



## **Build leaders of tomorrow one ECD at a time by collaborating with a local NPO**

From 1 April 2022, the Department of Basic Education will be taking over early childhood development (ECD) functions as part of Government's commitment to provide all young South Africans with access to quality ECD programmes by 2030. Currently, an estimated 1.24 million children between the ages of three and five are not attending an early learning programme [i], and over 75% of these kids are underprivileged[ii]. So, those who are most in need are being neglected. While Government is working to rectify this, there are exciting opportunities available for the private sector to bolster these efforts.

This is according to Samantha Massey, Project Manager at [Santa Shoebox \(SSB\) Legacy](#), which uses donations from corporates and private individuals to permanently uplift the lives of children and their families by transforming ECD centres in rural and underprivileged communities throughout SA. "The first five years of a child's life are crucial for developing the social, cognitive, emotional and language skills upon which future learning, economic productivity, and responsible citizenship are built, so missing out is a massive problem."

## **Partnerships are key to achieve permanent change**

Massey shares that Government alone can't solve this challenge. "SSB Legacy develops sustainable solutions that corporates and private individuals can adopt and which SSB Legacy implements and manages. "We apply a holistic approach to the projects we undertake. We look at the broader issues affecting the communities with which we work and determine the right partners to ensure that we create a lasting impact. Involvement with these projects also ensures participating companies' compliance with Corporate Social Investment and Socio-Economic Development scorecards."

All SSB Legacy projects incorporate six pillars of transformation - Infrastructure and Registration, Training, Water, Literacy, Gardens, and ongoing Mentoring & Support. "All of these seek to address several societal issues such as the need for educational funding, the demand for training among educators, access to potable water, increasing the literacy rate and early childhood nutrition for growth and development. Uplifting communities holistically and sustainably, not only contributes towards socio-economic development but also supports the achievement of a number of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," says Massey.

## **Paving the way to give SA's children a bright future**

Last year, for instance, funds were used to build a creche on a farm outside Ceres and to install reading hubs in 25 ECD centres in the Samora Machel community in Cape Town. Caregivers and teachers at these facilities also underwent training in various educational programmes, which included anti-bullying workshops.

In 2020, new premises were built for the Soul City Creche in the Loskop district of rural KwaZulu-Natal. The original building was constructed using sticks and mud bricks, and as a result, required regular repairs due to the humid and rainy conditions in the area. The

new brick building helped earn the creche a Department of Social Development registration, which had long been out of reach due to the lack of basic infrastructure.

Over the next three years, SSB Legacy is set to build more ECD centres, in addition to their involvement with library and water projects that will positively impact children at the new facilities and in the surrounds.

“As President Ramaphosa once said, ‘If we are to break the cycle of poverty, we need to educate the children of the poor’. SSB Legacy invites business to collaborate - together we will support early learning and the development of holistic skills, ensuring these impoverished children thrive and reach their full potential in life,” concludes Massey.

For businesses interested in donating to the SSB Legacy Fund, visit <https://santashoebox.org.za/legacy-2/> or for further information email [samantha@santashoebox.org.za](mailto:samantha@santashoebox.org.za)

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#### **About the [Santa Shoebox Project](#):**

There are three initiatives within the Santa Shoebox Project:

- **Traditional Santa Shoebox:** Over the last 16 years, 1 077 289 Santa Shoeboxes each containing eight specified items of treats and essentials have been given to underprivileged and socially vulnerable children throughout South Africa and Namibia. From 01 September each year, Santa Shoebox donors choose their beneficiary child/ren by name, age and gender and are given the child’s clothing size. Each personalised shoebox reaches the very child for whom it was pledged. Using the Santa Shoebox app, donors are able to track their shoebox from the moment it is pledged to the magical moment it is handed to the child.
- **Virtual Santa Shoebox:** These shoeboxes are purchased online by donors and are available year-round, meeting the needs of donors who live too far from drop-off points, are too busy to shop or are perhaps Covid-vulnerable. Components are chosen by the donor on the Santa Shoebox website, the shoeboxes are packed by the Santa Shoebox Team and delivered to children attending far-flung rural facilities. A Virtual Santa Shoebox contains the eight specified items, as well as additional items, such as masks, a lunchbox and books. A Virtual Santa Shoebox costs R450 plus an optional delivery fee of R30.
- **Santa Shoebox Legacy:** All Santa Shoebox Project operating costs are covered by corporate sponsors. Privately donated funds have been accruing under the SSB Legacy Fund which are now being used to bring permanent change to the lives of Santa Shoebox beneficiary children and the impoverished communities in which they live.