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Message from the Managing Director

I am confident to leave because this organisation that I was privileged to establish, has become an adult, and a valuable member of the ECD community. To begin with, like a child, it required close supervision and a great deal of nurturing. As it grew older, the team and I were able to guide and encourage growth and independence and now it has matured and must continue without me. LETCEE can no longer be limited by my dreams and aspirations. I have done what I can and now it’s time for the organisation to start a new chapter…with new leadership, who will bring innovations and new developments. I know though, that the commitment to young children will remain steadfast. I hope that the organisation retains the courage to take on new challenges and test new models while retaining the most basic rule of ECD – children must play to learn. I trust that they will hold onto the core values of a passion for children, listening to and respecting parents and communities and a readiness to share with and learn from the wider ECD sector.

I wish Poonam and her team much success in the future. LETCEE will always have a place in my heart, and like every Gogo, I will pray for this “child’s” protection. I will silently weep at every setback; swell with pride at every achievement, and quietly mutter “I knew you could do it.”

Salani Kahle. uNkulunkulu abe nani

After almost 30 years in the Little Elephant family, I must now say goodbye! While this is not easy, I have a deep peace in my heart that it’s time.

I have relied on this feeling many times over the years. It has helped me, select staff, start projects…and withdraw from them… and ask for funding when it didn’t seem logical to do so.
Welcome to the New Management

We would like to introduce the incoming Managing Director, Mrs Poonam Dwarkaram. Poonam has almost 30 years of ECD experience and has, for the last 2 years, managed LETCEE’s ECD projects. The Board has appointed two further directors, who together with Poonam, will manage the organisation. They are Astrid Gifford, Director of Operations and Kitso Maragelo, Director of Projects. Both Kitso and Astrid are currently employed at LETCEE and have immense experience, knowledge and skills in their fields. This powerful triumvirate, who took over the reins on the 1st of February 2022, will lead LETCEE into the future very successfully. Their commitment and passion for the young children is tangible and they are excited about what lies ahead.

LETCEE and the new management are forever grateful to Mary for her mentorship, love and trust.
Introduction

Little Elephant Training Centre for Early Education (LETCEE) was established in 1993 by Dr Mary James. A need for trained pre-primary teachers was evident and the training centre was opened. What started as a small initiative grew into a registered Non-Profit organisation.

Other ECD programs were added. Centre-based and community-based ECD practitioners provide play-to-learn sessions, Mobile and Stationary Toy Libraries and Food security programs provide a holistic programme.

LETCEE improves the access to Early Childhood Development in 6 District Municipalities in KwaZulu Natal, through an ECD program that was pronounced “Model of Excellence” in 2009 by UNICEF.

Access to ECD remains poor in South Africa. The 2021 ECD Census shows that on average only 6.2 ECD programmes exist per 1000 children.

BUT...
...the Umzinyathi District Municipality looks different. We stand out like a beacon of light, thanks to our persistence and the ongoing support of our funders for over 30 years.

7.8 – 10.9 ECD programmes per 1000 children. 27% - 37% enrolment vs Child population.

These extracts were taken from the 2021 ECD Census report that was compiled by the Department of Education and the Lego Foundation.
The year in Numbers

- **12 970** meals were served in 5 centres
- **16 425** servings of fortified porridge were given to the children
- **1.8** tons of porridge were delivered to the children

- **141** students were enrolled in SETA accredited ECD Training
- **89** students already graduated in Level 4 ECD
- **6200** children accessed ECD services
- **420** ECD practitioners were facilitating playgroups

- **54** Home gardens and **25** community gardens were established and maintained
- **250** food parcels were distributed
- **55** black bags of clothes were distributed

- **150** activity packs were distributed
- **80** training sessions for Abahambi (field ECD practitioners) were given
- **150** children received multivitamin syrup
Voices from the Staff

Covid Pandemic

Some of the LETCEE staff continued to be scared for their lives during 2021 Covid times. Everyone had to adapt to a new lifestyle and follow health protocols, which, at times affected our work. Mary was very supportive and took the time to speak and counsel those who needed the extra support. Covid continued to be traumatic to some of our staff as they lost loved ones. Some felt isolated as they were scared to join church services or other community events. Our communities reported that Covid continued to have a bad impact on them in terms of job losses, food security and children attending school. People in some communities were very agitated and angry, the atmosphere is heated since then and many called to fight the government.

KZN July Riots

A bag of mixed emotions. Afraid, scared and chaotic were the words most used to describe the July riots in KZN. LETCEE’s staff was feeling very helpless because people couldn’t do anything to stop the situation. The looting had a detrimental effect on the communities as they were already living in poverty. The riots escalated the situation. People lost their jobs because factories, shops and retail stores were burned to ashes. Some companies and organisations have been shut down since the looting and were not able to reopen. Some people are more fearful of what could happen due to the experience. People lost their lives and the amount of trauma inflicted on people will show its ugly face in future. A few LETCEE staff remember this as the taste of the uprising in apartheid times. Gunfire was experienced by some for the first time. It was chaotic and dangerous but luckily the LETCEE offices were spared. One of LETCEE’s staff members stated that he was scared to find LETCEE burned to the ground and not having a job after the week of riots.
SETA accredited
Training for ECD
NQF Level 4

This course is an entry-level qualification for those who want to enter the field of Education, Training and Development, specifically within the sub-field of Early Childhood Development (ECD). This qualification will enable our students to facilitate the all-round development of young children in a manner that is sensitive to culture and individual needs (including special needs) and enable them to provide quality early childhood development services for children in a variety of contexts, including community-based services, ECD centres, at home and in institutions.
Izengane Zethu Centre is located at the old army barracks, a low-income part of town. Here we also welcome and feed 110 older children that come after school. They receive a nutritious cooked meal 365 days a year.

The Sgedlane Centre is in a very isolated part of the district and does not receive any services from the municipality. Through a generous donation, the centre and the village received a borehole and have had running water since this year. It makes a huge difference to the hygiene and health of the children and their families.

ECD Programs

LETCEE supports 5 ECD centres in the Umvoti Local Municipality. They are located in Greytown, Nseleni, Potspruit, Sgedlane and Upper Thulini. The children receive a fortified porridge in the morning and a nutritious cooked meal for lunch. A qualified ECD practitioner offers play-to-learn sessions at the centre in a fun and stimulating environment. Every centre received support to create a vegetable garden. The gardens produce enough to add to the cooked meal and sell the surplus.
The appreciation of books for example. We distributed 15000 books to children in different communities which the children kept, creating a little library in each home. We observed that the children treasure those books and are very protective of them.

Non-centre based program

42 ECD practitioners (Abahambi) facilitate daily playgroups for 1040 children, 3 years and older. The Abahambi also visit the younger children at home and provide support to caregivers and parents. We can see positive changes in every child that attends our playgroups.

The Abahambi protect the rights of children to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.
Mobile and Stationed Toy Libraries

LETCEE runs three mobile toy libraries and 3 stationed toy libraries

This successful program provides play and early learning resources to children in hard-to-reach places, in our communities. The mobile toy libraries also provide awareness amongst the caregivers about the importance of early learning, good nutrition and how important it is to monitor the child's progress.

The Toy Libraries reach over 1000 children, 298 Caretakers and 53 ECD practitioners, annually.

Many children attending Toy Libraries, will play with their first toys, read their first books or do their first puzzle. Toys are an integral part of the development of a child. Toys engage a child's physical and mental activity and exercise fine and gross motor skills. Social skills are learned when children play together or share toys with other children.
The Play Able Project supported 23 young children with special needs.

The project participants grow and develop along three pathways, representing the journey in our program:

- **Inclusive Playgroups**
- **Psychosocial Support**
- **Multi-disciplinary Rehab**
SmartStart

SmartStart’s mission is to ensure that every young child has access to quality early learning programmes in preparation for the opportunities ahead.

SmartStart is a social franchise with its head office based in Johannesburg, supporting ECD facilities nationally in South Africa. LETCEE supports the 3rd largest SmartStart branch in South Africa with 3600 young children in the programme. Our team received THE EXPEDITION POSSIBLE AWARD 2021.

For always rising to the occasion, to take up challenging tasks, and execute them well.
Community Development

The programmes include aspects such as nutrition and income generation to strengthen the families of young children. LETCEE is committed to real partnership and co-managing projects with the community, which includes decision-making and the setting of project budgets. The families who are visited by each Abahambi collectively establish a food garden with our support. The gardens are fenced and a tank is installed. The gardens are run on an allotment type model. The gardeners' barter produces within the group and sells the excess to generate income. Some groups now supply the local schools’ feeding schemes. The vegetable gardens not only ensure improved family food security but also improve the caregivers’ sense of worth and provide them with a support group. Vegetable gardens are established in homes where the caregiver is unable to participate in the local community garden.
LETCEE’s policy is to empower communities to take over the projects to ensure sustainability. To do this, projects are co-managed by the elected committee. Decisions concerning who is employed and the budget for direct project costs are made jointly. The committee is assisted to register an NPO so that they can attract funding as LETCEE withdraws. The committee is encouraged to work closely with the traditional leadership in each community. Workshops are facilitated to build confidence, as well as to learn more about budgeting and management.
The PowerGirls Program focuses on empowering and developing young black girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, ages 9-16. We increased the number of active groups to 4, with 48 girls in each group, situated in Greytown, Sangweni, Eshane, and Njengabantu. A total of 192 girls participated in wonderful weekly sessions, that will give them the courage to strive for their dreams, and if they fall short, the resilience to try again.
Our greatest challenge continues to be the remoteness of the communities in which we work.

Management visits to projects are time-consuming and expensive, and this means we are reliant on having our own vehicles.

The lack of resources and services in the communities sometimes hinders progress.
Financials

**INCOME**
- GRANTS: 91%
- SELF-GENERATED INCOME: 7%
- OTHER: 2%

**INCOME: R 8 817 928**

**EXPENDITURE**
- STAFF COSTS: 52%
- PROJECT COSTS: 30%
- OFFICE COSTS: 7%
- VEHICLE AND TRAVEL COSTS: 9%
- TRAINING COSTS: 2%

**EXPENDITURE: R 9 702 806**
We would like to thank our current Funders and Partners for their generous support.

The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust
Grindrod Family Centenary Trust
The Lunch Box Fund
Jim Joel Fund

The LETCEE Board
Kinderfonds
Mamas
HCI Foundation
SmartStart

Mondi Volkswagen
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Lewis Nestlé
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Sanlam Private Wealth
Solidarity Fund
Word Works
Plennegy

Solon Foundation
DG Murry Foundation
Starke Ayres
Sanlam Private Wealth
Hermannsburg School

Wembley College
Greytown High School
St Davids Diocesan School
Deante Swart
Book Dash
THANK YOU!

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