



EDUCARE MPAME SOUTH AFRICA

Website: <https://edu-carempame.com>

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NEWSLETTER No. 28: April 2026

Greetings from Mpame!

Note from the Writer

In the previous newsletter I asked for understanding regarding any mistakes, as Leonie was unfortunately not available to assist with editing. Ironically, while preparing this newsletter I immediately noticed an error in the previous edition — January 2026 had accidentally been dated January 2025! My apologies for that oversight.

Back to the real business — the last four months have been both exciting and special. It is difficult to believe that we are already in the second term of 2026 and that Jean and Tony have now been back in Mpame for almost five months.

EDUCARE SO FAR FOR 2026

- On 9 February, Siyakhula Kids (“We are Growing”) opened with 16 children. The ECDC was originally meant to open in 2025 but, for a variety of reasons, was delayed. We are delighted that it is now operating successfully with sixteen children and many more on the waiting list. A special thank you goes to The Solon Foundation, whose generous donation made the opening of this centre possible.
- Teacher training has been on the cards for a long time. A proposal was prepared and submitted to The Solon Foundation, who generously offered to fund the training programme in its entirety.
- The data capturing system developed for Educare Mpame to record attendance and daily monitoring activities is nearing completion.
- Security upgrades at Chocolate Cottage are currently underway and, hopefully, will be completed by the end of July.
- Chocolate Cottage, the Robertson home, has now officially become Educare Mpame’s head office.

SUNSHINE, LITTLE FLOWER AND SIYAKHULA

Sunshine ECDC

Teacher: Nthombozuko Cobothi (Ntosh) Assistant: Azola Sigwiji Crèche Coordinator: Jean-Marie Robertson

Besides everything running smoothly, the biggest news from Sunshine is that Ntosh is expecting a baby in May. She told Jean that she would only need one day off and planned to return to work the day after the baby was born! Jean explained that things do not work quite like that at Educare, and she will be taking a month's paid maternity leave.

Bukho will be standing in during this period. She has already spent some time at Sunshine and has also been doing a crash course on the data capturing system. Jean also organised a baby shower for Ntosh, and she was deeply touched and overwhelmed.



Valentine Days



Parents trying out the educational materials



New Play Dough.



New Puzzles



Fine motor skills exercise.



Future Picasso

LITTLE FLOWER

Teacher: Nomzamo Sinono (Zamo) Cook: Funeka Mpayatheti Crèche Coordinator: Jean-Marie Robertson

As always, everything continues to run well at Little Flower. Zamo keeps a tight rein on everything while remaining caring and loving towards all the children.

Zamo's computer skills continue to improve and she is now confidently sending emails to the Department of Education.



Valentines Day.



Furu filling in for Zamo



Hard at work

New Crèche in Zwilitsha – Siyakhula Kids

Teacher: Namhla Gosa Assistant / Cook: Zameka Sinyaka Creche coordinator Jean

The crèche opened with sixteen children and already has a healthy waiting list. Namhla is extremely excited about her new position and she is proving herself well. If I'm not mistaken, this is Zameka's first full-time position, excluding her lifesaving duties during school holidays.

The first PTA meeting was held on 26 March and a committee was elected consisting of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and two additional members.

Applications now need to be submitted to the Department of Social Development so the ECD can be registered as a non-profit organisation, and thereafter to the Department of Education for funding.

At present these are a temporary premises. A site has already been identified for the new crèche, approved by the community and sanctioned by the our chief. Plans have been drawn up, bills of quantities prepared and budgets completed. Documentation has been sent to several organisations in an effort to secure funding.



The little creche with the big heart



Siyakhula Kids



As an ice breaker at the first parents meeting Namhla asked parents to identify their children by their hands

Data Capturing

Training for the data capturing system is approximately 99% complete, with only one or two minor issues still being ironed out. With Ntosh going on maternity leave, Bukho has been doing a crash course to be able to assist.

Thank you so much to Ryan Banks, developer of the system, and David De Gruchy who took over much of the training. The system has become a valuable addition to the organization.



David explaining how the data capturing dash board works

Wild Coast ECD Community of Practice (COP)

Community Engagement and Professional Development

Educare Mpame continues to attend the Wild Coast Community of Practice (COP) meetings. One of the exciting developments at the latest meeting was that both Jean and Namhla attended for the first time.

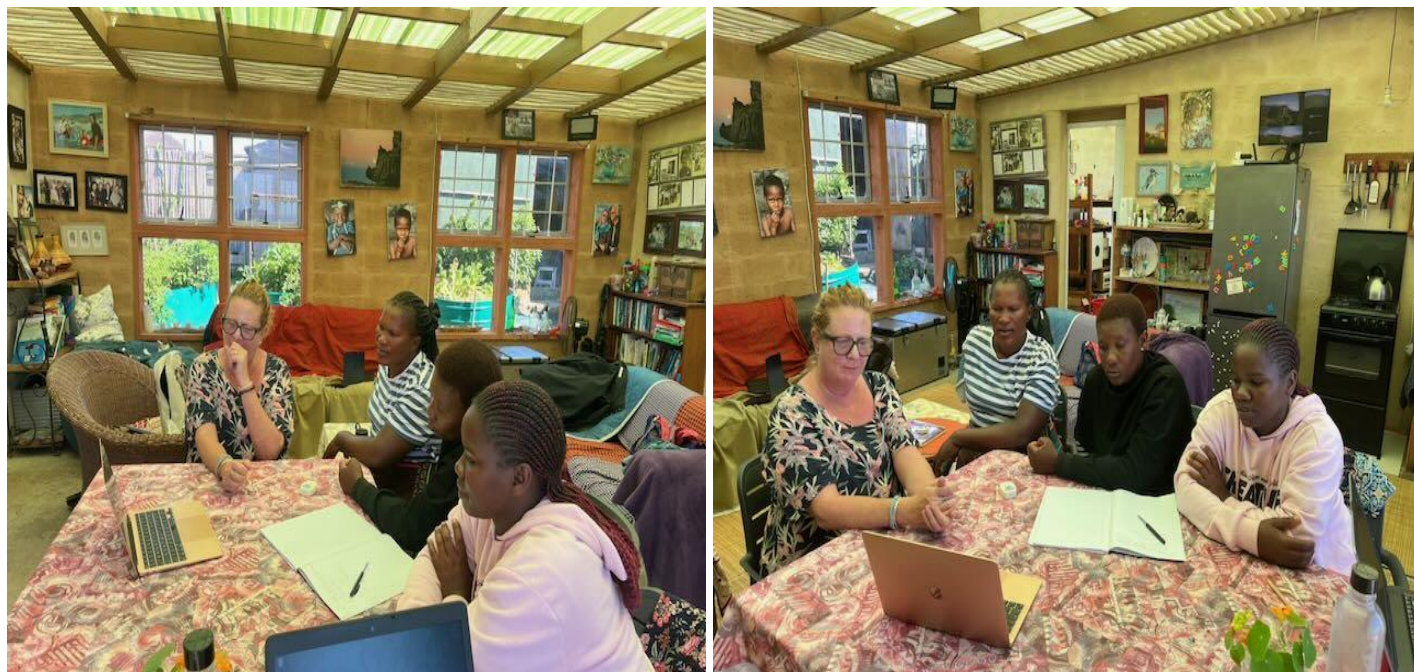
Zamo continues to serve on the management committee and remains highly respected within the group. These meetings continue to provide valuable opportunities for networking, professional development and the sharing of ideas between organisations working in Early Childhood Development throughout the region.

Teachers Training

The training programme for the NQF Level 4 Occupational Certificate in Early Childhood Development has now officially begun, with Nomzamo, Namhla and Ntosh enrolled. Jean has also decided to join the course and complete the training alongside the teachers.

So far there has been an introductory meeting and two additional lessons, each lasting approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. The lessons are conducted online and, fortunately, internet connectivity has been adequate so far.

One of the interesting requirements of the course is that all submitted work must be handwritten to help ensure that the work remains entirely the student's own and to discourage over-reliance on artificial intelligence.



Department of Education

The current Department of Education funding cycle ended on 31 March, and the application for the next funding period has already been submitted and is awaiting notification.

As with many administrative processes, things sometimes move slowly. One cannot help but wonder what the experience must be like for organisations whose primary source of income depends entirely on these processes. We remain hopeful and continue to trust that the necessary support will be received.

Donations

Cloths, puzzles, toys and stationery

In last newsletter Mike and Cherle Saunders were no thanked for the puzzles and seeds they gave to Educare, thank you so much, rather late than never.

Toys were donated by Paul and Roxanne Webb

Clothing from Theresa De Klerck

Financial Donations:

Financial support during this period has been very encouraging. Existing donors who committed to ongoing support have continued generously. With several annual donors increasing their sponsorship. We are also actively working towards growing our base of smaller monthly donors.

The Solon Foundation has funded for four teachers to do there NQF level 4 ECDC certificate. They have also contributed to the security upgrades at Chocolate Cottage

Bridge-ed foundation has contributed directly to upgrading of services and administration costs funding and are funding consultants to assist Educare in strengthening sustainability and donor growth initiatives

Monthly Donors

Abona	Tish North
Bildungsförderung Transkie	Chris North
Lynne Semple	Rosemarie and Brian Lockie
Alex and Lyndsay Cyprianos from Revelstone	Ryan Breetzke
Karen & David Hart	Wes Dewing
Janet Hodkins	Gary and Colleen Midlane
Barbra and Steven Gettliffe	Jacqui Finlay
Jade Dewing	Leonie Viljoen

One off donations came from the following people and organisations

GRM Cat Holdings	Malcolm Carew
The Rolf-Stephan Nussbaum Foundation	Wilfred Newman
Bridge-Ed Foundation	Jad Jon Youens
Atlantic Brick and Concrete	Nicola Wassell
DonnaKay Lee	

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTS US IT IS MOST APPRECIATED

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Ongoing thanks to Iain and Robin Stewart for their contribution to Educare's financial reporting. Educare has decided to up the game on accounting and as from January 2026 has a accounting package to assist with the bookkeeping of the organisation, hopefully making everyone's life easier. The accounting package is Xero.

GENERAL

Security at Chocolate Cottage

Chocolate Cottage, which serves as both the Robertson family home and Educare's head office, continues to undergo important security improvements following incidents experienced during 2024 and 2025.

Security upgrades include the construction of a secure room, additional camera installations and improvements to solar backup systems. Work still remains to complete the secure room and final electrical upgrades before the remaining security cameras can be installed.

A security guard is present on the premises every evening and the Robertson family remains in radio contact with him. The guard also carries a remote siren system that can alert the community if assistance is needed.

Community support following the difficulties experienced has been overwhelming. Prior to the Jean and Tony's return to Mpame, the head teacher Zamo Sinono organised a peaceful community gathering with mothers, guardians and local residents expressing concern and support for the family.

Following Jean and Tony's return to Mpame, a further community meeting was held with local leaders and residents. The turnout was tremendous and demonstrated the remarkable support Educare continues to receive from the wider community.

Connectivity Challenges

Another major challenge currently facing Educare Mpame is internet connectivity.

Educare had initially been using a company called iData and receiving approximately 6 Mbps service. At first this was manageable, but once security cameras, online meetings and virtual lessons became more frequent, the service became increasingly inadequate. The service was upgraded to 10 Mbps, which resulted in some improvement, but performance still fell short of requirements.

An alternative provider, Morclick, was approached and offered a 20 Mbps satellite service on a three-month trial basis.

The initial intention had been to replace iData entirely; however, it soon became clear that both systems would be needed — Morclick for security operations and iData for online work.

This currently costs approximately R2,500 per month for uncapped services. Fortunately there are no long-term contracts and services can be cancelled with one month's notice. Until better alternatives become available, this arrangement will need to suffice.



Sunshine new inverter.



Little flower inverter battery combo

There are many challenges in rural development work, but there are also many rewards. Despite obstacles, Educare continues moving forward and remains excited about the future.

Hope you enjoyed this.

Thanks for your continued interest and support!

From all of us at Educare Mpame.

Wishing Leonie a speedy recovery so she can help with the editing

All photos are published with the written consent of the children's parents.
