastructure support to ECD Centres such that these centres are able to meet the DSD registration standards.
- **Child Health Services** – This is a partnership with the DoH to ensure that children in Nkomazi region communities have access to health facilities. The Grow Great campaign supports this by ensuring that health services reach children who do not have access to early learning programmes.
- **Stimulation and Early Learning Programmes** – A programme that ensures that practitioners are qualified and are well trained, in collaboration with Ntataise and other funders

The project is currently in two local municipal wards and seven villages, and the following are among its key achievements:



Click [here](#) to see Jabulile’s full presentation.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question : How do you get the partners, and maintain the partnerships?

Answer: The biggest strength of the Foundation is playing a supporting and coordinating role. The Foundation is the one on the ground, so it is able to inform partners and bring them on board. The Foundation collaborates with stakeholders who have an interest in ECD. The Foundation's coordination role is crucial.

Question: Does the Foundation play a coordination role, and mobilise the stakeholders itself?

Answer: Yes, for example, *Nalibali* had Siswati books that the community could benefit from. The Foundation approached *Nalibali* for the books, and these were delivered.

Question: How are you partnered with SmartStart?

Answer: Through the nutrition support services of the Initiative, where perishable goods, like peanut butter and porridge are donated.

Question: In reference to Slide 9 of the presentation, how did you get the DoH on board? Any advice on this kind of partnership?

Answer: it's important to get buy-in from the top, and to find people who can direct you to the relevant stakeholders/ departments. Networks and accountability, in a nutshell.

Question: with regards to the various national ECD campaigns since lock down, is there participation and engagement from ECD centres in the community?

Answer: The Foundation supports, but there's also a Young Child Forum where these conversations and campaigns are shared

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub, as are any other specific knowledge products relevant to ECD. [Here](#) is the link to this.



UNDERSTANDING THE DSD 11 SEPTEMBER DIRECTIONS FOR ECD PROGRAMMES

BRIDGE ECD Project Manager, Thandeka Rantsi, presented on the last National ECD CoP meeting's discussions on the DSD 11 September Directions for ECD Programmes. The Directions were issued by the minister of social development on 11 September 2020, to guide the process of reopening ECD centres.

Reflecting on the following questions, are ECDs able to reopen? Are they aware of what needs to happen for them to re-open, practitioners shared the following challenges, approaches and strategies applied in response to the directives:

Challenges

- Some ECD centres have not been able to re-open, because their centres are too small to adhere to the 1.5 social distancing regulations.
- Where Centre's have been able to open, some practitioners have found it difficult to maintain the social distancing regulation, as children are likely to play and interact beyond the demarcated areas.
- Some parents and caregivers cannot personally drop their children, which compromises the quality of screening conversations, in some instances, and has created record-keeping barriers as a result.
- Parents and caregivers are still weary of bringing children to school.
- Infrastructural challenges have compromised the sanitary and safety processes in some cases.
- Encouraging children to keep their masks on has been challenging.
- School fees are not being paid for children who haven't returned to ECD Centres.

Strategies

- Some centres have summarised the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and created a screening checklist based on the regulations.
- In some instances, centres were furnished with soap and sanitisation resources, and follow-ups are conducted regularly to monitor how the protocols are implemented.
- The SOP checklists and instruments used have set times for screening and sanitisation.
- Coaching and mentoring on SOP regulations has encouraged compliance from practitioners. 78 out of 105 Penreach ECD centres have re-opened and are on board with this, for example.
- Distributing sanitary packs and PPEs has enabled the centres to be compliant with the health and safety standards outlined by DSD. In some cases, this was accompanied by meetings to review re-opening challenges.
- Distribution of food vouchers for nutritional support.
- Providing training on health and safety protocols for centre managers ahead of time, helped with the re-opening process.

- The use of radio media to reach parents and children who are not yet back at the ECD centres.
- Home visits for children who aren't back. Some centres have opted to phase in the children to accommodate the 1.5 m social distancing.



National ECD CoP summary - ECD and the Law

On 20 October 2020, the National ECD CoP convened to discuss key legislation affecting ECD practitioners, and some of the key mechanism available to influence the law to better serve the sector. Lizette Berry, a senior researcher from the Children's Institute, presented on the the Children's Act; while Nurina Ally, a lecturer in the Department of Public Law at the University of Cape Town, presented on the current Children's Amendment Bill (B18-2020). Thandeka Rantsi recalled key points from the National ECD CoP Presentations and summarised the issues as per Lizette's and Nurina's presentations

Key Issues around the Children's Amendment Bill (B18-2020)

Key challenges in a nutshell

- ✓ **Registration (dual) requirements are onerous and unrealistic**
- ✓ **Duplication/conflict between different requirements**
- ✓ **Poor recognition/differentiation of programme modalities – limited funding**
- ✓ **Conflation between entry requirements and good practice standards?**
- ✓ **Poor recognition of context – failure to apply Power to assist and Conditional registration**
- ✓ **Young children excluded, perpetuates inequality, compromised development**

Thandeka shared that key issues identified have led to a campaign to address the core reforms needed in the legislation to strengthen the ECD sector. This campaign is led by Real Reform, who are advocating for the following reforms:

- ① **We need a one-step registration process for ECD providers** and different types of ECD providers must be regulated differently.
- ② **All children** attending any type of ECD programme should be able to **access the early learning subsidy** if they need it.
- ③ **Simpler, adequate health, safety and programme standards** must be in place and must be accessed through one process.
- ④ **It must be made clear that you can get conditional registration** if you can't meet all the registration requirements and MECs must **support** providers to meet requirements and **report** on their systems of support.
- ⑤ **The infrastructure needs of the sector must be supported.**

This campaign can be supported in [3 main ways](#):

- By making a submission to Parliament
- By signing the Real Reform Petition
- By signing your organisations name onto the Real Reform Campaign.

To access a more comprehensive outline of the National ECD CoP's discussions on the Children's Amendment Bill (B18-2020) click [here](#)

CHECK OUT

Thulile thanked the participants for the fruitful discussion on issues that were closely affecting all of us in ECD. The CoP will reconvene in 2021. Dates will be communicated in due course and participants were urged to express the topics that they would like discussed through this forum.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name and Surname	Organisation
Daniel Mdluli	Penreach
Frank Makwakwa	Singita Lowveld Trust
Glory Mkhonza	Halls Properties
Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini	Do More Foundation
Jabulani	Singita Lowveld Trust
Jabulile Sibiya	
Johanna Ndlovu	
Martha Moyane	Mtfunyelwa DC Centre
Modupi Mazibuko	Smartstart
Msesi Simelane	Penreach
Dr. Pat Moodley	DBE
Righardt le Roux	Nalibali
Shelly Alkema	Singita Lowveld Trust
Solly Sarela	Penreach
Sue Mushwana	Penreach
Tirelo	Penreach
Thulile Mnisi	Penreach
Thandi Mgaga	Cotlands
Thomas Mokoena	Sheepgate Preschool
Thandi Ubisi	Sakhasive ECD
Thandeka Rantsi	BRIDGE
Virginia Mashiane	BRIDGE