

# BRIDGE

JULY- AUGUST 2021

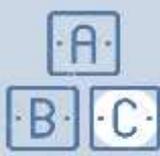


## KZN ECD COP SOLIDARITY: REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED



FOCUS AREA:  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT**





## Background

The provinces of Kwa Zulu Natal (KZN) and Gauteng (GP) had been hit by a string of violent civil unrest that devastated businesses and infrastructure in communities. KZN was by far hit the hardest with targeted attacks and burning of supermarkets, shopping centres and local stores, widespread looting and infrastructure damage.

Given the already vulnerable ECD sector and the impact of limited access to food, a group of concerned training providers, ECD funders and fraternal organisations initiated conversations on how best to support the sites that were impacted. Support could be offered in the form of food relief and counselling as examples, but a strong coordinated effort to identify the needs was required. This group initiated an idea to have the KZN BRIDGE ECD Community of Practice (CoP) play the role of coordinating the needs on the ground whilst funders, and others able to, could address the needs.

The KZN ECD CoP held a meeting held on 20 July 2021. The meeting was attended by 28 people including funders, resource training organisations (RTOs), forums and ECD programmes who shared the needs they had identified in communities and centres they work in and with. A working group to coordinate support to organisations was set up and led by the BRIDGE KZN ECD CoP champion and facilitator, Patsy Pillay, who heads up New Beginnings in KZN. The working group included Mbongiseni Gumede from Smart Start; Pam Picken and Kathy Pitout from Do More Foundation; Mary James from Letcee and Thandeka Rantsi. Kayin Scholtz from DGMT played a supportive role to this committee.



## 12 August 2021 Feedback Session

The coordination of the working group made it possible to link funders with those who needed their support. To this end, RTOs and forums played a significant intermediary role between funders and communities. Subsequent to this, a meeting was held on 12 August to facilitate a feedback session on the support received by communities and to identify any gaps and lessons learnt. This was quite an enlightening feedback session. Funders, RTOs and forums got the opportunity to share on their experiences of the process of receiving and creating access to support that had been provided in an event that was unexpected. The purpose of these meeting notes is to share details of this process and to highlight the lessons shared by those who participated.

### **A brief account of the results of the coordination – Patsy Pillay**

Patsy began the proceedings by acknowledging the generosity of communities, ordinary citizens, business and organisations in extending support, material goods, finances and cleaning up. Elaborating on this, Patsy acknowledged the following:

- The presence and support of the Do More Foundation in meetings. The Do More Foundation provided information, material support and logistical support.
- To this end, the Do More Foundation approved a 6-month supply of porridge that will be distributed to a number of sites in eThekweni and other parts of KZN. Do More Foundation will also provide logistics support to partners distributing the supply.

- Hope Worldwide provided relief grocery packs to a number of forums including the Wentworth, Kwa Mashu, Ntuzuma, Inanda, Umbumbulu and Nsimbini Forums which were directed at ECD practitioners and parents who desperately needed food.
- Support was also provided to a number of sites that suffered infrastructure damage and looting through Hope Worldwide. [Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

The RTOs and forums led this process by providing names of sites, families, arranging to pick up food and distributing it to the respective people. One can only admire this group of mostly women who showed such sterling leadership and community compassion. A WhatsApp group was created that continues to share information on developments to date.

Funders such as FNB and Lego Foundation amongst others also provided support and continue to do so. Other funders have also come on board and therefore the work of providing relief continues. BRIDGE hopes to update this paper to provide a holistic view of this support in due course.

## What were the challenges and gaps that remained?

Participants expressed concern on the psychological impact the unrests potentially had on children and at a moral perspective, what children had been taught through these unrests. In some communities, amenities such as ATMs were still missing which posed challenges in accessing food-particularly for rural communities. As far as the coordination of the needs, the following was expressed:

- RTOs reported challenges in storing and distributing food and other goods from funders. The immediate needs meant that RTOs had to take over the role of nutrition organisations who would usually distribute food to ECD centres and so on. This proved to be logistically demanding requiring more than usual capacity in terms of time and Human Resource to ensure that food is distributed.
- Finding organisations in different parts of the province, particularly North KZN, to assist was a problem and speaks to the issue of a less coordinated KZN ECD community.
- Nutrition is an ongoing challenge and apart from the relief support that has been provided, long-term solutions are required to tackle nutrition.
- A more collaborative approach to providing support could have helped to avoid some of the duplication of efforts and exclusion of some sites.

## Some lessons learned

**Accountability:** Relief support or community interventions requires accountability from all role players (service providers, recipients, committees, funders)-accountability is not only top down. Systems are required to ensure that those coordinating and those providing support

are aware of each others' activities. This will help to reduce duplication in providing support and this more efficiently serves the sector.

**Collaborations:** Humanitarian work is a time and resource consuming exercise that has to be facilitated within a short period of time and with limited resources. Support required by the RTOs and forums to coordinate and reach beneficiaries should be factored in and provided for. Government and civil society partnerships would also be beneficial in extending the magnitude of the support and reach.

**KZN ECD Civil Society Coordination requires strengthening and support:** The KZN ECD forum that was inclusive of all other forums working in KZN was disbanded years ago. Such a forum would have been a central point for coordination and providing support. It is important to be cognisant of the fact that many of the forums experienced capacity and access challenges. Going forward, the ECD community must consider its effort in building the capacity of forums because they are strong and large network of ECD practitioners working with children. Better ways of working with forums must be sought if change is to happen in the sector. The use of technology to gain access to information is undeniably a requisite and more so in the C-19 context. We need to start promoting and supporting technological skills support. For those with platforms, the question is, how can platforms become more accessible through zero-rating and so on in order to create access to forums.

Platforms such as Wazi Maps could be helpful if ECD organisations make an input into these platforms. The myriad of data collection efforts taking place tend to be confusing as communications are not clear. Some of the RTOs mentioned that they were advised to make input into Vangasali which would then feed into Wazi maps but this has not happened yet.

**Long-term solutions for nutrition:** The ECD community has to be more directed in finding sustainable solutions for nutrition and this is something that could bring the sector together. As a start, the subsidy is a major factor that requires the sector to better coordinate advocacy efforts to ensure that the subsidy starts to serve nutritional needs of all children under five.

**Stronger collaboration amongst funders:** Participants felt that more could be done by funders as a collective group to better collaborate and share information, particularly in an urgent process such as this. This would avoid duplication of support and minimise additional work for the RTOs and forums assisting ECD programmes.



## **Way forward**

In conclusion, participants felt that bringing together the entire sector will always be a challenge but perhaps looking into ways in which ECD stakeholders could be identified and known would be great starting point. The sector should be encouraged by the collaboration of funders, ECD programme providers, forums, RTOs and others during the crisis and employ such collaborative partnerships to advance the National Integrated ECD Policy 2015. ECD services are meant to intersect the needs of children, parents and communities, what role can we as the ECD community play given the proximity to communities and families? We have

systemically segregated communities in KZN and the entire country and where also reminded of ongoing racial tensions that exist, perhaps ECD might have a role to play in addressing issues of inequality and social cohesion? The sector is encouraged to continue these discussions?

Participants requested the following items be looked into:

-BRIDGE to reach out to various networks including NECDA, SA ECD Congress, Government, the KZN ECD forums and offer practical support in coordination efforts.

*BRIDGE would like to acknowledge the contribution and inputs of Patsy Pillay, BRIDGE ECD Champion in KZN and New Beginnings Director, into these meeting notes.*