

Amid Financial Strain, South Africans Continue to Uplift Underprivileged Children

Cape Town, December 2023 - Despite South Africans feeling more [financially pressured](#) in 2023 than they did last year, this has not affected their generosity. Over 74 000 Santa Shoeboxes have been donated to underprivileged and socially vulnerable children across South Africa and Namibia, bringing the total number of children impacted over the past 18 years to 1 226 756.

Commenting on this achievement, Deb Zelezniak, CEO at the [Santa Shoebox Project](#), says that South Africans are a giving nation, and rallying our citizens to uplift a child in need is met with overwhelming support, as people recognise the profound positive impacts this can have. “For example, when a child receives stationery to set them up for the academic year ahead, it instils a sense of pride and reinforces a positive attitude toward learning.”

The driving force behind this year’s success has been the dedication of 1,151 volunteers who managed 74 drop-off points nationwide, delivering Santa Shoeboxes to the children living in and around their communities. “These volunteers embody kindness and the spirit of giving, and I believe they give the beneficiary children and their caregivers a reason to hope when times are tough. Volunteer contributions are intrinsic and invaluable to the operation of non-profit organisations countrywide, without whom most of these NPOs would have to close,” Zelezniak notes.

Beyond gift-giving, the Santa Shoebox Project brings about lasting change in the lives of beneficiary children and their communities by establishing and transforming Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDs) in rural South Africa through the Santa Shoebox Legacy initiative.

In 2023, the organisation inaugurated its fourth project, the Qandokuhle Crèche in the uThukela District of KwaZulu-Natal. This facility features two classrooms, two toilets, a kitchen, office, and a fenced-in playground.

Thirty-two reading corners were installed in ECDs in Alexandra, Gauteng, where 64 caregivers received training in incorporating books into various facets of early childhood development, beyond literacy. The non-profit extended its impact by training an additional 360 caregivers in Alexandra, Central Johannesburg, and Soweto in social and emotional learning, perceptual skills, and learning through play.

Additionally, in celebration of the Project’s 18th birthday, it sponsored training for 36 ECD practitioners in the Western Cape and KZN, providing them with a nationally recognised qualification.

Looking ahead, the organisation has set an ambitious goal of building two ECDs next year, departing from its previous annual target of one. Furthermore, the non-profit plans to train several hundred under-skilled or unskilled caregivers to enhance the quality of services at their facilities. This will enable them to charge fees that can be reinvested in improving the infrastructure of their centres.

Additionally, 30 reading corners will be installed in Diepsloot, Gauteng, accompanied by caregiver training on integrating reading materials into various aspects of early childhood development.

“None of this would be possible without the support and generosity of South Africans. Investing in children is an invaluable cause, particularly amid budget cuts for early childhood development. I urge more people to make a difference in the lives of more underprivileged children in 2024,” concludes Zelezniak.

About the Santa Shoebox Programmes

Traditional Santa Shoebox: Over the last 18 years, 1 152 587 each containing eight specified items of treats and essentials have been given from 1 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 have health issues. 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 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.

Fiduciary information: As a Level One Contributor to B-BBEE, the Santa Shoebox Project earns 100 points on the generic scorecard, and with Section 18A status, is able to provide a tax-deductible receipt in recognition of donations. The Project is an initiative of the JOG Trust (IT2671/2009). The Trust is registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO-930031301), a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO 102-098) and holds a current ICPR in support of 100% SED compliance.

Social media:

TikTok: @santa.shoebox

Facebook: /SantaShoebox

X: @SantaShoebox

Instagram: /santashoebox

YouTube: The Santa Shoebox Project

Pinterest: /santashoebox