

SISANDA FUNDAYTION 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Contents

Section 1

1. Letter from the Director
2. Achievements 2024
3. Letter from a partner
4. Organisation Overview
5. Finances and Sustainability
6. Plans for 2025
7. Description of Programmes

Section 2

1. Impact Statistics
2. Impact for Children and Families
3. Impact for Youth Play Ambassadors

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NPO number: 080-949 NPO
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B BBEE Level 1 status

1. LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I am inspired by Arianna Huffington's quote: *"Resilience is not about overcoming, but becoming. It's about creating the space for the transformation that will lead us to the life we want."*

At Sisanda FunDaytion, we are driven by our mission to build a thriving future for children and South African communities. Our team is dedicated to uplifting children and creating environments that foster positive transformation by empowering parents, caregivers, and the broader networks that influence them.

Our approach is shaped both by the needs expressed by the communities we serve and by research. The research shows that resilience is shaped by observation, learning, and experience, with a strong influence from a young person's environment. The impact of stress can lead to elevated cortisol levels, adversely affecting health and educational outcomes, particularly for children of parents with mental health concerns. Additionally, social challenges such as broken relationships, substance abuse, and lack of educational opportunities further undermine resilience in young individuals. Through our efforts, we aim to address these issues and cultivate a brighter future for our children.

Research shows that one of the most effective tools for healthy development is PLAY, which not only fosters essential skills but also strengthens relationships—an important foundation for resilience. While promoting more PLAY within families and between communities, we also use PLAY-BASED approaches to introduce strategies for reducing stress, promoting emotional regulation, building self-esteem and a growth mindset; the belief that abilities and intelligence are developed through effort and learning.

PLAY is essential for fostering hope and resilience, yet we recognise many families face barriers that hinder its appreciation. Our mission is to show that play can be simple and resource-independent, and that just 15 minutes a day can enhance well-being, strengthen connections, and promote problem-solving. Our growing network of dynamic, uplifting, and playful Play Ambassadors is demonstrating to their communities, families, and to us the catalytic impact and POWER of PLAY.



As an Occupational Therapist, I am encouraged by the range of sectors recognising play's importance. Our growing relationship with Health; SHAWCO and St Josephs Paediatric Care, and with educational settings for children with disabilities and Early Childhood Development, points to the growing awareness of mental health needs and recognition of PLAY as a valuable inter-sectoral tool.

I'm proud of how our team has navigated the non-profit landscape in 2024. Despite funding shifts and personal losses, our culture of Play and Resilience has been our anchor, strengthened by our dedicated Youth Play Ambassadors.

In 2025, we aim to build financial resilience and enhance team skills to develop more Youth Play Ambassadors as community change agents. We will expand our training in new communities, including Khayelitsha, Strandfontein, Ocean View, and Dunoon, targeting staff from the health, education and social sectors.

Thank you for supporting our mission and trusting us to build on our success in the coming year.

Warm regards,
Nicky Seymour
Director, Sisanda FunDaytion

2. ACHIEVEMENTS IN THIS PERIOD

Celebrating 15 Years of Impact

- We marked our 15-year journey of transforming lives with a lively and memorable quiz night, a raffle, and the creation of a 15-Year Time Capsule filled with reflections and gratitude for all who have been part of this incredible journey.

New Office, Growing Team

- With excitement, we relocated this year to the scenic Community Gardens on Gabriel Road, Wynberg. Our core team remains strong, and this year we welcomed an Australian intern and hired Megan De Villiers to support our fundraising efforts.

Increasing Our Impact

- Our expanding Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) team, alongside key strategic partnerships, is enabling us to reach more children by influencing a broader network of parents, caregivers, and others who engage with them. In every initiative, we integrate education on mental health, play-based resilience, and relationship-building. Our YPA team have helped us this year, to almost double the number of children, parents, caregivers, and volunteers we reached.

Activating a Compassionate and Inclusive Society

- In collaboration with partners such as St. Joseph's Intermediate Paediatric Care, UCT's SHAWCO, and the WCED Safe Schools Programme, we provided more opportunities for children with wide-ranging abilities and health statuses to PLAY, and for volunteers and Youth Play Ambassadors to learn inclusivity through play.

Expanding our Reach through Training

- By partnering with Resilience Hub, we have been able to reach more children and adults, raising awareness of mental health and providing training in tools to support resilience-building through Resilience Toolbox Training.

Nurturing Sustainability

- We are grateful for the ongoing support of existing partnerships and excited to have started new relationships. We were extremely pleased to be selected for final round interviews with an international donor focusing on grass roots mental health from a pool of 19,000 applicants world-wide. Join us in manifesting a positive outcome!

Becoming Better Known

- An increasing number of partners and organisations have approached us to present, train, and sit on panels promoting Play and Resilience. These opportunities not only allow us to share our beliefs but also offer valuable experience for our YPAs.

3. LETTER FROM A PARTNER

Dear Nicky and Sisanda FunDaytion,

In a world where technology often replaces childhood play and where parents juggle demanding schedules, the need for spaces of joy and connection has never been greater. You have truly been a beacon of hope, filling this gap with vibrant energy and purpose.

Through the "Play at Home" program and Sisanda's Fundays, we have witnessed a beautiful transformation in our children and families. These initiatives have reignited the spirit of play, bringing back laughter, learning, and a sense of togetherness.

Seeing our children engage in play again (whether through Showco clinic, playing outside with their parent or during a Funday) is like watching the sun rise after a long night—it brings warmth, joy, and new beginnings.

Equally inspiring is the role of the Youth Play Ambassadors. This program is more than just an opportunity—it's a calling. It is shaping the future leaders of our community, instilling in them purpose and a sense of responsibility. I love what is being injected into their lives—hope, confidence, and the belief that they can make a difference. The young people involved are not only enriching the lives of children but are themselves being empowered, discovering their strengths, and realizing their potential.

What you are not seeing; You are sowing seeds of joy, hope, and change. From the children who now have the chance to play freely to the families finding moments of unity and the young leaders stepping into their purpose—your work is a gift to our community.

I'll leave you with this:

The true magic of play is not just in the games—it's in the connections we build, the lessons we learn, and the future we create together.

On behalf of Khanyisa;

Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Xolile Makutoana

4. ORGANISATION OVERVIEW

Sisanda FunDaytion is a registered NPO, PBO, and BBEEE Level 1 non-profit organisation located in Cape Town. Because we know that play is good for children's physical, cognitive and social development, we use it as the vehicle to teach resilience to young community role models, who go on to teach these play-based strategies that enhance self-awareness and bonding in other families and their communities.

Our vision is a world in which all children can experience the joy of being children and develop the relationships and resilience to thrive.

In Xhosa Sisanda means "We Are Growing".



Our Mission

To inspire and empower positive role models who, through a trauma-informed approach, uplift the mental well-being and foster resilience in vulnerable children through play.

To reach children we focus on nurturing family and community cohesion. By uplifting, educating and inspiring the network around children we believe we will have a greater chance of positively affecting children today and tomorrow. We facilitate training and programmes for role models increasing their self-awareness, knowledge and skills that cultivate resilience and create opportunities to practice, connect, and be inspired. We nurture active citizenship and promote being PlaySMART in our mission towards uplifting future generations.

Our Background

Founded in 2009 by Daniella Mark, Nicky Seymour, Melissa Wallace, and Martha Evans, Sisanda FunDaytion emerged from a transformative experience in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. While working with teenagers, Daniella learned that their greatest Christmas wish was simply to visit the beach—a mere 5km from their home, yet a world apart from their reality. This experience ignited a deep awareness of the stark contrasts between their lives and her own, leading to a beach day that



brought joy and fostered connections across cultural and economic divides. The day's success highlighted the profound impact of immersive experiences, inspiring the founders to create an organisation dedicated to connecting individuals through play and building resilience.

In partnership with organisations such as HCI Foundation's 'Community Transport Initiative', and Spur Foundation, our efforts have for 16-years connected children with positive role models, introducing them to new experiences. Since 2020, we have intensified our focus on empowering youth and built the Sisanda Youth Play Ambassadors Programme. The initiative aims to foster a sense of agency and reduce poverty's cycle by transforming youth into positive role models for children and families in their communities and equipping them to ignite play, bring joy and embrace a holistic understanding of well-being.

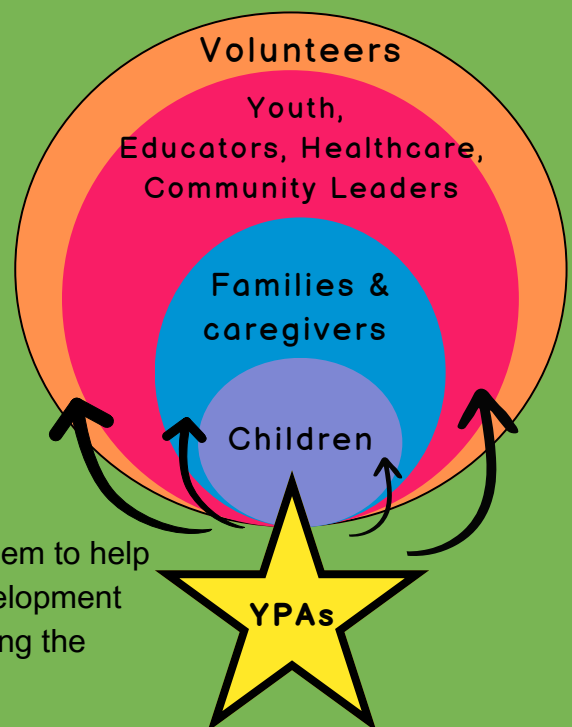
Our Beneficiaries

Our primary beneficiaries are children but to reach them we focus on the adults and youth who influence them on a daily basis.

To increase our reach we equip and place **Youth Play Ambassadors** in situations where they can role model, train, mentor, motivate and influence shifts in the greatest network around children that we can. We collectively call all those around children that we are trying to reach: **Positive Role Models**. We focus on places where children are at risk of trauma and toxic stress for whatever reason.

We want to support and educate the network around them to help prevent the damaging consequences for children's development and their futures. This cannot be tackled without reaching the important people in their lives.

This includes communities with high rates of violence, drug abuse, and gangsterism such as the three areas in Gugulethu, Mannenburg and Nyanga where we directly impact the community and build our core **YPA** teams. We reach other at-risk children and youth through health, education and social sector partnerships.



Our Approach

We have two approaches to address these challenges.

We **engage and equip Youth Play Ambassadors within their neighbourhoods or networks**. To give youth an aspiring alternative to drugs, gangs and violence, we demonstrate the personal growth and community respect they can get from becoming a Play Ambassador. We use this to role model to other youth and adults in their communities and to create a visible option to draw younger children towards healthy, positive, and dynamic role models.

Secondly, we **empower parents, caregivers and professionals in childcare through our programmes and training**, helping them integrate games and other play-based approaches into their daily lives and work with children. In essence, they become Play Ambassadors in their own spaces.

Through our Play Ambassadors and diverse play programmes, we are creating more opportunities for play and connection at the family, community, and service levels. This fosters joy, relieves stress, and raises awareness about mental health and well-being, empowering individuals to prioritise their emotional health.

Our Goals

1

To be experts in Play and Resilience Building and an organisation well-known in Cape Town for the positive impact on mental health and well-being.

2

To equip Play Ambassadors—youth and adult positive role models—to nurture the resilience of children and youth, and to promote and engage in play.

3

To promote Stimulating, Enriched, Play Experiences which connect children and positive role models that foster community cohesion, uplift mental health and strengthen resilience.

Our Values and Pillars of our Work

Resilience: we strengthen protective factors: self-awareness and mastery, emotional regulation tools, social networks, growth mindset, and compassion.

Play: we encourage play and enriched experiences and use play-based approaches.

Connection: we create and ignite connections.

Generosity of Spirit: we inspire active citizenship.

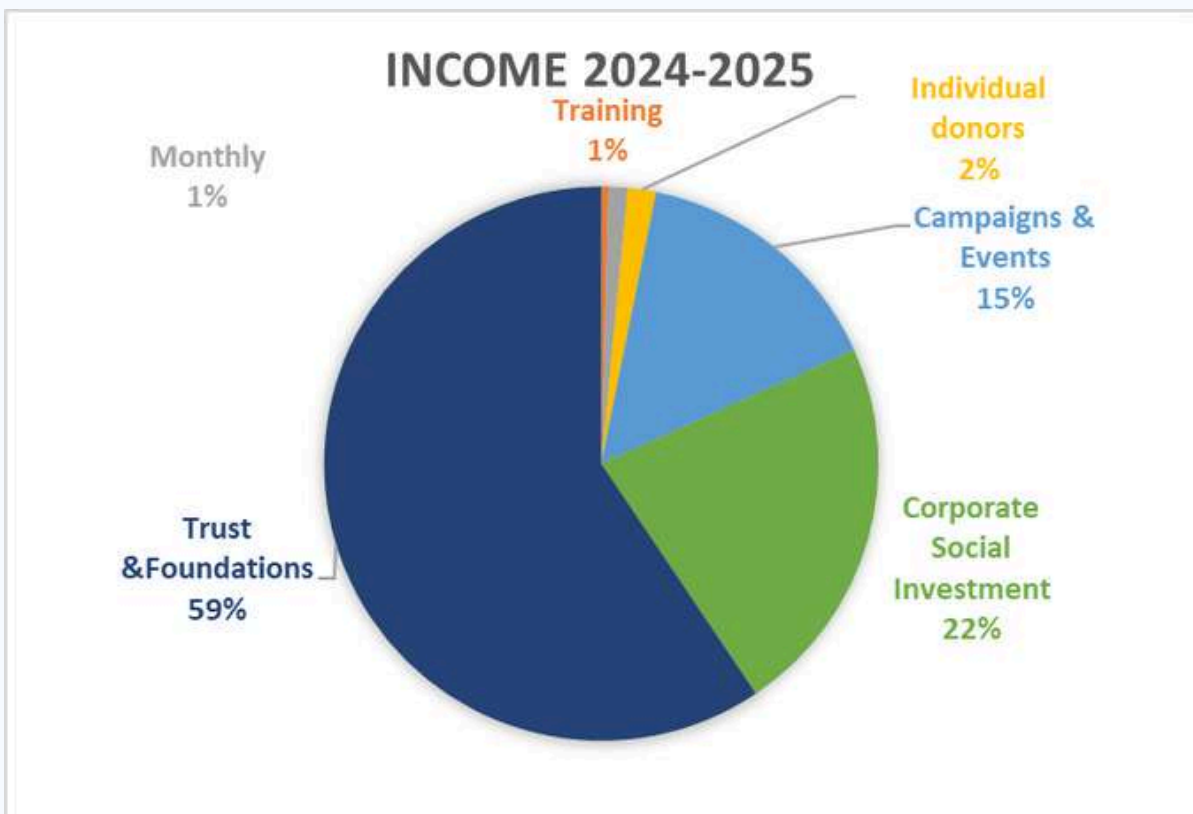
5. SUSTAINABILITY

FINANCES, GOVERNANCE, TEAM & PARTNERSHIPS

2024 has been our most successful year in fundraising since our inception as an organisation. However this is paralleled by rising costs, the expansion of our programmes and increasing governance requirements requiring significantly more administrative input. For the 14th year, we have had a clean audit by Nolands Global, submitted all requirements for DSD compliance and met our tax requirements with support of bookkeeping partner, Emerald Review Services.

We optimise use of resources—drawing on volunteerism, focusing on relationship and connection, and sourcing and nurturing partnerships. Our resources support: time for nurturing volunteer, play ambassador and partnership networks, and go towards training, co-ordination and event planning, together with transport, communications, printing, food, arts, crafts and activity equipment.

We're excited by new partnerships this year with Wings Of Support and Eagle Lighting coming on board. Several others have supported us for many years, indicating the value they see in our work. This includes HCI Foundation since 2010, OMEGA AIR since 2012, CP Trust since 2016, Converge Consulting, Zestcore, Nussbaum Foundation and Nucleus since 2020. CP Trust Foundation and Zestcore gratefully stepped up this year filling a gap in our funding cycle that typically hits us in July and August. Fundraising campaigns (Cape Town Cycle Tour, Two Oceans and Comrades Marathon, and our Birthday Quiz Night)—while successful this year with great support from Omega Air, Converge Consulting and LED Lighting SA—need careful consideration going forward due to the intense team involvement they require. We initiated our income-generating initiative through training delivery and team building of corporate teams and community partners. We see this adding a small but growing percentage to future income.



Our Board of Trustees includes three co-founders, with an advisory network for financial strategy, governance and marketing portfolios. Our dedicated team of five part-time staff has been in place since 2020, although most have had longer relationships with Sisanda FunDaytion. Our Programme Co-ordinator started with us as a beneficiary in 2012, now responsible for building a new network of Play Ambassadors. Our reach is amplified by our Youth Play Ambassadors—this year reaching 31 and volunteers, 194. We have taken a leap of faith this year in employing a part-time fundraiser to shift our efforts towards sustainability.

With Connection as a key driver for us, we work hard to nurture relationships with people and organisations joining us on this journey.

We are enormously grateful for the part you have played in 2024!

**The CP Trust
Foundation**



Omega Air



LED Lighting SA



HEI foundation



since 1924
EAGLE LIGHTING
100 Years of Excellence!



**Fundi Digital
Ross Metcalfe
Pam Knight
The Pfisters
Michael Forth
The Currys
The Suddings
The Truslers
The Oulds
Tracy Miles**



All the wonderful supporters of our campaigns: Steps4Smiles (running), 15th Birthday Quiz night, Ride4Resilience / CT Cycle Tour



**Giselle Kroeger
Paula Youens
Kathleen Kitshcke
Heart & Hustle
Judith Johnson
Dylan Henick
Linda Balme
Tsholo Mshuru**

**Sha Sha Warmma
Kerry Sanmar
Barry Matthew
Trent Clarke
The Bermans
The Hunters
Tania Anderson
Sarah Van Lienden**

5. PLANS FOR 2025

Plans for 2025 focus on enhancing leadership within the Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) programme to grow our impact in our three communities and to expand to new areas through partnerships. We will improve our monitoring and evaluation processes and put significant focus on robust and effective fundraising strategies.

- Build a YPA leadership and training team to expand our reach.
- Work to sustain programmes in targeted areas (Gugulethu, Tambo Village in Manenberg & KTC in Nyanga) by strengthening community ownership. We aim to facilitate a Play & Mental Health Conference as a step towards collaborating and raising awareness.
- Start to scale our YPA and P@H programme to other areas of Cape Town such as Khayalitsha.
- Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation approach to increase efficiency and gather impact data.
- Create a fundraising strategy that includes training for corporates and other community partners as an income-generation model with Resilience Toolbox Training.



6. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

The **Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) Programme** is the cornerstone of our organisation. Empowering young leaders to inspire play, and through partnership with Resilience Toolbox, we equip them with tools to foster resilience and well-being. Using the **PlaySMART approach**, YPAs benefit personally while positively influencing the adults, youth, and children they engage with.

Through the **Play@Home programme**, YPAs uplift and inspire families. The **Enriched Play Experiences** enable them to reach a larger audience, including children, parents, caregivers, and volunteers. They also support various sectors such as after-school programmes, community networks, education, health, and corporate entities by inspiring through **Team-Building Activities and Training sessions**.

Our Approach



The **PlaySMART** approach emphasises that by focusing on trauma awareness, building relationships, self-awareness, emotion management, and engaging in positive activities, individuals can enhance their resilience. This framework not only benefits Play Ambassadors personally but also empowers them to positively influence the children they work with.

To be PlaySMART we share the **Resilience Zones framework** which helps to increase self-awareness, create a common language around mental health, and empowers individuals to accept themselves and others and take control of their emotional regulation.



To be PlaySMART one needs to learn emotional regulation and the **Resilience Toolbox** symbolises the control we can have if we intentionally attend to what strengthens, empowers, regulates and supports our unique systems.

YOUTH PLAY AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME 2024

Empowering vulnerable youth to become positive role models in their communities through the power of play, our Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) programme inspires connection and transformation. Launched formally in 2020, the programme began

with WhatsApp video training sessions for four young people during the COVID-19 hard lockdown, equipping them to promote play within homes and strengthen bonds between children and their caregivers. Since then, the programme has evolved organically, growing to have reached 55 youth participants and offering comprehensive training, support structures, and reference materials.

This year, in response to growing demand, we expanded the programme to include 15-year olds. The 31 YPAs of 2024 have been highly active in our programmes, embracing opportunities to step out of their comfort zones, build confidence, and share their time and experiences with others.

31 Youth
participated
in our Play
Ambassador
programme
in 2024

PLAY [AT] HOME PROGRAMME 2024

During the Play@Home Programme, YPAs support families in their communities—on a weekly basis over a two-month period—teaching play activities designed to strengthen familial bonds and impart valuable information about mental health and coping skills. The programme runs twice a year, aligning with school terms and exam schedules.

Since its launch in Gugulethu in 2020, it has expanded to Tambo Village, Manenberg in 2022 and, most recently to Nyanga in 2024. Currently delivered in English and Xhosa, this year we trialled the integration of Parent Play Ambassadors, which positively impacted programme co-ordination and inspired greater confidence amongst participating parents.

Families involved in Play@Home are identified through partnerships, YPAs, and, more recently, Community PlayDates (see next section), which have proven to be a valuable source of referrals. To deepen our impact, children and sometimes parents participating in Play@Home, are invited to participate in Enriched Play Experiences. This not only acts as an incentive for engagement but also provides meaningful opportunities to strengthen connections within the community.

As Play@Home evolves, we continue to refine our approach and resources to emphasise resilience-building within families, ensuring a lasting and positive impact.



One parent said “
this programme is so
important because
some families
outside do not know
that their kids also
have stresses like
them.”

71 Households
participated
in
Play@Home
in 2024

ENRICHED PLAY EXPERIENCES 2024

This programme is designed to connect people through the transformative power of play, fostering learning about oneself, others, and the world. By bringing together Youth Play Ambassadors, children, parents or caregivers, and a diverse group of volunteers, we create enriching and stimulating experiences in environments that inspire exploration, connection, and growth. We continue to love the involvement of young volunteers from local schools like International school of CT, Rustenburg, Wynberg Girls, and Bishops, as well as international participants from Grow Abroad's Care2Grow programme. Enriched Play Experiences offers two models:



11 Enriched Experiences with 756 children in 2024

Six **Fun Days (FD)** took place this year. The goal is to take children and Youth Play Ambassadors out of their communities for excursions that broaden their horizons and create lasting memories. This year saw our first Child and Parent Fun Day creating shared memories and igniting play while integrating learning moments for the parents.

<p>Greenpoint Adventure - Feb</p> <p>43 children between 7 & 9 from Gugulethu and Tambo Village visited the Play Park followed by special surprise meal at the Spur.</p>	<p>Right to Play Day - March</p> <p>43 tweens from Gugulethu and Tambo Village visited Simon's Town Scratch Patch and Cave Golf, and Fishhoek beach.</p>	<p>Winter Wanderlust - June</p> <p>29 children between 3 & 5 from Project Playground in Gugulethu visited the Science Centre and park with us.</p>
<p>Parent & Child PlayDate - July</p> <p>25 children from Tambo Village & their parents joined their community PAs in Wynberg for an abundance of fun and learning together.</p>	<p>Spring into Action - Sept</p> <p>45 children & youth from Nyanga had fun with Zumba dancing, mindful journalling, conversation circles ending with free time in the park.</p>	<p>It's Cool to be Kind - Nov</p> <p>39 children from the SA Kinderhuis & Tambo Village visited Greenpoint Urban Park for a day of sports, games and carefree Play.</p>

Community PlayDates (CPD) bring enriching play experiences directly to children, particularly children with disabilities, illnesses, or other accessibility challenges, while also inspiring caregivers and healthcare workers with the holistic benefits of play. Our initiative with UCT's SHAWCO and St Joseph's Intermediate Paediatric Care has demonstrated the value of integrating play and relationship building into traditional healthcare.

The co-ordinator of SHAWCO Health, the largest student-led NPO in Africa, says:

"Sisanda's workshop significantly helped improve the student's ability to practice the art of medicine, and the patient's ability to be receptive to the help. All of the medical students look forward to our next joint Play Clinic."

<p>St Joseph's Childrens Paediatric Care Annual Carnival - April</p> <p>66 in-patient children had a wonderful experience with 91 volunteers the majority of whom were from secondary and tertiary education establishments in CT</p>	<p>SHAWCO Mobile Health Clinic - May, August, October</p> <p>Children, parents, young Play Ambassadors, students and healthcare providers from Tambo Village come together to experience the impact of play on relationships and health and identify and support those in need of healthcare services.</p>	<p>International Disability Day - December</p> <p>WCED, Nompumelelo and Tambaletu Special Schools - Gugulethu</p> <p>338 children, some parents, youth play ambassadors, educators, and rehabilitation professionals shared fun, laughter and togetherness.</p>
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AWARENESS, OUTREACH AND TRAINING: PARTNERING WITH RTB

297 people
participated
in RTB training
2024



We have expanded our efforts with **Resilience Toolbox (RTB)**, a training platform, bringing mental health awareness and play-based approaches to building resilience. We actively identify and create opportunities to provide education sessions in collaboration with partners and through our programmes. Our transformative sessions not only help participants feel good but educate them about their nervous system's response to stress.

These sessions teach practical tools to help individuals take ownership of their emotions and reactions during challenging moments and life stressors. This year we:

- Partnered with Project Playground to deliver resilience sessions for all their children and staff.
- Presented a 45-minute plenary talk on the benefits of play at the Community Mental Health Conference; and
- Conducted short educational sessions for parents, caregivers, and volunteers involved in our Enriched Play Programme.

Beyond our commitment to sharing the profound value of play, we aim to build our brand as an expert in this area and utilise this to create an additional income-generating stream. We are increasingly demonstrating our value-add and this year:

- Reached the employee teams of partners including OMEGA Air and the HCI Foundation, both of whom responded enthusiastically, requesting follow-up sessions in 2025, and referring us on to other partners who could benefit.
- Trained 12 members of the Sikhule Sonke leadership team to support their work in Khayelitsha with their Early Childhood Development (ECD) and After School Programmes (ASP). We will continue to support and train up others in their team over the next 12 months.

Looking ahead, we are nurturing relationships with several organisations, including Cape Kidz Foundation, SA Kinderhuis, Advance Educos, and Hope Town, to bring our training and programmes to new communities in 2025, reflecting our ongoing commitment to expanding our reach and impact.



7. IMPACT

2023

2024

YOUTH PLAY
AMBASSADORS
21



YOUTH PLAY
AMBASSADORS
31



CHILDREN
510



CHILDREN
951



109 PARENTS &
CARERS



201 PARENTS &
CARERS



76 VOLUNTEERS

131 VOLUNTEERS

9 FUN DAYS



6 FUN DAYS & 5 CPDS

2 PLAY@HOME

2 PLAY@HOME

9 TRAINING COURSES

6 TRAINING COURSES



Our
assumptions

Our play approach:

1. Is a catalyst for more play
2. Fosters connection and nurtures a greater sense of belonging
3. Increases mental health awareness, resilience and personal growth
4. Ignites active citizenship, which we view as creating a kinder community

"HISTORY WILL JUDGE US BY THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE IN THE
EVERYDAY LIVES OF CHILDREN."

- NELSON MANDELA

IMPACT ON VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. Connections through Play

Play@Home, Community PlayDates and Fun Days are designed to help both kids and adults create positive memories together, to practice connecting differently with each other and to enjoy getting to know themselves and others.

"I have learned to include everyone that I'm friends with, regardless of what they are good at. I have also learnt to be kind to other kids," said a 9-year-old girl.

"I have learned to share; I will share my bubble with my granny," said 4-year-old Caleb.

"I learnt to be a team player and always help my teammates when they need help," stated Riyane.

"I like it that my mom can play with me; this is my first time seeing her," said a 7-year-old at a CPD.

"I don't remember the last time I made a new friend; today was easy for me," said a 13-year-old girl.



Parents have gained a lot of information and knowledge on how to interact and have fun with their kids and we hope this changes perspectives and gives ideas and impetus to continue.

Of the 56 feedback forms received this year from families in the Play@Home programme:

- 98% reported an increase in enjoying spending time together
- 96% sparked more curiosity and interest in learning new things in the household

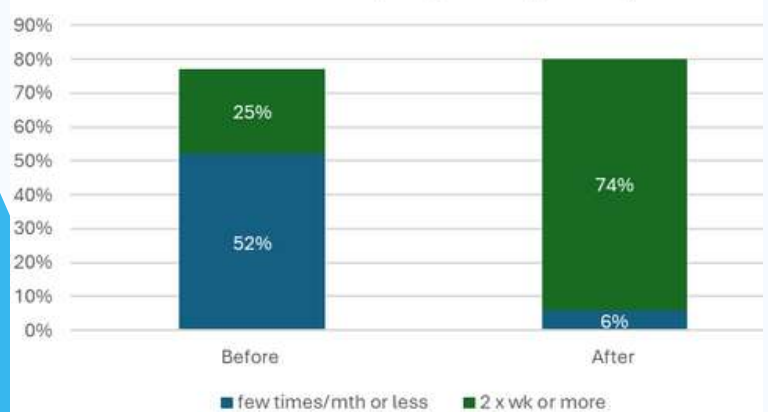
Of 118 responses during our 2-month follow up (since 2020), 52% of families spent little to no time together before participating in the P@H programme. 2-months after the programme, 74% families had weekly connections as a family.

"We did not do exercises but after the programme we do it almost every morning to start our day nice and healthy."

"I have twins, and I learned storytime can calm them. I will try this at night and at bedtime," said a mother.

"With good memories created today with my kid I now remember that a family that connects and bonds together, the kids will grow to be healthy and full of life and enthusiastic beings." - Mother

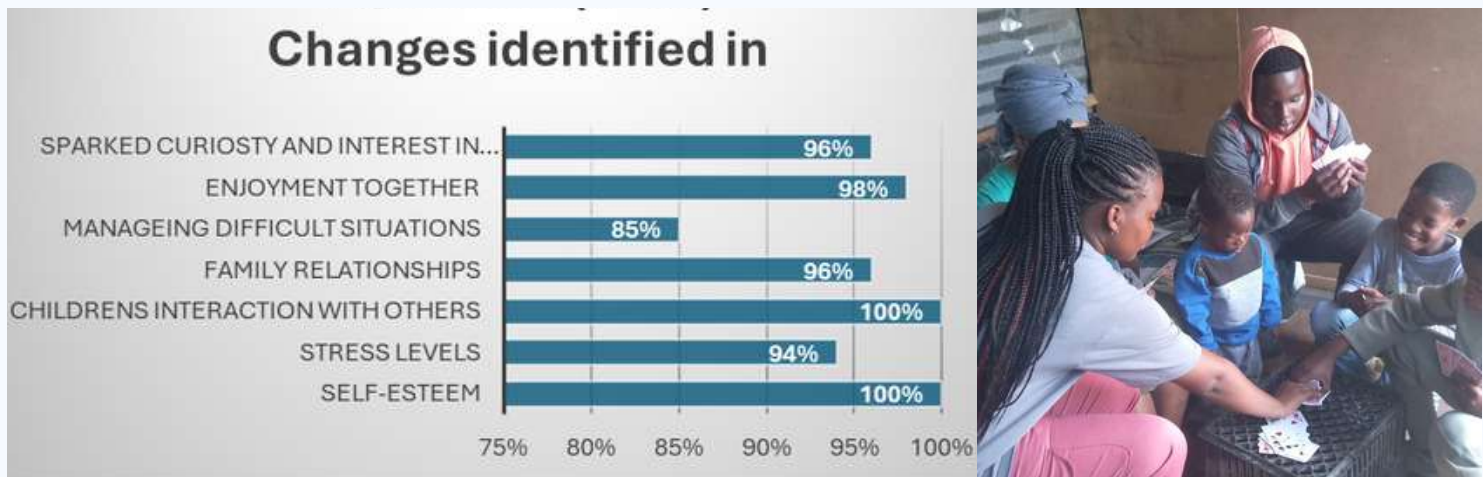
2 Month Follow up P@H 1-9 (n=118)



2. Resilience and Family Strengthening

By encouraging stronger family connections and using play as a transformative tool, Youth Play Ambassadors (YPAs) positively impact individual well-being, family relationships, and the overall atmosphere in the home.

Results from two Play@Home programmes in 2024 highlight this impact, with 70 participating families reporting significant improvements: 96% noted better family relationships, 94% experienced reduced stress levels, 85% saw improvements in handling difficult situations together, and 100% observed better interactions between children and others outside the family.



These parents expressed the impact on their ability to manage stress and difficult situations:

"I learnt a lot. I learned about sharing and how to calm down. I gained many ideas on how to manage my stress and connect with people."

"I have learned that through games you get to be silly and have a lot of fun. You also get to laugh and giggle. That causes you to forget about your trials and tribulations for a while, and you learn and adapt the resilience tool that helps you carry on with life regardless. Thank you, Sisanda."

"Now I am learning and reading to my kids and we have developed a strong bond from playing together. Learning more about each their experiences and emotions now I understand them more, and now they share their problems with me about what's happening outside."

"The kids now tell their parents how they feel about themselves, and the community is a better environment, especially for children. It makes the people in the community bond with the children of the community," said Iviwe (YPA), 17.



The Woodingtons

The Woodingtons are a family who joined Sisanda's Play@Home programme in September 2024, consisting of a large group that includes 8 foster children.

Why Tambo Village?

The families of Tambo Village have faced many adversities for years.

High levels of crime and gang-related violence make it difficult for kids to be safe outside of the house. As a result, kids are not given the opportunity and freedom to play outdoors. Nor do parents seem to know how to play with them.

A Word from the Woodingtons

"Since they joined the Sisanda programme they can go out and see other kids. They are not alone anymore. They have a chance to meet with other kids and enjoy themselves." Mother says that playing has "opened their minds."

"It helps them finish their homework, because they just look forward to games".

However the biggest change is there is now unity between the children, "before there was so much fighting" but now they just want to play together.

"They are just so excited to be a part of Sisanda"

What is being taught?

Sisanda FunDaytion aims to educate families on the power of play for children and inspire them with ways to engage in play with their kids.

Through Sisanda Youth Play Ambassadors, families are taught card games and creative activities like drawing, to transform parenting and create connection in Tambo Village.

The Impact

Since Play@Home Tambo Village launched, we've seen dramatic shifts in family participation in the programme. Previously, many discouraged play. Since its introduction, families have noted significant changes in their children and family interactions.

Previously, the Woodington children "didn't actually have anything to do". Their mother says they would always come home from school and sleep.

In less than 3 months their family dynamic has drastically changed. From increased happiness to improved communication and better emotional management, parents have shared that their children are now much less angry and bored.

IMPACT FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH

1. Connections through Play

Since the launch of the Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) programme in 2020, we have had 52 active YPAs who have stepped up to run 10 Play@Home programmes and 36 Fun Days and Community PlayDates. Their efforts have created 2,537 child-focused interactions directly through our programmes and we estimate that they have reached an additional 1,560 beyond that.

The visibility of these energetic change agents creates a ripple effect within their communities, motivating others to join.

"In my community, school and at home I am the change because I know how to calm children and let them see/realise it's okay not to be okay." - Aliya

"I always knew play as a phase that every child has to go through, I didn't know the benefits if it. I was never taught that. But I have learned that play, has an important part in my mental health and it helps you to have better connections with people close to you." - New YPA, Lilitha

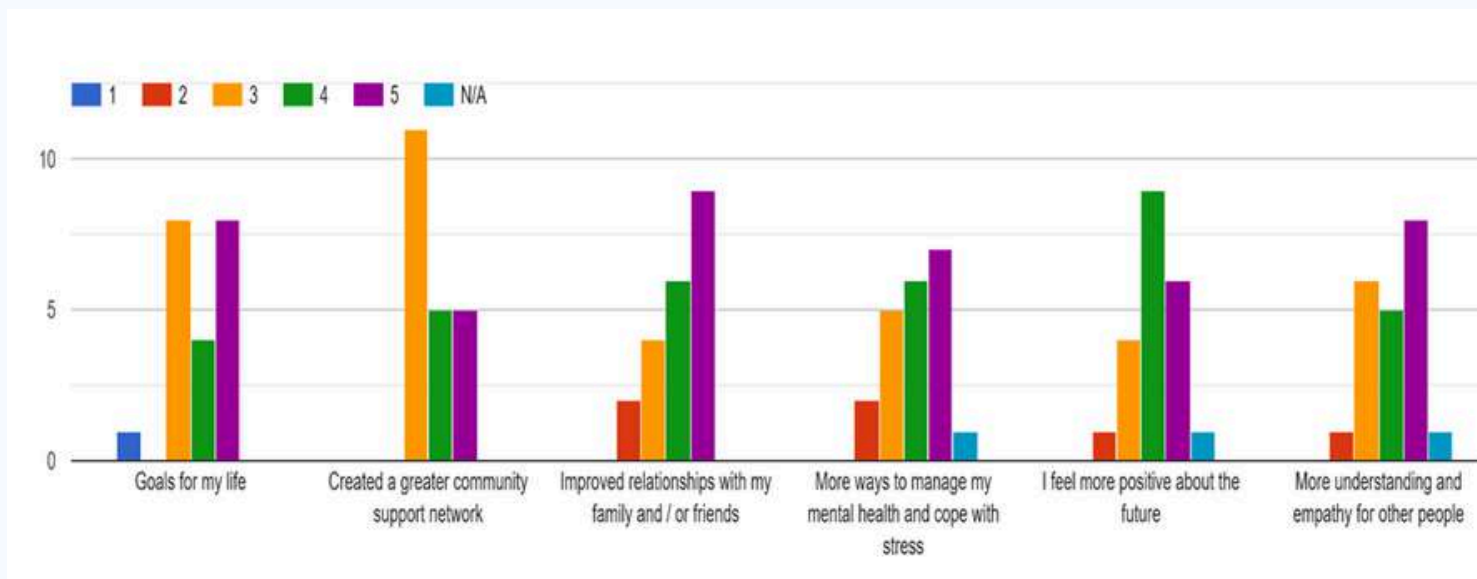
"It was just great to be able to share my skills with everyone on the day with kids and parents." - Soso



'This has changed my beliefs being negative about being around kids and having doubts about my personality with kids. I've seen that having time with kids is my thing. Now I'm known by parents to love my community kids and to have a good way of treating them.' - Thimna

2. Greater mental health awareness, resilience and personal growth

Twenty-one YPAs participated in a survey about their experiences in the YPA role. The feedback provides valuable insights into our impact and where we can focus further efforts. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) the YPAs showed us where they have felt an impact. Highest impact was expressed in relationships with family and friends, developing goals for themselves and developing greater understanding of and empathy for others.



“At home, I am now able to voice out how certain things make me feel without having fear of authority or those older than me. I’ve learnt to love, appreciate and accept my family for who they are regardless of any mishaps we go through.” - Anelisa



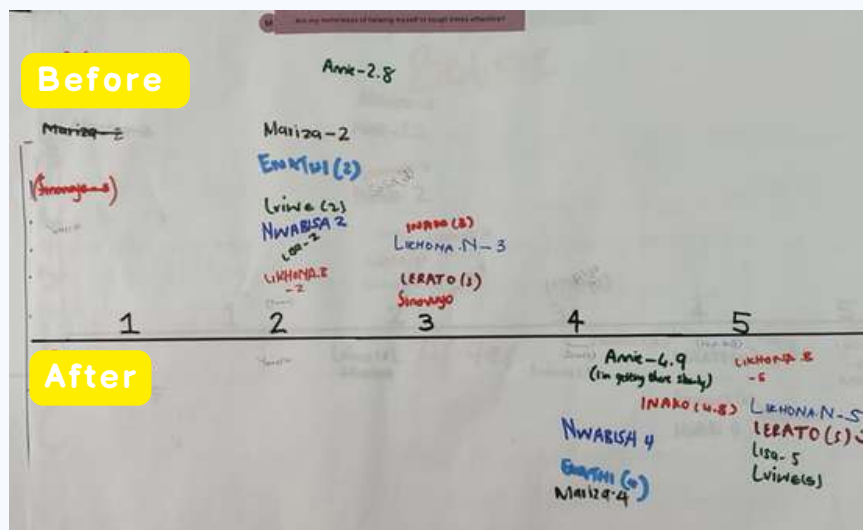
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“Growing up, I learned that boys shouldn’t cry and need to be strong. However, Sisanda helped me realise that I am human and have emotions. Now, when I feel angry, I know how to manage those feelings. This programme has deepened my bond with my little sister, and my mam often joins in on our special moments.”

IVIWE 17, SISANDA YOUTH PLAY AMBASSADOR.

We want to include more boys like Iviwe in our YPA programme and for this reason have extended the age down to 15-years in order to catch them earlier, show them leadership opportunities and create more boy role models in family and community care.

When asked to score the effectiveness of their **emotional regulation tools** at the beginning and end of the programme, everyone reported an improvement of two or more points on the 5-point Likert Scale.



"I'm so thankful to you guys for teaching us about how to regulate and maintain our emotions through breathing techniques. Changed my life."

"When I'm not in a good mood, I take my manual and check resilience zones for what can help me change my mood."

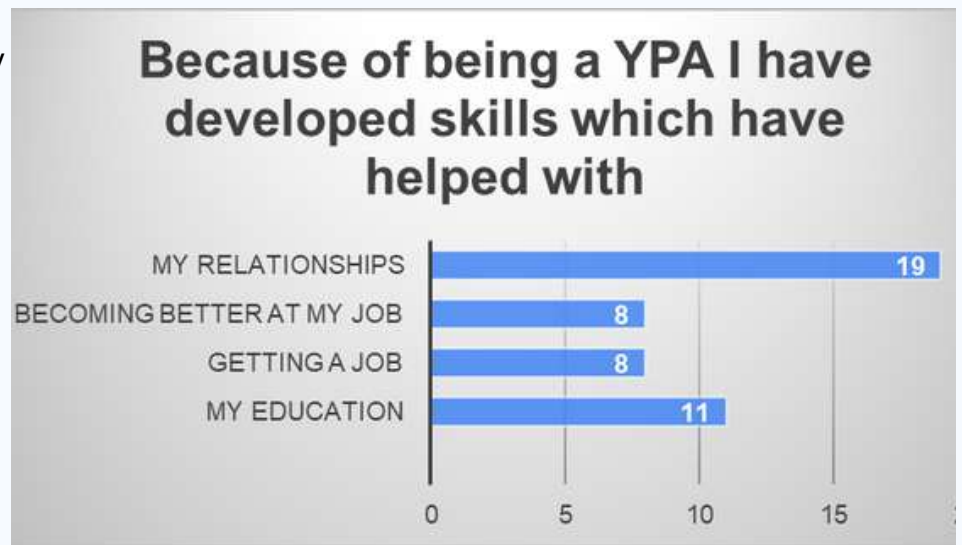
"When I'm dealing with my own emotions, I take a break from work, and play with children in my community to calm my stress."

"It has helped me manage my emotions; when I am angry, I use my [Resilience] Toolbox."



"Yes it has changed a lot in me because now I can believe in myself and my personality I can be whatever I wanna be and I love being around people. At first I used to feel like in life there's nothing that I can achieve but now I see that there's a lot that I can do and achieve. At home I can be responsible for many things, at school for me it is easy to make friends and it is easy to committ myself in my school work and take full responsibility of my work. I used to not be able to control my emotions but now I can by using Resilience Zones Model and that helped me a lot, and I have connected with more people in my community that I never thought I would speak to but now we have a good relationship." Likhona B

Supporting our young people to step up as Play Ambassadors includes helping them to take steps that improve their lives. 19 of 21 YPAs fed back to us that skills learnt during the programme helped with their relationships (19), their education (11), and securing (8) and doing (8) their job.



"Being a PA has changed my personality a lot from being a closed person to an open person. At first, I couldn't talk with other people but now I can and I become confident. It has changed the way I feel as I used to be scared of people and crowded places. But now I'm confident about myself and happy about the change. At home I can talk about anything with my family, it has brought much connection in my family. The Resilience Zones have helped me a lot with my emotions and on how to react on the situations that I cannot manage in life." – Zintle

Inako shares, "At school I'm more confident when doing speeches and orals." Enathi adds, "I have experienced other benefits like networking and connecting to other people. I got an opportunity to attend The College of Magic which I'm starting in February and I got that opportunity through Sisanda." Additionally, Lisakhanya gained the confidence to finally take her learner's driver's test—and she PASSED!



3. Inspiring Active Citizenship and a Focus on Children

Lisakhanya (YPA) shares:

"Now I know I'm important in some people's lives. This makes me want to improve more because I know there are children who are looking up to me."

YPAs have engaged in unique opportunities to connect with the broader community, raising awareness and confidently addressing diverse audiences about being PlaySMART during events like the Project Playground Parent meeting, Khanyisa Parent Breakfast & Workshop, Sisanda FunDaytion Quiz night, and partner presentations. They have also networked, educated, and inspired participants at the Community Mental Health Conference.



"I mostly enjoy bringing change and inspiring young people to be better versions of themselves, influencing them to be role models in their communities."



Beyond Sisanda FunDaytion

We also value instances where community play activities are initiated and run independently, highlighting the potential for advancing play as a tool for family and community cohesion. YPAs participate in planning, running and evaluating various events equipping them for independence from us.

Following a recent Community PlayDate, Lerato expressed, "Today provided us with the perspective and confidence that we can independently run Community PlayDates, and I truly appreciated the teamwork and support we shared."

This year, we supported Mariza in obtaining an international certificate in social-emotional skills training through Rock and Water Training, enhancing her capability to foster these skills in children.

Soso successfully completed an online play-based programme for Grades 1-3, while Thimna discovered her desire to pursue a career in social work.



Thandi

Thandi joined us at 17-years as a junior Play Ambassador and became a senior in 2022. She has participated in 12 Fun Days, 4 Play@Home programmes, and 2 Community PlayDates, gaining valuable experience in the role.

The Context

In Tambo Village, the idea of play was not widely promoted, and mental health was rarely discussed. Thandi explained that growing up, the community didn't prioritise play, with messages like "you're too old to play." Sisanda recognised this gap and has worked to introduce play as a tool for improving outcomes in Tambo.

Additionally, the community faces significant levels of segregation, which limits certain groups from fully engaging in communal play and connection.

What is being taught

Sisanda's partnerships with community organisations in Tambo Village emphasises the importance of play for connection and well-being.

Through Fun Days, Community PlayDates and Play@Home, YPAs engage families engage in play, using Resilience Toolbox training to support their own and others' mental health.

To combat community segregation, Sisanda PlayDates are brought into the community, giving all families access to play and promoting inclusivity whilst building out those safe spaces.

A word from Thandi

"I have learnt so much since joining Sisanda; I've learnt how to manage any issues I have at home, I've learnt about my own mental health. Being a part of Sisanda has been life changing. Ever since I joined Sisanda, they pushed me to talk more and that has changed a lot for me. Now I'm able to do public speaking and be in front of the church".

Personal Impact

Thandi, who spent her childhood caring for her three younger brothers, never had time to play. Since joining Sisanda, she has learned the value of play and introduced it to her own family and those she supports. She's seen a noticeable difference in the happiness of the children when games are involved. Sisanda has also boosted her confidence—once quiet, she now speaks publicly, even in front of her church.

Community Impact

In Tambo Village, play was never promoted, and mental health was largely overlooked. Through Sisanda, Thandi and other Play Ambassadors are changing this. They've organised community playdates, breaking down segregation and helping people access spaces previously unavailable to them. Now, everyone knows about Sisanda FunDaytion and its positive impact.

Empowering the Future Together

In 2025, our focus is on building financial resilience while enhancing the skills of our team to develop Youth Play Ambassadors as community change agents. We plan to expand our reach to new communities and through training by targeting businesses, health, and education institutions. We will strengthen our fundraising efforts, grow our leadership team of Play Ambassadors, and trial the replication of our model in new locations to deepen community partnerships and amplify our impact.

Play should become known as a reliable pathway to better mental health. We'll connect children with positive role models, promote community cohesion, and strengthen mental health and well-being.

Ultimately, we strive to be experts in Play and Resilience Building, known for our positive influence on mental health across Cape Town.

As we reflect on 2024, we are excited about the possibilities ahead. The Youth Play Ambassador (YPA) team embodies the resilience and leadership we aim to nurture in the next generation. With a strong focus on mental health and community empowerment, we look forward to partnering with you to make a lasting impact on the futures of South Africa's children.

