



UPDATE PLAY FOR ALL



PROGRAMME FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)



Dw DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP CHILDREN

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INTRODUCTION

During the early years of a child’s life, the parenting and care they receive is crucial for their holistic development, setting the stage for the rest of their lives. A child’s brain develops more rapidly from the ages of 0 -5 than at any other time in life, and their parents or primary caregivers are their first and most important teachers. Parents play a vital role in shaping their child’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

During these formative years, children rely on their parents for guidance, love and security, laying the foundation for their well-being and future success. Through responsive caregiving, parents foster healthy attachment, nurturing a sense of trust and self-esteem. They also introduce children to language, communication and social interaction, crucial skills that enable them to navigate their world. Furthermore, parents serve as role models, imparting values, morals, and behaviours that shape a child’s character. The emotional support and consistent boundaries parents provide promote emotional

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regulation and resilience, equipping children with the tools needed to manage stress and challenges as they grow.

Sadly, many Namibian parents are under huge strain and are unable to provide the care and support their children need. Rapid urbanisation has led to the loss of community and extended family support, and parents are fed conflicting messages about parenting practices that are irrelevant or not relatable to their circumstances. Poverty, inequality, long workdays, inadequate childcare, and lack of meaningful support are among the many stressors Namibian parents face. Additionally, Namibia has epidemic levels of violence across all areas of society – in homes, schools, and communities. Too often, we see parenting practices that are harsh, cruel, or negligent.

In response to this need, Development Workshop has been increasing our focus on parenting under our Play for All Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme. We are working with community leaders, parents and ECD teachers to promote and support nurturing care and responsive caregiving to help ensure that children are in safe and loving environments. We seek to break cycles of violence while providing parents with more support based on an understanding of their circumstances.

2023 ECD RESULTS AT A GLANCE



240 ECD teachers trained

282 Centres supported comprising **680** teachers and **10,092** children



4,433 Storybooks distributed

28 Centres Improvements completed

1.6 Million people reached with RightStart and Thrive-by-5 Messages

OVERVIEW

Play for All is an integrated ECD programme that supports ECD centres (kindergartens) and families in informal settlements. In the past six months the programme has expanded to include Gobabis and Witvlei and is now starting in Ondangwa, Oniipa, Otjiwarongo and Keetmanshoop. These were added to the existing towns of Windhoek, Omaruru, Karibib, Opuwo, Oshakati and Katima Mulilo where our programme has been operating for a few years, bringing the total to 12 towns reached by the ECD programme.

Play for All offers teacher training, provision of teaching and learning materials, parental support, centre improvements, and in two towns it also includes a nutrition programme. Under the **Play for All** programme Development Workshop provides support to **282 ECD centres** comprising **680 teachers** and **10,092 children**.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS ON POSITIVE PARENTING

Working hand-in-hand with community leaders, community activators and local government ministerial service providers, Development Workshop has been running a series of parental engagement sessions in towns across Namibia. The objective of these sessions is to spread awareness about the importance of positive early childhood experiences to support child development. Our community partners and DWN team members use these sessions to provide simple information and tips that parents can use to support their young children, promote children's rights and help parents with their own well-being. Since their initiation in June, **23 parental workshops have been held in informal settlements, reaching 798 parents** with these messages and links to support services. These activities will be scaled up with increased intensity from September, which includes sharing these messages via community radio stations in each town.



Parents meeting in Windhoek



Thrive-by-5 workshops in Otjiwarongo and Tsumkwe



In the last update we spoke about our exciting work on the Thrive-by-5 App, which provides information and guidance to parents of children aged 0-5 years. In partnership with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, the Minderoo Foundation and Waka Waka Moo, Development Workshop has taken the Thrive-by-5 messages on the road. Knowing that smartphone and data access in Namibia is limited, the roadshows aimed to make the App's valuable parenting information available to a wider audience.

The roadshows visited six towns in three regions: Swakopmund and Omatjete in Erongo, Opuwo and Sesfontein in Kunene, and Otjiwarongo and Tsumkwe in Ot-



Scan this QR code to download the Thrive-by-5 App.

jozondjupa. Besides introducing the App, the team held community activation sessions, parents' workshops and ECD teacher workshops in each town. **226 parents were reached through the workshops and 326 through the activations**, where they received Thrive-by-5 information

in booklets written in local languages and through discussions, activities, and demonstrations. The roadshows and the Thrive-by-5 messages were also promoted through the media under the RightStart campaign. Coverage on national TV reached 780,000 people, a further 30,000 were reached through print media and 1.6 million reached via seven local radio stations.

Beyond the household, important child development takes place in ECD centres across the country. DWN continues to work closely with centres in the informal settlements to support teachers, improve the quality of the care and teaching provided, and the upgrade the physical conditions of the ECD centres.

TRAINING

With the support of MTC and the Finnish Embassy, **240 educarers have been trained by DWN in the last six months**, with another 100 still to be trained by the end of September. The trainings have been held in six towns and, at the request of the educarers, two new training modules have been added: Nutrition and Hygiene, and Inclusive Education. In addition to training sessions, our teams visit the ECD centres to support the educarers to implement the theory. We also hold additional training and create platforms for peer-to-peer support and learning through selected beacon centres. A beacon centre is an existing ECD centre that acts as a hub to up to 12 neighbouring centres to provide a central meeting point and an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and exchange and for the coordination of support.

CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

DWN provided grants to 23 centres in Windhoek's informal settlements to improve the centres' physical environments to make them safer and more conducive to learning. In Katima Mulilo, toilet facilities were built for five centres, and in Karibib centre maintenance is underway. We are starting to support centre improvements in Gobabis and Witvlei with support from the Capricorn Foundation. Our teams have assessed the needs of 13 more centres where improvements will be concluded within the next few months.

BUILDING QUALITY ECD INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEW LOW-INCOME RESIDENTIAL AREAS

With support from MTC, DWN will be building an ECD and community centre on one of the institutional plots in the new residential area of Onawa Proper extension in Oshakati. This area is being developed by the DWN Housing for All Programme in collaboration with the Oshakati Town Council. The centre will provide quality ECD to the children enrolled but will also be a hub for support surrounding ECD centres and ECD teachers, through trainings, sharing materials and providing support services. A community meeting was held in August to discuss the plans and to respond to the communities questions and concerns, and after receiving positive community support, construction is due to start in October this year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

As we seek to continuously promote a love of reading, as well as a close parent-child bond through story time, we have been creating and distributing our storybooks. With support from Pupkewitz Foundation, DWN developed four new storybooks in six languages. These books are being distributed to ECD centres in towns where the Play for All programme is implemented. We also distribute storybooks during our parenting sessions, and encourage parents to incorporate a cuddle and a story into their daily routine with their children. Since January **DWN has distributed 4,433 storybooks** to homes and ECD centres across Namibia.



FEEDING

With the support of Twin Hills Trust, our feeding programmes continue in Karibib and Omaruru, with 677 children benefiting from the nutritious and diverse meals that are served at the ECD centres. Funds are sent directly to the ECD centres, each one has a weekly pre-approved menu and our DWN team monitors the use of funds and provision of the meals. The ECD teachers have reported improved attendance and concentration among the children.

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