



ANNUAL 2019 REPORT





**“THERE IS NO BETTER WAY TO
START BUILDING THE FUTURE WE
IMAGINED THAN TO FOCUS ON
EARLY LEARNING”**

Minister of Basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga



CONTENTS

Directors note	4
Who is The Mikhulu Trust	5
Impact	7
First Thousand Days partnership	8
Book sharing as a community tool	9
Mikhulu Trust supported research	10
Story	13
Funding success	14
Team and Board	15
Thanks and acknowledgments	16





A note from the Director: “The freedom to create our own story”

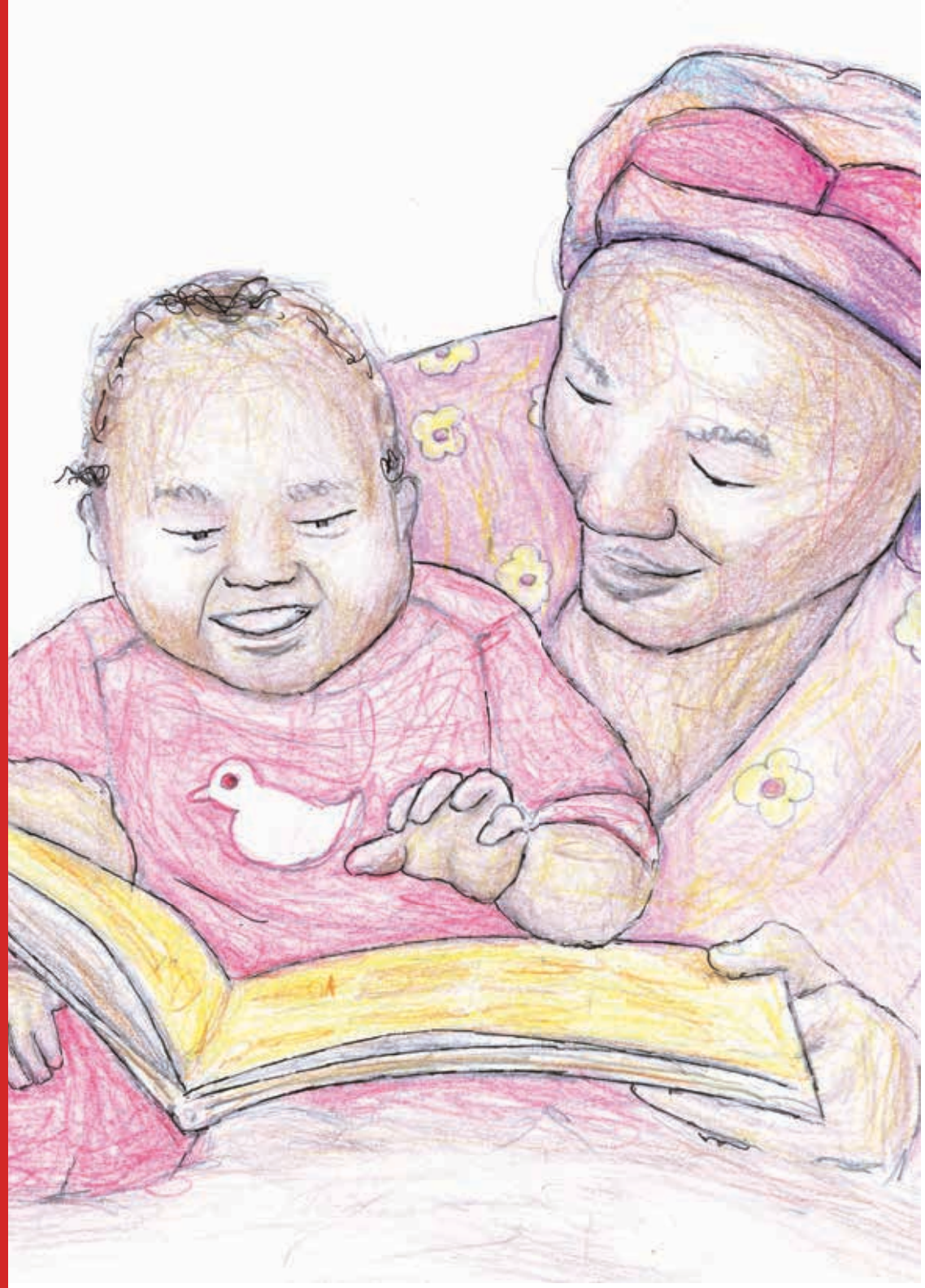
“When my daughter was little, she would ask me to help her with her reading homework. Most of the time her reading would be in Afrikaans. I can't read Afrikaans, so I would avoid her. After now with my younger son, being trained in the book-sharing programme, I understand that he and I have the freedom to create our own story, in our own words. I am able to learn more about my son and he is able to know me better as his mother.”

This story came from a parent in one of our programmes, and it meant a lot to me. It demonstrated the power of a simple tool like book-sharing and its ability to help parents realise that they have everything they need to help their children develop well. Most importantly, the parent's comment shows how book-sharing helps to build closer relationships between parents and children.

This quote also, however, highlights the great challenge we have. Many parents feel that they are ill-equipped to support their children's development. In our daily work, we meet parents and caregivers who think that their children's education only start once they go to school. They underestimate their real capability to support their child's development, and the wider impact such support will have on their child's future.

In light of these considerations, we have focused our work more deeply on the socio-emotional impact of book-sharing, and particularly, how parent-child relationships support children's cognitive development. This has helped us engage more partners who are interested in the “holistic development” of the child, including inter-personal, emotional, and cognitive developmental aspects, as outlined in the Nurturing Care Framework's “Early Stimulation” guidelines.

In 2019, with a renewed focus on supporting our implementing partners to enhance their impact with parents, we were able to increase mentorship visits to the facilitators we had trained. These visits enabled facilitators to feel more confident in their engagements with parents, helping parents to feel more motivated and excited about supporting their children's development. We look forward to further developing this work, and realising its impact in the year to come.



WHO IS THE MIKHULU TRUST

The Mikhulu Trust envisions that all parents and caregivers are supported to develop nurturing and stimulating relationships with their young children to help them have the best start to life.

Our organisation has roots in the academic world through the research of two Professors, Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper. They were particularly interested in how improving aspects of the early relationship between infants and their primary caregivers could benefit the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

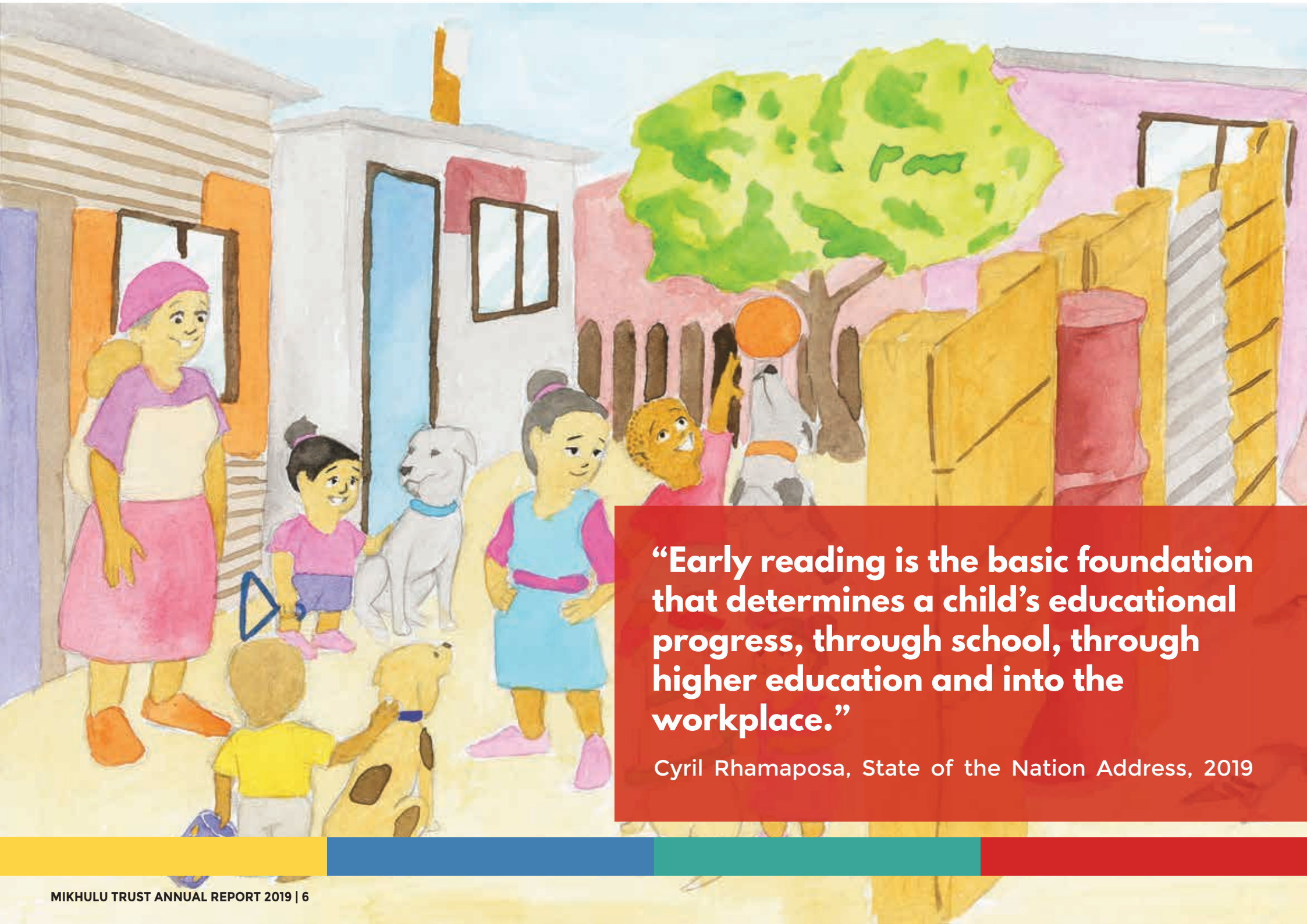
In 2014, they developed a "Dialogic book-sharing" programme for South Africa and, in collaboration with South African colleagues, tested it in a randomised controlled trial in Khayelitsha. Mothers of 14-month-old babies were trained in specific techniques for sharing wordless picture books with their babies. These mothers were guided to pay attention to what their babies were looking at, pointing to whatever attracted the babies' attention. They were encouraged to name objects and actions, to ask questions that would trigger their babies' curiosity, and to praise any contributions that their baby made in the interaction. Mothers attended weekly group sessions for eight weeks for a duration of one-and-a-half hours. The mothers were asked to share books with their baby every day for at least five minutes during the eight-week training period.

By comparing the outcome of the babies of the mothers who had received the training with a group of babies whose mothers had not received the training, the study showed that training led to dramatic improvements in the babies' receptive and expressive language and in their ability to focus their attention.

These were particularly significant findings because early language and attention skills are both known to contribute to children being better prepared for school and for the development of literacy. The trial also showed that, for children whose mothers had received the training, those who started off with the poorest language and concentration abilities improved the most.

The study also showed that the intervention led to the benefit of babies being able to demonstrate concern for others, and their ability to understand others' emotions. Notably, statistical analysis showed that it was the improvements in the mothers' book-sharing skills that led to the improvements in the children's development.

The impressive findings of this trial led to the establishment of the Mikhulu Child Development Trust. The purpose of the Mikhulu Trust is to implement evidence-based programmes like the book-sharing programme with parents and primary caregivers of children between the ages of 1 and 6 years old. We have since partnered with 11 community-based NGOs in South Africa to deliver the programme, and we are working with the Western Cape Department of Health and various municipal libraries, to bring book-sharing to caregivers across South Africa.



“Early reading is the basic foundation that determines a child’s educational progress, through school, through higher education and into the workplace.”

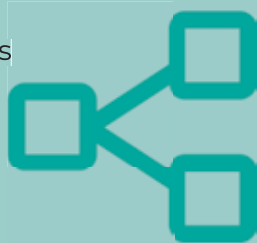
Cyril Rhamaposa, State of the Nation Address, 2019

IMPACT



5 new organisations trained to deliver the book-sharing to parents

11 total organisations delivering the book-sharing programme to parents



58



support visits conducted with organisations delivering the book-sharing programme to parents



2 facilitators delivering book-sharing to ECD teachers

28 total facilitators delivering book-sharing to parents

30 community health workers trained in book-sharing in the First Thousand Days



346

wordless picture books distributed to families



6 ECD teachers reached with book-sharing

186 parents trained in book-sharing



PARTNERING TO PROVIDE NEW TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR EARLY STIMULATION

The Mikhulu Trust has partnered with the Western Cape Department of Health to integrate book-sharing into the Parent /Caregiver / Family Support Package offered as part of the First Thousand Days initiative.

A caregiver and child sharing a wordless book together, is a way for them to strengthen their relationship. At the same time, this activity provides an opportunity for the caregiver to support their child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. The partnership between the Mikhulu Trust and the WCDOH is of major significance, because it enables the Mikhulu Trust to impart their experience and expertise to a sizeable cohort of professions and thereby ensure that a large number of caregivers will be introduced to a powerful means of helping their children thrive.

PROMOTING CARING RELATIONSHIPS

The South African and international policy environment, and specifically, South Africa's National Integrated ECD policy, recognises the importance of an holistic approach to ensuring that children thrive during the all-important First Thousand Days. The WCDOH's FTD initiative, which is aligned to the WHO's Nurturing Care Framework, has three pillars: grow, love, play.

Falling under the 'love' pillar of this holistic approach, book-sharing has been identified as a way to strengthen the bond between caregiver and child, while supporting the child's cognitive development. It promotes a close, engaged, enjoyable, respectful and stimulating relationship, the kind of relationship that is known to nurture development.



The department's new Road to Health booklet, which is issued to each child born in South Africa, now also acknowledges the importance of responsive caregiving and the importance of book-sharing in this context.

INTEGRATING BOOK-SHARING INTO EXISTING SERVICES

The importance of book-sharing as a means of strengthening relationships and promoting early stimulation is being integrated into existing service touch points that support caregivers in the First Thousand Days. Caregivers receive passive messaging in health facilities (for example, through posters), have brief discussions with health promoters in waiting rooms, receive more in-depth information and a book gift from the nurse, are coached by community health workers, and have the opportunity to participate in the full book-sharing programme offered by local organisations.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

It has taken some time to work out how best to integrate book-sharing into the Support Package. The Mikhulu Trust and the WCDOH have adopted an interactive approach and consulted many stakeholders at all levels to ensure that training tools and materials suit the needs of health workers.

We share our learnings through many platforms, including partnership briefs, provincial and local inter-sectoral engagements and conferences such as the FTD Colloquium.

In 2019 we started work in the Drakenstein and Saldanha Bay municipalities. We conducted provincial and local roadshows, hosted orientation workshops for all stakeholders, and trained 30 community health workers in delivering book-sharing training to carers.

The Mikhulu Trust and WCDOH are expanding the partnership to include networks inside and outside of the health services. As an example, to broaden the ecosystem support for book-sharing mothers, we've connected them to the library services in their areas.


Future efforts will include aligning the programme with other parent and literacy support initiatives, evaluating the programme in terms of both process and impact, and expanding to additional districts.

Book-sharing as a community tool: Parents become agents of change in their communities

Community Work, has been trained as a book-sharing facilitator by the Mikhulu Trust. She is implementing the programme in Langa, where parents have gone beyond the training to become agents of change in their own communities. Thus, some parents - despite graduating from the book-sharing programme - continue to attend our book-sharing training sessions to support the cause, and to guide the parents who are newly enrolled in the program.

Ntombenceba, upon noticing the returning parents, asked one of them, “why do you still want to attend the sessions, if you’ve already completed the training?” The parent replied: “This programme enabled me to learn techniques that promote my child’s language abilities. My child has not started school, but she can point and name colours and fruits. Me and my child enjoy sharing a book together and this is something I intend not to stop. Every opportunity I get to learn, I avail myself. I am making sure that my child is prepared to start school.”

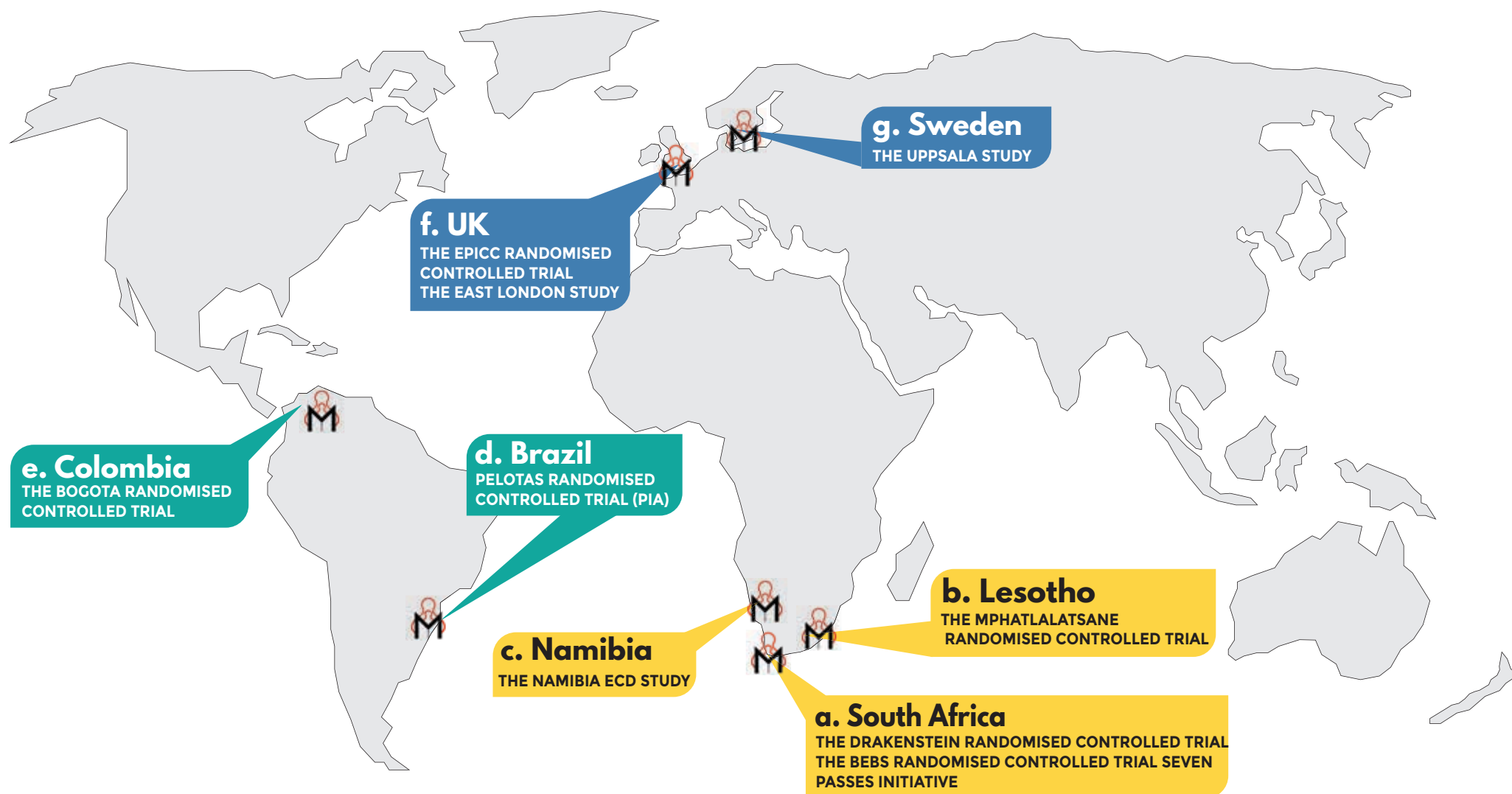
The fact that parents are encouraging each other to embrace book-sharing is heartwarming, and helps with attendance and retention too, explains Ntombenceba. She finds that returning parents can share their experiences of the book-sharing programme with other parents, and they can explain the benefits the programme has brought into their lives and the lives of their children.
Puseletso Mofokeng -Training Coordinator



“Me and my child enjoy sharing a book together and this is something I intend not to stop. Every opportunity I get to learn, I avail myself. I am making sure that my child is prepared to start school”

MIKHULU TRUST SUPPORTED RESEARCH

THE MIKHULU TRUST SUPPORTS ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS AROUND THE WORLD IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH USING MIKHULU TRUST TRAINING MATERIALS. THE STUDIES CURRENTLY UNDERWAY OR RECENTLY COMPLETED ARE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED IN THIS REPORT.



MIKHULU TRUST SUPPORTED RESEARCH: **NATIONAL RESEARCH**

a. South Africa (National)

THE DRAKENSTIEN RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: This study, which took place in the Drakenstein municipality, compared the impact of book-sharing training on families with children aged 40-44 months with a waitlist control. The study evaluated the impact of this intervention on the neurocognitive and socioemotional development of the children involved. In total 122 carer-child pairs were recruited with 61 randomised to the intervention. Training and post-intervention assessments were completed in July 2019. Data quality control, data cleaning, retrospective translation, and scoring of tests and statistical analysis are ongoing.

Who was involved: This study, headed up by Dr Karen Mare, was supported by Professor Dan Stein, head of the Brain Behaviour Unit and Department of Psychiatry at the the University of Cape Town, with the involvement of Paediatrician Prof Heather Zar of Red Cross Hospital (UCT), Research Centre for Adolescent and Child Health Unit, and Profs Peter Cooper and Lynne Murray of the University of Reading, UK..

Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training and supervision to the facilitators and donated books to the families.

SEVEN PASSES INITIATIVE

Summary: This study evaluated the impact of a set of parenting support programmes on parenting styles delivered in the Touwsrante area. The Seven Passes Initiative supports parents in the Touwsrante area through four parenting programmes – including our book-sharing intervention - under the Parenting for Lifelong Health initiative. An evaluation was conducted to determine the impact of the social activation process on the whole community's parenting style and on child outcomes. The results (not yet published) indicate that, following the intervention, parents experienced less parenting stress and had improved in setting limits. They were more likely to support positive child behaviour, and there was a significant decrease in corporal punishment. There was also a significant decrease in the children's mental health problems

Who was involved: Seven Passes Initiative, University of Cape Town, Institute for Security Studies with SNA support, The University of Reading, The University of Oxford.

Mikhulu Trust support: The Mikhulu Trust trained and supported the Seven Passes facilitators to implement the book-sharing programme and provided training materials.

THE BEBS RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: The BEBS trial was a study of families with children aged 23-28 months living in the peri-urban settlement of Khayelitsha, Cape Town. The trial aimed to investigate the impact of our book-sharing intervention on parenting and child language, attention and social understanding. The trial has been completed, with a six month follow-up, and journal articles have been submitted and are currently under review. (See Dowdall et al, Trials, 2017, 18, 118.)

Who is involved: The BEBS trial was headed up by Dr Nicholas Dowdall of Oxford University, and was supported by the Medical Research Council of South Africa and the Rhodes Trust, as well as Stellenbosch University and Reading University.

Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the facilitators.



MIKHULU TRUST SUPPORTED RESEARCH: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

b. Lesotho

THE MPHATLALATSANE RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: This study, conducted in Mokhotlong, in rural Lesotho, was a large cluster trial, with randomisation by village. The study aimed to investigate the impact of our book-sharing intervention on parenting and child language, attention and social understanding in families with one to five year old children. The trial has been completed, with a 12 month follow up, and data are currently being analysed. (See Tomlinson et al, Trials, 2016, 17, 538).
Who was involved: This study was headed up by Professor Mark Tomlinson of Stellenbosch University, and was supported by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the facilitators.

c. Namibia

THE NAMIBIA ECD STUDY

Summary: The study was initiated to evaluate the impact on child outcome of dialogic book-sharing in ECD classroom settings. This study was a preliminary "before-and-after" study of our book-sharing programme for Early Childhood Development Centres, with training delivered to 13 pre-school teachers in Windhoek and assessment made of teachers and children. The study is currently underway and will be completed later in 2020 (subject to an easing of mobility restrictions).
Who was involved: The study was headed up by Kaathima Ebrahim of the Mikhulu Trust. It is being conducted in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Namibia, and is supported by the University of Reading. Biblionef donated books towards this study.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to ECD teachers, the project management of the study, and wordless picture books.

d. Brazil

PELOTAS RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL (PIA)

Summary: The PIA study was a large trial, carried out in collaboration with the Pelotas Municipal Government. It is embedded within the Pelotas 2015 Birth Cohort. It involves a comparison of a no-intervention control group with two interventions for families with 30-42 month old children: our dialogic book-sharing programme, and ACT - a programme to reduce harsh parenting. The trial has been completed, including a six month follow-up, and data are currently being analysed. The cohort participants, including those who took part in this trial, will be monitored to adulthood (See Murray, et al., Trials, 2019, 20, 253).
Who was involved: The study was headed up by Professor Joseph Murray of the State University of Pelotas, and is supported by the Wellcome Trust of the UK.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the facilitators, training materials, and wordless picture books.

e. Colombia

THE BOGOTA RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: This study was a three arm study that aimed to compare a no-intervention control sample with two intervention groups: one receiving our book-sharing programme, and the other receiving CARE, a programme that aims to enhance child cognitive functioning. Families from Bogota and Cali with 36-59 month old children have been recruited and randomised. The study has been completed and the data are currently being analysed.
Who was involved: The study was headed up by Juan-Jose Giraldo, with support from the University of Bogota.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the facilitators (via Kate Traynor of PACT-UK).

f. United Kingdom THE EPICC RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of our book-sharing intervention on parenting and child language, attention, and social understanding in disadvantaged families attending Children's Centres in Reading, UK. This was a cluster RCT (with the Children's Centres randomised) including families with 28-45 month old children. Families attending half the Centres received our book-sharing intervention. The study has been completed, with a 4-6 month follow-up, the data have been analysed, and an outcome paper is about to be submitted for publication. (See Murray et al, Trials, 2018, 19, 450).
Who was involved: The EPICC trial was headed up by Professors Lynne Murray and Peter Cooper of the University of Reading, and was supported by the Nuffield Foundation.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training and supervision to the facilitators.

THE EAST LONDON STUDY

Summary: This study aims to compare the impact on infant attention between providing parents with our book-sharing intervention and a computer delivered attention training programme. Families with 10-14 month old infants in London, UK are being recruited. The study is currently underway and will be completed by the end of 2020 (subject to an easing of mobility restrictions).
Who was involved: The East London study is headed up by Professor Sam Wass of the University of East London, and is supported by the European Research Council.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the study facilitator.

g. Sweden

THE UPPSALA RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL

Summary: This study is a trial of our book-sharing intervention delivered to families with 10-12 month old infants, compared to an active control intervention (i.e. stimulating joint constructive play). Follow-up assessments will be made when the children are 18 and 24 months of age. The study is currently underway and will be completed by the end of 2021.
Who was involved: The Uppsala study is headed up by Dr Linda Forssman of the University of Uppsala, and is supported by the Swedish Research Council.
Mikhulu Trust involvement: The Mikhulu Trust provided training to the facilitators (via Kate Traynor of PACT-UK).

A mother's first visit to her local library:

Linking to local services through book-sharing sessions

During June and July 2019, we delivered an eight-week course on the book-sharing programme to facilitators from 'Living Hope' – a community-development non-profit organization that works in the Masiphumelele township in Cape Town. Masiphumelele, is only a few square kilometers in size, but it has a population of over 16,000. Despite efforts to develop the area, it still lacks sufficient amenities and the community is not much aware of the amenities and services that do exist.

Five mothers and their young children attended the first Masiphumelele book-sharing training course delivered by Living Hope. During the training, a new book and a different book-sharing technique was introduced at each session. The mothers each had a chance to practise the skills they learned in the session before taking the books home. At the final session, a small graduation ceremony was held to celebrate the mothers' completion of the course. Each mother received a copy of "Little Helpers" to keep and use with their children.

Living Hope facilitators also linked the mothers to their local library. This was a new experience for them all. Linking to a local service was exciting for these mothers, as they were able to better understand the free services that they could access - an important discovery for stay-at-home mothers like themselves.

Christelle Heskwa, COO, The Mikhulu Trust





108%
OF FUNDING
GOAL ACHIEVED

FUNDING SUCCESS

Mikhulu publishes new, wordless picture books - with crowd-funding

In 2018, supported by the Mila Charitable Organisation, the Mikhulu Trust incubated four unpublished South African illustration interns to develop new wordless picture books to support our book-sharing work. The project was a considerable success, and we were able to publish six new books at the beginning of 2019.

After printing a small number of the books, and sharing them in our programmes and with partners, we were humbled at the positive response to these new books and by the great demand for them. We decided to raise funds through a crowdfunding campaign in order to print 10,000 copies of the books, which we aimed to distribute to parents who complete the "Book-sharing for Families" programme.

We launched the campaign in April 2019, aiming to raise R80 000. We reached this goal within two months, and were able to negotiate favourable print rates to allow us to print 11,500 copies. To further reduce costs, and to give others the opportunity to print sets of our books for themselves at this cost, we opted for a collaborative print run, in which 8 ECD and Literacy partners added 3,500 books to the print run. Collectively, we were able to print 15,000 books!

This campaign has reinforced our belief in collaborative partnerships for book production, as it not only helped us include our supporters in our work, but also allowed us to have a large enough print run to be of benefit to other organisations' work.

TEAM

CEO: Kaathima Ebrahim

COO: Christelle Heskwa

Training Coordinator: Puseletso Mofokeng

Master Trainer: Phumza Gqwaka

BOARD

Chairperson

Mdebuka Mtwazi

Board Members

Fatima Abba

David Jeffery

Pulane Kingston

Lynne Murray

Nafeesa Rahbeeni

Tebogo Skwambane

John Smelcer



THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to sincerely thank every person and organisation who have worked with us, and supported our work throughout this year. Your presence and support helped us grow as an organisation, and helped me grow as a leader. A special thank you to my staff and my Board for their dedication, and to our donors and grant managers for their guidance and advice. Thank you to our service providers for helping us develop beautiful books, and to our partners for helping us reach families with this special work. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year. - **Kaathima Ebrahim, Director**

DONOR PARTNERS



To all those who donated to our crowdfunding campaign through Thundafund.



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS





South Africa: Non-Profit Company number 2017/464907/08 | PBO number 930060969
United Kingdom: Registered Charity number 1158733
Early Learning Centre, Athlone, Cape Town, 7764
info@mikhulutrust.org | www.mikhulutrust.org