A brief history

1991
- Little Elephant Pre-Primary started by the Parish of St James. First non-racial school in district.

1992
- St Davids (primary school) started. Catering for children leaving Little Elephant.

1993
- LETCEE started after requests from community members. Trained 6 teachers, mostly sharing skills. Visits into communities that were unknown to us at a time of pre-election tensions. First funding received: R13 500.

1994
- Bought first vehicle: VW Kombi

1995
- First fully developed ECD course. No credits. Trained 13 ECD practitioners.

1996
- Participated in National Pilot Project to offer accredited training to ECD practitioners. Served on the task team to develop and test the curriculum. 140 students. APT (Toy making) was most popular course.

1998
- Participated in the National Audit of ECD Provision in SA (commissioned by the EU). Visited more than 1000 pre-schools collecting evidence.

1999
- Granted partial accreditation for training through Dept of Education. Our first computer! Donated by a young couple from Germany instead of wedding gifts. At this stage our focus was ECD provision in crèches – only education.

2000
- Challenged by Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund to cater for the 80% of children not accessing ECD. With The Valley Trust and TREE developed the plan for non-centre based ECD. First venture into Community Development

2001
- Began implementing Izingane Zethu Intervention: Toys in bags carried by the facilitators. First Home Visits.

2002
Training for the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) learnership. First Toy Library (Matimatolo). Split from Little Elephant Pre-Primary.

First loan vehicle from VW (Have received every year since then). Participated in UCT research project, Networks of Care. LETCEE selected to present this work in Dakar. Best ECD practitioner in KZN trained by us.

Piloted Abahambi project in Ngome for Dept of Social Development. Our model is now used nationally. Started Mbuba project.

Awarded: Best ECD provider in KZN. Most innovative ECD model. Recognised by Unicef as a model of excellence.

Started working in Njengabantu & built Njengabantu Toy Library. First Mobile Toy Library. Deregistered as FETC. Participated in the KZN ECD audit. Started vegetable bag gardening.

Split from St Davids. Started Abahambi project in Matimatolo, funded by Jim Joel Fund. Presented our work in two international conferences.

Toy Shop started to help practitioners access small quantities of paint, paper and cheaper toys.

1st Medical Checks for Children: 800 children seen. Had App developed for more efficient M&E (Ulwazi).

1200 children seen. Total income: R6 100 039

Medical Checks for Children: 1200 children seen.

Registered as a Not for Profit Company. Registered as a private Further Education and Training College.

Registered as a Not for Profit Company.
The Little Elephant Training Centre for Early Education (LETCEE) is an Early Childhood Development (ECD) non-profit organization. LETCEE was established in 1993 after a need for trained pre-primary teachers became evident at the Little Elephant Preschool. This preschool was established in 1991 (before the end of apartheid) as a non-racial school, and as the school grew, more teachers were needed. In January 1993 LETCEE started training (mostly rural) women in ECD skills.

LETCEE has grown from a small, part-time initiative, training 6 women in our first year, to a registered NPO training more than 250 women annually. The training facility has grown from a single room to a centre, which consists of a training room, a residential block, kitchen and bathroom, as well as offices and storerooms.

Having implemented projects in rural communities over a number of years, LETCEE has learnt that the approach to ECD has to be developmental rather than welfare-oriented. We know that ECD cannot exist on its own, but has to be linked to the wider life of the children in their families and communities. Projects must include aspects such as nutrition and income generation if they are to have any real lasting impact on children. One of the greatest realisations was that there is a need for a real, rather than token partnership, with the community which includes decision-making and the setting of project budgets.

These insights have led to the development of a unique, robust model for ECD intervention. This model was pronounced as a model of excellence by UNICEF in 2009 and now, years later, we still follow this model in our training and community ECD projects.

LETCEE works in the impoverished, rural communities of the Umzinyathi district in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In this area, unemployment figures are high and the impact of HIV/Aids and TB is a reality in almost every home. The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation (SAIMD) 2011 has identified this district as the most deprived municipal area in South Africa.

Access to basic services such as health and education remains poor, and the majority of the population of over 500 000 people have a very low socio-economic status. One of the biggest concerns is the lack of access to ECD services. Only 10% of children between the ages of zero and five years in this area have access to ECD services.

Please refer to our attached infographic for a more detailed look at the Umzinyathi district; as well as the centrefold that depicts the extent of our services in the region.
LETCEE’s vision is for every child to develop and grow in a caring community. Our mission is to build the confidence and capacity of families and communities to create nurturing environments for their children. We achieve this by:

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**Supporting a cohort of volunteers who facilitate learning through play**

Our staff currently offers practical guidance, training and support to 166 community play facilitators. These include toy librarians, home- and community-based ECD practitioners, as well as youth group and homework club leaders. LETCEE currently also supports 126 of these play facilitators financially, by paying them a monthly stipend for the work they do in the communities.

These volunteers are all trained in play-based learning and offer ECD services by doing home visits, running community playgroups, and managing toy library playgroups. LETCEE’s non-centre based ECD services are currently reaching 1988 children that previously did not have access to any of these services. Since July 2017 we have also been able to provide fortified porridge to all our under-fives. This is prepared by the play facilitators and enjoyed after each playgroup. We are excited about this new development, as the regular nutrition improves our children’s learning ability.

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**Providing resources for play and learning**

LETCEE runs five community toy libraries in conjunction with the community committees. These toy libraries provide play and learning resources to the children and community. Children can attend playgroups at the toy libraries, while parents can borrow toys from the library to use for developmental stimulation at home. We also provide toy bags to all our ECD facilitators. These are used during home visits and playgroups. The toys are exchanged at our toy libraries on a regular basis, to ensure a variety of play opportunities for the children.

We also have two mobile toy libraries (converted vehicles) that offer the same services to the most rural, hard to reach places in our communities. A fixed toy library or crèche is often too far for the smaller children to walk to, so our mobile services bring ECD to their homes.

In addition to physical resources for play, we also do parent training called Play-to-learn. This programme improves the parents’ knowledge and skills in play-based learning at home. Parents also get the opportunity to make toys for their kids, from waste, to ensure sustainability.
Map not drawn to scale.

Key:
- Abahambi
- Children 0-5 years (incl. kids with disabilities)
- Smartstarters & children
- 3-4 years
- Training
- Students’ ECD sites
- Caregiver groups
- Mobile Toy Library visit sites
- Toy Library
- Committees
- Community
**Offering accredited ECD training at NQF level 4**

LETCEE provides training for a nationally recognised Further Education and Training Certificate in ECD (FETC: ECD). The certificate is a level 4 qualification on the National Qualification Framework (NQF). We currently have 284 registered students for this qualification.

Training includes completing 19 five-day contact sessions over the course of two years and compiling a portfolio of evidence of practical work done. The contact sessions are facilitated by LETCEE’s experienced training staff and are offered at various locations in the Umzinyathi district. The trainers also visit the students at their workplace, to observe, assess and improve their practical work.

Most of our students are unemployed rural women, unable to pay for this qualification. By subsidising the training fees, we address two major problems: Poor access to ECD services and high unemployment rates. LETCEE is currently able to subsidise 50% of each student’s fees due through generous donations and funding by external organisations.

**Strengthening the communities to create strong networks for children**

LETCEE works closely with traditional leadership and existing structures in various communities. We are committed to developing these communities through the empowerment of individual members and to build the management capacity of the elected committee. By doing this the committee will, in time, be able to establish, register and manage an independent NPO which will ensure the project is sustained.

Parents are encouraged to join self-help groups which, over time, are able to provide seed money for small businesses or income generating activities. To date, 13 businesses have started out of these self-help groups and four of them have officially registered as private companies (Pty Ltd).

A total of 17 vegetable gardens have been established in the communities in which LETCEE operates. Parents form clusters and collaborate in growing food for their families. Any excess is sold locally.
LETCEE does not receive any government funding.

All our projects are made possible by our fundraising efforts.

Our total annual budget is in the region of R7 million (± US$530 000 or £410 000).

The majority of our funding is received from local and international organisations, corporates and trusts. The training fees paid by our students cover some of the training expenses. Individuals donate to cover smaller organisational expenses. We are continually looking into more income generating opportunities for sustainability.

Please would you consider supporting our work to improve the lives of the young children in Umzinyathi?

Bank details
Bank: ABSA
Account Number: 1910145513
Branch Code: 632 005
International Swift Code: ABSAZAJJ
Account Name: LETCEE

Contributions can also be made on our website, or by using the Zapper app now.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the director, Mary James.
Umzinyathi District
KwaZulu-Natal
South Africa

Access to water

66% of the population don’t have access to safe drinking water

Access to electricity

60% of people have no access to any form of electricity

Households

The average household...
- consists of 4.5 people
- is multi-generational
- has an annual income of R46 637 (±US$3500; £2700)

This means the average person lives on

R 863.65  R 28.79
US$66.64  US$2.22
£51.29   £1.70

per month  per day

Infographic compiled by LETCEE | All rights reserved | For more information, visit our website at www.letcee.org
Umzinyathi District, KZN

Access to ECD

10% of children aged 3-5 years attend an ECD centre

Primary schooling

One in every five children over the age of 5 years, are not attending school

Highest level of education

A quarter of adults have no formal schooling

Less than 5% of all adults have any form of tertiary education

LETCEE...

provides non-centre based ECD services to 2000+ children

trains 250 women each year to become accredited ECD practitioners

works in 6 rural communities in the Umzinyathi district

has been working in ECD in rural settings for 25 years

LETCEE

Good quality early education for all!

Contact us: ecd@letcee.org

Follow us on Social Media

Visit our website: www.letcee.org

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For more information, visit our website at www.letcee.org

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Wright, G., & Noble, M (2012): The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 at Municipality Level
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