

A wide-angle photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, a young boy in a green school uniform with red and white stripes on the sleeves is sitting at a wooden table, looking at a large open book. Next to him, a girl in a similar uniform is also looking at the book. An adult male is leaning over the table, pointing at the book. In the background, several other children and adults are seated at similar tables, engaged in various activities like reading or drawing. The classroom has a grey tiled floor, wooden tables, and black chairs. On the walls, there are colorful posters, including one with the word 'ETHOS' in a yellow box. A window with colorful bunting is visible in the background.

# The LifeMatters Foundation

**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



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## PURPOSE

The LifeMatters Foundation believes that every life matters and deserves our help to build strong foundations to discover their worth and to reach their full potential.

## MISSION

Our mission is to provide holistic support in the form of academic and life skills intervention, so that children are equipped to reach their full potential and become active citizens.

## VALUES

We believe:

- That God has a plan and a purpose for each person's life
- That hope drives purpose
- That it is our responsibility to advocate for children's rights
- That active citizenship transforms communities
- That all people deserve respect
- That diversity should be celebrated
- That equity is the first step towards restoration
- That integrity and honesty are the foundation of all relationships



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

How quickly the years seem to fly by.

With Covid a distant memory now and life seemingly back to normal, we have enjoyed a very successful year at The LifeMatters Foundation. Our programmes have been full of eager little learners, dedicated volunteers, and fantastic interns and staff. I am excited for you to read about the wonderful work done and hope you feel very much part of the story. But more than that, I hope you get a sense of the lives that have been changed by being involved in our programmes either as a learner, volunteer, or intern.

Words are sometimes so inadequate to truly convey the life-changing work that is done every day. Pictures however can speak a thousand words. [Take a look at our latest video about the work of LifeMatters.](#) I hope this gives you a sense of the scope and reach of our programmes but even more, the sheer joy experienced by all those who are involved at LifeMatters.

Some of my highlights of 2023 were our Annual Auction Fundraiser, which was held at Pigalle Restaurant on the 1st of September. Our theme was “21 years of unlocking potential” where we celebrated the wonderful work that has been done by LifeMatters over the 21 years we have been in operation. It was such a privilege to look back over the many lives changed and the incredible growth we have had since our inception.

Another highlight was attending the Shine Indaba in November. Shine has decided to close its doors after many years and pass the mantle on to their literacy partners. To this end, they gathered all of us who work in the literacy space from across South Africa for a three-day think tank

and community-building workshop. What a privilege to be surrounded by so many passionate literacy advocates. It was so exciting to see the work that is happening all around our nation and to learn from one another. LifeMatters, along with two other organisations, one based in Gauteng and one in the Eastern Cape, has agreed to facilitate a quarterly community of practice sessions for all involved in literacy. We have also committed to supporting one another, as well as any new organisations that would like to start a literacy centre, with knowledge and resource sharing. With all the organisations aligned in our mission to create a culture of reading in our schools, we believe we will see the tide slowly start to turn.

Our hope for 2024 is to see more volunteers in our centres, especially in our numeracy programmes! Every new volunteer means an extra child or two receiving much-needed literacy or numeracy intervention. The counselling programme is our hardest programme to fundraise for, yet it is the programme that offers the most valuable of interventions to our most at-risk learners. Hopefully, this year will see a fully funded counselling programme.

Lastly, I would like to thank our incredible donors for their generosity in 2023. Every financial donation, auction item or prize donated helped us reach over 3000 learners who would otherwise not have had the help they needed to change their lives. Your contribution makes a huge difference!

With thanks,  
**Alnerié Turck**



# 2023 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2023 has been a year of settling back into the routines after the disruptions of COVID-19 on our work in 2020 and 2021 and as we reframed our approaches in 2022. We continue to develop our programmes to service our beneficiary schools as effectively as possible, as we grow our reach.

During 2023 Shine Literacy, who has been a great trailblazer in the literacy environment and with whom we have had a productive relationship for many years, has decided to close its doors and hand the mandate over to other organisations in the literacy space. LMF has agreed to take over the running of the Shine Literacy Centre at Rosmead Primary in Claremont. I want to commend Shine for their work over many years and trust that we will be able to carry on the good work they have started.

The work of The LifeMatters Foundation is dependent on the commitment of our volunteers, who deliver our services to the learners, our staff, who keep the programmes running effectively in the centres and in the office, and our donors, whose generous contributions enable us to sustain our work. It has been a pleasure to welcome some new members to the Board of LMF who bring unique skills and perspectives to our governance structures.

As we look back on 2023 and forward to 2024 we continue to thank God for the work of LMF and the impact we can have on young lives.

**Peter Withey**







# LIFESKILLS PORTFOLIO



# COUNSELLING

Report by: Siphesande Mfaku

## 2023 has been a year of growth for our counselling team.

We added two remarkable counsellors to our LMF Family. Sandy joined the iThemba Primary School team as the school counsellor while Rosemary joined Lourier Primary School. Both ladies are amazing counsellors and are an asset to our counselling team. This year also reminded me of how dedicated and committed our counselling team is to making every beneficiary feel that they are valued and heard. During the year, we found that several parents from the communities came to the school offices to seek help and guidance on certain issues and worked with our counsellors for the betterment of the children. Our counsellors are change agents, not only in the school community but the wider residential communities the children live in.

Our counselling team had a very demanding year. However, after some reflection, it is great to see what we still managed to achieve in 2023. We found ourselves doing a lot of work outside the counselling room to help our beneficiaries reach their full potential. When working with children multi-agency is vital. Most of the children, their families and educators face incredible challenges. The communities that we serve are characterised by high rates of unemployment, gangsterism and high levels of substance abuse. This year, we found it important to focus on helping our families and teachers develop much-needed techniques to deal with life challenges. In our counselling sessions, we help learners build their toolbox to better manage future challenges but also reassure them that they can come to us when they need assistance. The act of building these foundations takes time and effort

and has many parts to it, but once established makes it easier for the child to progress in life with the help of their families and educators. For children to believe in themselves, they need a caring adult who believes in them. By looking at the environment that the children live in, we ensure that we involve teachers and parents in the therapeutic process. In some cases, we found ourselves having to refer our parents for counselling, parenting classes, etc. Adults should help children foster resilience and self-efficacy. This will provide the children with the ability to adapt to stressors in a flexible and resourceful manner.

As part of our strategy to involve different stakeholders in Child Protection, we attended diverse workshops, meetings and talks to find ways to help our beneficiaries. We were invited by an organisation, that provides free adult education in some of the communities we work in. This was to help build referral pathways for our parents and help them upskill themselves. Education attainment is a protective factor (Sampson and Laud, 2005) and once parents are fulfilled, they become “good enough” parents to their children. By helping our parents, we are also impacting our learners. We also visited some churches in the community to find out about some of their projects and programmes and how we can work together in the future.



# WORKSHOPS

## We developed and successfully piloted teacher training at Steenberg Primary School.

The training aimed to help teachers understand and work with troubled and traumatized learners. To ensure that our interventions are holistic and benefit the children. The educators must be informed in these areas because they spend more time with the learners in class. This training assisted them with knowledge of what to do when learners present with certain symptoms in class or are triggered during the lesson and most importantly, it provided them with the language to communicate with learners in these times.

We also launched our Child Protection workshop at our beneficiary schools. The greatest impact this training made was to show how central the Children's Act should be in everything we do. We were joined by the Department of Social Development (DSD) Social Workers as well as a Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Social Worker, to help us answer some of the questions the teachers had. This was a great way to build stronger connections and partnerships with these stakeholders. We cannot work in isolation when it pertains to Child Protection, all stakeholders must be involved. According to Holtzhausen and Campbell (2021) suffering from adverse childhood experiences may contribute to negative outcomes in childhood, adolescence, and beyond. It is, therefore, important as Counsellors and Social Workers, that we collaborate to achieve greater consistency regarding the teaching of the nature of child abuse and neglect and its treatment. Throughout the year, our focus was to build networks with all the Child Protection stakeholders in the communities that we work in. The Retreat Day Hospital invited



**991 LEARNERS  
RECEIVED COUNSELLING  
INTERVENTION IN 2023!**



us to meet with the clinicians which was a great way to build a referral pathway.

Our team was also part of an incredible Think Tank alongside Inclusive Affirming Ministries and the Department of Basic Education on effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in our schools. The goal of this strategic conversation was to find ways to add value to the teaching of CSE in our schools, and ways to support Queer-identifying learners in settings. Being part of the strategic discussion helped our team realise that there is a significant amount of learning and unlearning that needs to be done in society. We also attended a 3-part discussion on how Faith, Gender and Sexuality intersect. We were able to hear from different individuals in faith spaces, their interpretations of the scriptures and how they grapple with the interconnect of Faith, Gender and Sexuality. We need more of these discourses in society to equip ourselves as Counsellors and help our schools build environments free of prejudice, stereotyping and victimisation of learners and teachers who are othered.

Capacity building and ongoing staff development is a key part of our strategy so that our counsellors are equipped with the appropriate skills needed to implement interventions. We also attended workshops on how to handle trauma-related cases and trainings hosted by the Teddy Bear Clinic and Solidarity to better equip ourselves. We also attended a workshop presented by Prof Carlien Van Wyk and Dr Lizanne Wilson on play-based activities and relationship-building with children. We live in a society of constant trauma; trauma is no longer in the past. Our clients are traumatized by the past, present and future. We must equip ourselves with empirically based techniques to help us be of aid to the children. We believe that Continuous Personal Development leads to enhanced self-confidence and improved practice. Lastly, we also kept to our supervision needs to help us debrief and ensure that we take care of ourselves so we can be of better service to our communities.



# TEENAGE AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

Report by: Kayla-Tess Pattenden

2023 saw us welcome back a past Life Skills Manager, Kayla-Tess Pattenden to develop and grow the Teenage Awareness Programme.

With the same passion for quality life skills education and more experience in the field, Kayla-Tess tackled the growth and sustainability of the Teenage Awareness Programme by maintaining our existing programmes and bringing in some new schools and organisations.

Our pool of facilitators grew this year, enabling us to sustainably provide more programmes with a ratio of at least 1 facilitator to every 8 learners. More thorough screening, training and critical feedback of our facilitators in action has further enhanced the quality of our programmes. We are thankful for the relationship with The South African College of Applied Psychology for regularly referring psychology students and graduates to us to add numbers to our facilitation team.



## OUR TOP 3 HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2023 ARE...

1

Hosting a Mental Health & Wellness Workshop at Springfield Girls Convent School where learners drew representations of what they subjectively experienced as mental illness and mental health. The drawings were vulnerable, giving expression to the vast mental illness experiences in the room- as one participant said after the workshop, 'it made known the silent pandemic of mental illness and helped me feel less alone in my experience'.

2

Hosting our first multi-week sex education curriculum at Cape Kids with their Boarding House students. This 8-week curriculum saw us address sexual boundaries, pornography and human trafficking, consent culture, the impact of religion and culture on sex, gender & sexual identity, parenting, pregnancy and birth. To end off the programme, we gifted each learner with a white rose as a symbol of love & worth- this was a very special moment reminding each learner that they are worthy of love not just 'sex'.



3

We were excited to host a team from Ackermans's Ububele Initiative at our Lourier Primary School Programme. With their onsite support, we had 4 additional facilitators and could gift each learner with a 'hygiene pack' including menstrual products for the female learners and deodorants and soaps for the male students. The donation was substantial enough to provide boxes of menstrual products to distribute to our other beneficiary schools too.

Moving into 2024, we look forward to a full weekend programme on Diversity & Inclusion with the Tertiary Students at Cape Kids.





go-writing

GHINE  
RHYMES

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STORIES that  
last a LIFETIME

THE GIANT BOOK OF  
THE HUMAN

ACADEMIC  
PORTFOLIO



# LITERACY REPORT

Report by: Kirsty Nortje

## Our Literacy Programme got off to a wonderful start in 2023.

We were so happy to welcome all our volunteers, interns and eager learners back into our centres at the start of Term 1. We had some eager new Grade 2s join our programmes and returning Grade 3 learners, all ready for a year of fun and learning.

Our teams at each literacy centre provide Grade 2 and 3 learners with between 45 minutes to one hour of individualised tutoring twice per week. These learners come to the LifeMatters centre during their literacy lesson in class but get individualised attention. Since many learners are learning in a language that is not their home language, each literacy session includes four activities which support language and vocabulary development, comprehension and decoding and phonics skills. Volunteers work at a pace that is comfortable for the child to maximize learning.

**We have had 210 learners on our programmes this year doing the Shine Literacy Hour 4-step programme. We were able to do 8760 literacy sessions which equated to 7251 hours of intervention through this programme. Our centre at Capricorn runs an adapted literacy programme focusing on paired reading and was able to do an amazing 5880 reading sessions this year for over 280 learners.**





The paired reading programme at Capricorn ran hand in hand with an extensive lending library. Each one of our centres has been running lending libraries this year as we continue to see a huge gap for our learners to access books to take home to read for enjoyment with parents, siblings and caregivers.

**We had over 700 learners come through our libraries in 2023, seeing learners all the way from Grade R – Grade 7.**

We also, through a partnership with Shine Literacy and Wordworks, were able to distribute termly resource packs to every learner from Grade 1- Grade 3. The Grade 1s all received Together in My Education packs, and the Grade 2s and 3 resource packs that included Little Issue Magazines, pencils, sharpeners, activities for working at home, and Book Dash books.

This amazing impact would not have been possible without the wonderful teams at each of our centres. Our centre managers have managed their compliments of volunteers and interns impeccably, creating safe, happy and inviting spaces in each cabin or classroom. **Our volunteers have generously given their time this year and we are so thankful for them – throughout the year we trained 78 new volunteers, bringing our total number of active volunteers to 108.** We are so blessed to have such dedicated, committed individuals working in our centres.

Towards the end of 2023, we received the sad news that Shine Literacy, our long-standing partner whose programme we implement in our literacy centres was going to close its doors at the end of 2023. This sunseting period was done with grace and generosity. There were multiple events hosted during the last quarter of the year which capacitated all Shine's franchises and their networks to continue with the amazing work they had pioneered and supported in the literacy space over many years. Our centre managers attended a two-day Chapter



Strengthening Workshop where they explored together what it means to have an inviting, fun, and well-managed literacy centre. At a leadership level, LMF joined the Shine Indaba – an incredible two-day programme which brought together programme leaders and directors of various NPOs working in the literacy space across the country who have all been woven together in a beautiful tapestry by Shine. LMF will be doing our part to keep this community of practice alive and well. Finally, our Literacy Programme Manager attended an Advanced Facilitation Training by Vanessa Thomas-Lowndes. The two days spent with other literacy trainers from across the country were totally inspiring. We are looking forward to 2024 when we will welcome Rosmead Primary as our 7th LifeMatters Literacy Centre – watch this space for more info in the new year.

Besides our usual academic programming, we always make sure we have fun! Reading is about broadening the imagination of the learners who come through our centres, and we have loved doing that this year. At Capricorn Primary our centre directed and performed a rendition of 'The Gruffalo' by Julia Donaldson, with our centre manager and volunteers pulling out all the stops to make costumes and get the Grade 3s ready for this wonderful show. We celebrated International Literacy Day, World Read Aloud Day and Library Week. We had wonderful visits from Storm Distribution, Flash, and RMB who came to read with our learners at various times during the course of the year. M&G Investments donated stationery and books for our centres as part of their Mandela Day activities. A highlight for the children at Westlake Primary was a visit from the Grade 7s from Sweet Valley, who for a second year in a row have come to read with them.

At the end of the year, we're always so happy to see the learners and volunteers enjoying a well-deserved celebration of hard work and progress at our class parties and volunteer thank you breakfast.

We can't wait for next year and all that is in store for the Literacy Portfolio.



# NUMERACY REPORT

Report by: Nix Bowley

We had an excellent start to 2023 due to many new sign-ups from people who were eager to share the gift of their time and give back to the community.

We trained twenty-four new volunteers during the first term and by the end of the term had for the first time since the inception of the Numeracy Programme in 2017, Numeracy Centres filled to capacity!

**We managed to reach 91 learners and offered them 3370 tutoring sessions throughout the year.**

Two big highlights of our Numeracy Programme during 2023 were the celebration of International Maths Day and Mandela Day. International Maths Day was on the 14th of March, but we turned it into a “Maths Week”! The success of this inspired us to introduce a “Fun Maths Week” at the end of each term so that all the Grade 2’s, not just the learners on our programmes, can benefit and see that Maths can be exciting. These Maths Weeks saw volunteers and interns donning Maths-related regalia with banners and balloons, inviting 16 Grade 2 learners every half an hour to be put into smaller groups of 4 and move from station to station, playing Maths games. Some of the games included building skip-counting number pyramids, throwing beanbags into place-value tubs, making 2D shapes using playdough, using play-play money to “go shopping”,





digging in sensory tubs to match the time and building symmetry mats with Duplo Blocks. It's so rewarding to see the "lights come on" in little minds and to see their beaming faces as they go about "playing" in a Maths Centre! The second highlight was Mandela Day, which was celebrated by a group of volunteers from an organisation called "Flash", who came and shared some brightness, smiles and cheer while playing Maths-related games with the learners on our programme.

This year once again saw us doing our mid-year LifeMatters assessments. These assessments always give us an indication of the impact that we're making. We assess all the learners on our programme as well as a control group of learners who got similar results but who for some or other reason weren't on our programme. We expect all the learners to improve on the assessment that they wrote at the end of Grade 1, which they rewrote mid-year but hope that our learners will show greater progress due to the one-on-one intervention that they've had for a few months. We were again so encouraged by this year's results:

**The average of the LifeMatters learners jumped from 48% to 76% compared to our control group which had a starting average of 54% and jumped to 65,8%. So the difference in improvement between the LMF learners of 28% as opposed to a difference of 11.8% from the control group, makes us continue to build and sow into the lives of those we manage to reach each week!**

In between the fun weeks and mid-year assessments, a lot of hard work is spent learning and revising number concepts and using concrete objects to demonstrate and develop an understanding of important Grade 2 concepts. Our volunteers



and interns tirelessly strive to not only help their learners to understand the fundamentals of Maths, but encourage them, help them to believe in themselves and give them a weekly dose of warmth and love. Our organisation wouldn't be around if not for our dedicated volunteers!

At the end of each year, we assess the Grade 1's at each school to identify who needs intervention the following year. At the end of 2023, we identified a greater need than before in two of our beneficiary schools. We discussed shuffling around our Centre Managers and adding additional days to accommodate more learners in 2024. We are also hoping for a large influx of volunteers at the beginning of the first term of next year so that we can meet the needs of the learners who will benefit from one-on-one Numeracy tutoring.

After our year-end assessments, we have celebratory parties and prize-givings, where each learner who has been on our programme receives a certificate. The smiles all around are heart-warming, especially when we see that our learners feel acknowledged, worthy and cared for! There is always much excitement and great joy in these celebrations.

Behind the scenes in our final term, there were many meetings and phone calls, purchasing, printing, laminating and general preparatory work done to pave the way for a new Numeracy Centre we are opening in the Deep South, at Kleinberg Primary School in 2024!

In summary, 2023 was a year of fun, success and growth. We appreciated the feedback from teachers who noticed that many learners on our programme were coping much better in the classroom, showing grit and determination and believing in their ability to learn. The trust many of them built with their volunteers and interns contributed to their weekly progress. As one of our volunteers wrote on reflection: *"The Numeracy Centre is like a ray of sunshine in bleak surroundings!"* We are extremely grateful to all who give of their time and finances to help us be that "Ray of Sunshine" to those who need it!



# iMATTER INTERNSHIP REPORT

We believe that investing in youth can bring about meaningful change in a community. Giving youth both hope and a vision for their future, as well as the necessary skills to realise some of those goals, is key to having a real impact.

Our iMatter Intern Programme does just that. This programme takes unemployed matriculants from the communities that our schools serve and gives them both meaningful work experience and work readiness training. The interns complement the volunteers in our centres by providing a consistent and reliable impact on our programmes.

We began 2023 with 10 interns on our programme, a slightly smaller cohort than we would have hoped, but were very pleased to add to our group as the year progressed and funding became available, and we ended the year with 15 dedicated interns.

As we have been doing since 2017, we work in partnership with Action Volunteer Africa (AVA) who assist us with supplementary training and administration of the programme, in addition to the workplace skills experience they gain in our centers during the week. The training provided covered a range of topics, including but not limited to financial literacy, career planning and development, entrepreneurship and emotional intelligence. They also did a SETA Accredited course on Customer Care, as well as completed a TEFL course. A fun highlight was a visit to the Two Oceans Academy where they were shown how to sail in a small yacht and had a short training on water safety, rope maintenance, knot tying and other sailing skills.

As our current funding cycle extends into next year May we are so looking forward to working with these energetic, committed and passionate young people, as well as continually looking to extend and grow the programme.





# FINANCE REPORT

Report by: Bretta Russell-Espin

## WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM:

The year ending 31 December 2023 is the first full year since the Covid pandemic that The LifeMatters Foundation has been able to return to normal operational capacity. We are extremely grateful to our donors for responding accordingly, which has resulted in the income for the year increasing by 22% to R4 172 094. This was driven by fundraising income which increased by 14%. Additional income was raised through the Teenage Awareness Programmes run in schools that were able to contribute financially towards these programmes, which in turn allowed us to run similar programmes at our beneficiary schools at no cost.

Donations from individuals, companies and foundations passionate about the work of LMF remain the foundation stone of the organisation's income, making up 83% of the total income. In addition, LMF graciously received R396,000 in advance at the end of 2023, which is reflected on the balance sheet as Deferred Grants, as the funds relate to activities planned for 2024.



## WHERE THE MONEY WENT:

As a result of the return to normal operations, organisational spending for the year increased by 14% to R3 472 335. Marketing costs remained similar to 2022. Management and Operational costs increased by 22% and 18% respectively. The Internship programme and Project costs increased by 55% and 9% respectively. LMF shouldered the burden of the interns' stipends in 2023 due to the Western Cape Education Department cancelling the Teacher Assistant Programme. We felt, however, that this programme provided additional support and stability to our centres as well as invaluable skills to our interns and therefore took on the responsibility of fundraising for and paying the youth stipends.

## FUTURE

The budget expenditure of R3 981 749 for 2024, represents a 14% increase on the 2023 expenditure. Personnel costs will only increase by an inflationary amount; however, the iMatter interns will increase by 55% and the Literacy programme will increase by 24%. We have taken over the running of the literacy centre at Rosmead Primary as well as 17 interns for this year. In addition, we have expanded the number of centres by adding Kleinberg Primary, where we will run a numeracy centre in 2024.

The Teenage Awareness programme will continue to be offered free of charge to beneficiary schools and will largely be funded by schools who are able to contribute to the Teenage Awareness Programme. The budget is cautiously optimistic about the activities that will be possible in the 2024 year. It is expected that spending will be tightly controlled during the year. Broadening the fundraising efforts continues to be an area of focus.



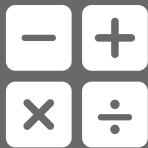
## REVENUE: R4,172,094

Grants	0%	
Donations - Corporates/Others	82.75%	R3,452,534
Donations in kind	2.35%	R98,106
Fundraising events	9.13%	R380,910
Fees	4.17%	R173,824
Interest received	1.60%	R66,720



## EXPENDITURE: R3,472,335

Marketing, PR & Fundraising	5%	R175,299
Management & Admin	6%	R209,148
Capital & Operation costs	11%	R391,397
Internship Programme	10%	R348,290
Project Costs	68%	R2,348,199



## SURPLUS: R699,759



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The LifeMatters Foundation • Bank: Standard Bank • Branch: Blue Route • Branch Code: 025609 • Account Number: 072032405

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