



IMPACT



REPORT 2025





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2020, **aRe Bapaleng** has empowered over 135,000 parents/caregivers and activated over 4,000 unemployed youth as ECD Champions across South Africa's nine provinces.

Grounded in the Nurturing Care Framework, we've fostered responsive caregiving, play-based learning, and community resilience — resulting in healthier families, confident parents, and thriving children. In 2025, we achieved QCTO accreditation and expanded our service offering to include climate resilience, entrepreneurship and life skills. We deepened our impact through parent clubs and home visits.

This report reflects our journey and sets the stage for scalable, community-led ECD ecosystems.



OUR VISION

A South Africa where every young child grows up in a loving, stimulating and resilient home; every caregiver feels confident, capable and economically empowered; and every community is stronger and more cohesive – because families, ECD centres, practitioners and youth are connected, skilled, and collectively caring for children, each other, and the planet.

*I now feel more
confident and inspired to
support my child's early
learning at home through
meaningful play.*

— Nomthandazo,
Mother to a 5-year-old boy





OUR MISSION

aRe Bapaleng partners with parents, caregivers, ECD practitioners and unemployed youth in marginalised communities to deliver holistic, play-based early childhood development rooted in the Nurturing Care Framework.

We train ECD practitioners to lead responsive Parent Clubs. We mobilise unemployed youth as ECD Champions with accredited skills and practical experience. We equip families with tools for responsive caregiving, early learning, health, nutrition and food security, disability inclusion, psychosocial wellbeing, increased involvement of male caregivers, and climate-smart practices. We build caregiver self-efficacy and confidence, strengthen home-centre partnerships, improve employability, and foster social cohesion. aRe Bapaleng creates resilient families and communities that nurture today's children and tomorrow's leaders.

We don't just teach parents how to play with their children — we support caregivers to become confident role models and unemployed youth to become employed community champions, one playful, resilient household at a time.

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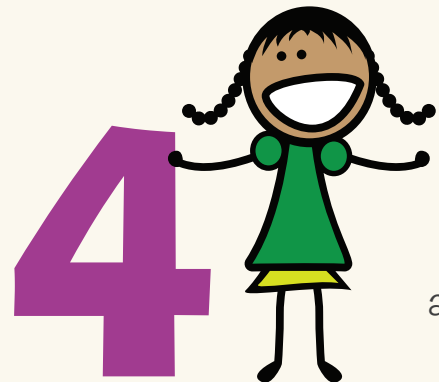


aRe Bapaleng closes critical gaps in early childhood development (0–8 years) by equipping parents and caregivers in underserved communities with practical skills, tools, resources and confidence. Rooted in play-based and experiential learning (“aRe Bapaleng” means “Let’s Play!” in Sesotho), we build a holistic ECD ecosystem through Active Learning Workshops, Parent Clubs, home visits, awareness campaigns and centre-based support.

This “Caregiver Network” creates a strong, high-quality cadre of in-community ECD capacity, enabling more parents and caregivers to play an active, positive role in their children’s early development.

Our approach integrates responsive caregiving, health and nutrition (including household food gardens), disability inclusion, increased involvement of male caregivers, climate resilience, and strong partnerships – including with the National Youth Service. At the same time, we transform unemployed youth into proud ECD Champions by providing meaningful public-employment opportunities, diverse training and real community leadership experience.

This dual pathway strengthens local ECD ecosystems, boosts employability, and fosters resilient, thriving communities.



THE aRe BAPALENG MODEL



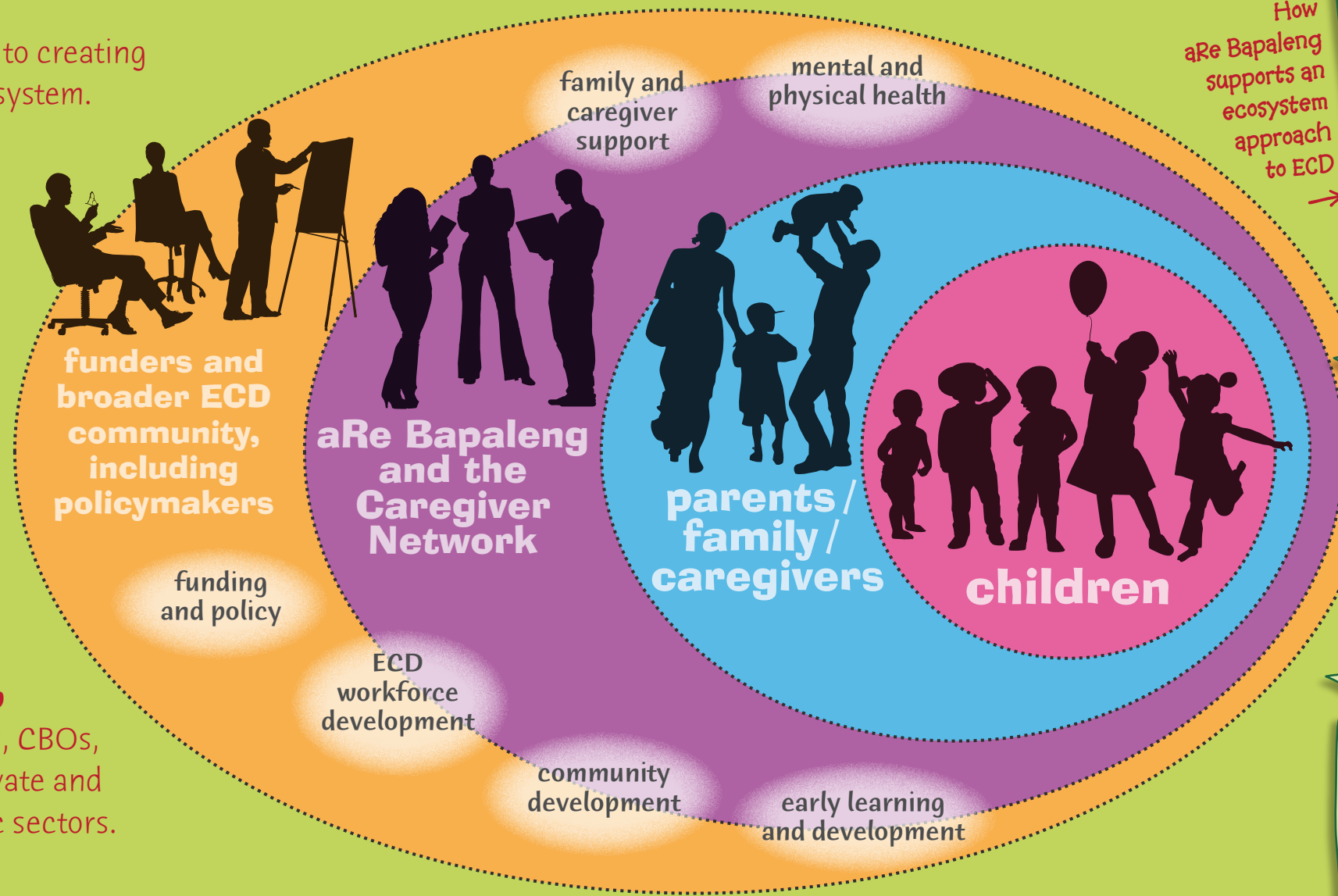
aRe Bapaleng
awareness
campaign in
Polokwane

EARLY LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT/ECD ECOSYSTEM

There are various aspects to creating a healthy, robust ECD ecosystem.

aRe Bapaleng supports this process **holistically in numerous ways** – responsive caregiving, early learning, nutrition, disability inclusion, psychosocial wellbeing, increased involvement of male caregivers, climate-smart practices, and others.

A critical success factor has been the **partnership model** – with other NPOs, CBOs, and the private and public sectors.



How
aRe Bapaleng
supports an
ecosystem
approach
to ECD
→



Ensuring parents/caregivers have increased awareness and capacity to deliver a higher quality level of holistic support to their kids – i.e. activating them to play their critical role in supporting the positive development of their children (ALWs and Parent Clubs)

Supporting the development of a strong in-community hub of ECD that includes local ECD champions that can create a network of activated caregivers (Caregiver Network)

Supporting the pathwaying of these Caregiver Network-ers towards them becoming more employable – in the ECD sector or elsewhere

The aRe Bapaleng trajectory – since 2020, design has deepened, widened, and strengthened

WHAT WE DID...

2020
(PILOT)

- ☺ Launched in Gauteng amid COVID; distributed 11 ECD info sheets via churches/radio
- ☺ Partnered with Londani-Lushaka NPO in Alexandra to feed 600+ children daily and raise ECD awareness
- ☺ Signed MoU with Midvaal Municipality for in-person ALWs; distributed Care for Education Lego Playboxes to ECDs in Soshanguve, Hammanskraal, and Thembisa
- ☺ Reached 329 caregivers

2021

- ☺ Introduced Caregiver Network with train-the-trainer peer educators for home visits/group support
- ☺ Added parent guides, activity books, and more ALWs



2022

- ☺ Integrated with National Youth Service (NYS); trained 3,000 youth as ECD Champions
- ☺ Delivered ALWs to 9,000+ caregivers on caregiving, play, nutrition, and wellbeing
- ☺ Hosted first Annual Partner Networking Event



2023

- ☺ National scale-up with six Provincial Field Coordinators; launched mobile app
- ☺ Partnered with Mikhulu Trust (book-sharing), Fathers Matter (male caregivers), Singakwenza (recycled toys), Care for Education (Lego 6 Bricks), Seriti Work.Learn.Grow (food gardens), and DMF (health/nutrition)
- ☺ Second Networking Event doubled attendance
- ☺ Opened aRe Bapaleng library in Deelpan



2024

- ☺ Selected as MIT Leap Challenge innovator; refined monitoring/digital tools
- ☺ Introduced Parent Clubs (e.g., Standerton), Pop-up JunXtions at malls for awareness, and Jolly Events
- ☺ Third Networking Event drew ~100 attendees
- ☺ Conducted focus groups with parents/ECD Champions

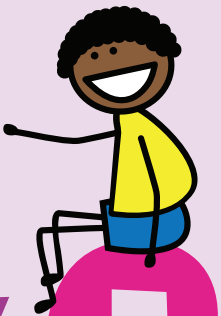


2025

- ☺ Implemented Leap changes; refined indicators (e.g., parent self-efficacy)
- ☺ Extended to Eastern/Northern Cape with two new coordinators (covering 8/9 provinces)
- ☺ Achieved QCTO accreditation for ECD career paths
- ☺ Entered fourth NYS phase; emphasized climate change
- ☺ Opened first aRe Bapaleng JunXtion in Deelpan
- ☺ Showcased in HSRC/JET book [Parental and Caregiver Involvement in South African Education](#), highlighting our community-based partnerships and holistic support of local ECD ecosystems



THE aRe BAPALENG JOURNEY 6

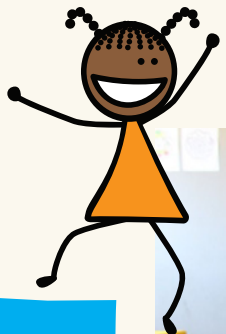


WHAT CHANGED?

OUR IMPACT

aRe Bapaleng has activated parents/caregivers to provide responsive, nurturing care – leading to positive child outcomes. We've also empowered ECD Champions, boosting community ECD ecosystems.

Working with partners across the country, positive change has been realised across key aspects critical to providing an enabling environment for young children to thrive...



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From “Naughty” to Thriving: Lehlogonolo’s Discovery in Modimolle

Lehlogonolo Hlungwane, a mother in Modimolle, Limpopo, used to think her six-year-old son was simply naughty or not interested. “He never listened,” she recalls. “I would speak to him, and nothing. I thought he was just being difficult.”



Everything changed when Lehlogonolo joined an aRe Bapaleng Active Learning Workshop. Through the playful, hands-on sessions, she began to notice subtle signs she hadn't seen before. When the aRe Bapaleng Field Coordinator, Makoma Moropa, visited her home for follow-up support, they observed her son together. Makoma gently pointed out behaviours that suggested he might not be hearing properly.

With Makoma's encouragement, Lehlogonolo took her son to the local clinic. The diagnosis confirmed it: he had a hearing disability.

Thanks to the early identification and the support aRe Bapaleng provided – connecting her to the right services and giving her the confidence to act – her son received the help he needed. Today, he is attending Grade 1, with the aids and adjustments he requires, and thriving.

Lehlogonolo smiles when she talks about it now: “Today my child is able to play with other children because of the treatment he is receiving. aRe Bapaleng helped me to understand him and get him the support he deserves. My son is happy and learning. That changes everything.”

Stories like Lehlogonolo's show the quiet, powerful ripple effects of aRe Bapaleng's work: one caregiver empowered with knowledge and support can unlock a child's full potential – and transform a family's future.

aRe BAPALENG SNAPSHOT

Started in Gauteng in 2020, and now spanning all nine provinces, aRe Bapaleng is a platform for caregiver empowerment, youth skills development, economic inclusion, and social cohesion in vulnerable households.

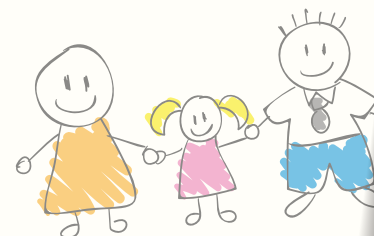
KEY METRICS	ACHIEVEMENT 2020-2025
Parents/caregivers trained in positive parenting & early literacy	14,000+ (plus parent guides distributed)
Caregivers registered on the aRe Bapaleng App	80,000+
Peer support groups (parent clubs) established	11
Parents reporting increased self-efficacy	76%
ECD Champions activated	4,000+ (with training & on-the-job experience)
ECD centres supported	1,000+ (via NYS & aRe Bapaleng)
ECDs trained on Lego 6 Bricks	1,000+ (with resources for early numeracy)
Youth trained on Taking Care of Business	1,000+ (for entrepreneurship)
NYS youth reporting improved caregiving, empowerment & employability	98%
Books provided to households (with book-sharing training)	2,000+
Active partnerships	30+
Food gardens started at homes/ECDs	130+ (boosting food security)

The session reminded me that I'm not alone.

Hearing from other parents who are also trying to be more involved was comforting and motivating.

— Gugu,
Mother to a 6-year-old daughter

228,000+
Children benefiting from improved stimulation & play



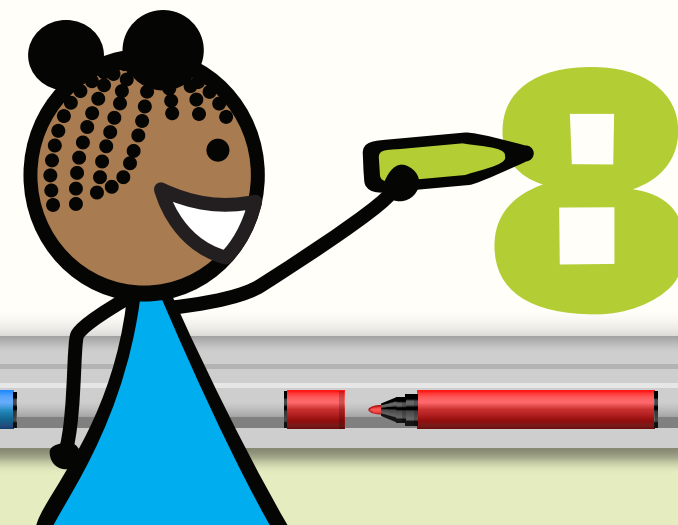
ARE BAPALENG HAS INSPIRED ME TO START MY OWN FOOD GARDEN. NOW WE EAT HEALTHY AND PLAY TOGETHER!

— Parent Participant

135,000+
parent/caregivers reached across all activities

Standout Outcomes:

- * 76% of parents feel more confident;
- * children are more active and socially adept;
- * households report healthier diets and stronger bonds





I started my own garden — now we eat fresh and play sports together!

— Parent

I gave up smoking and introduced Wellness Wednesdays for healthy eating.

— Father

EcoBox Food Garden at a crèche



are Bapaleng Agriculture Champs in the Eastern Cape



BETTER HEALTH & NUTRITION

Parents and caregivers have embraced healthier habits — eating more fruits, vegetables, and home-grown food, and preparing balanced meals.

With greater understanding of breastfeeding, hygiene, and age-appropriate nutrition, they are reducing risks of malnutrition and chronic illness. Children are more active, families role-model wellness, and overall household health has visibly improved.





ECD support
in KZN



*I communicate
better and am
more sensitive to
my child's emotions*

— Parent (Standerton)

*I now make sure
I'm home before
sleep time so I can
spend time with my
kids.*

— Caregiver

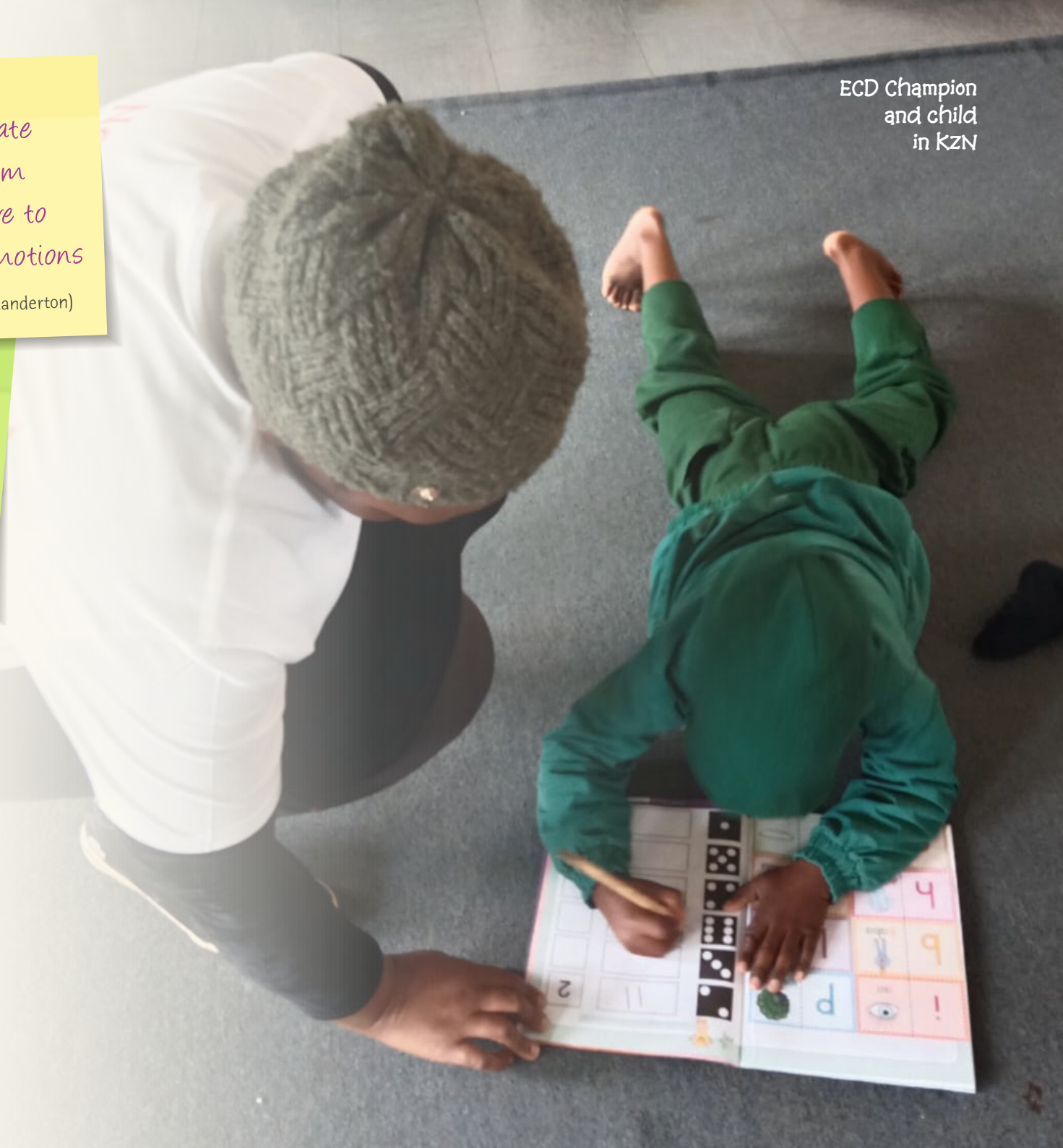
MORE RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

Caregivers now practise gentle, empathetic parenting – listening, communicating openly and spending quality time with the children, and responding to their cues.

Harsh discipline has given way to positive approaches and secure attachments, creating calmer, happier, and more trusting homes. Greater awareness of disability has also increased detection, empathy, and inclusion, strengthening families and communities.



ECD Champion
and child
in KZN



Increased Focus ON Early Learning AND PLAY

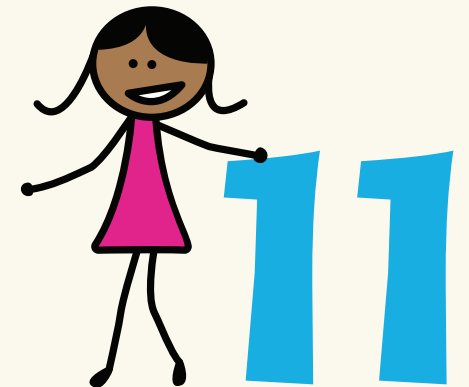
Parents now understand that learning begins at birth and the first 1,000 days are vital.

They turn everyday moments – chores, cooking, play, book-sharing, singing, and talking – into rich learning opportunities, often using recyclables or household items creatively. By integrating play-based approaches, they make learning fun and interactive.

As a result, children gain vocabulary, confidence, social skills, and cognitive growth, while strengthening bonds through joyful interaction.

It boosted my child's confidence through reading and pretend play.

– Parent Participant



Learning how to make toys with Singakwenza



Komati Jolly Event

I now use recyclables for educational toys – my child learns shapes and numbers through play!

– Parent (Modimolle)



aRe Bapaleng
Growing a parent and caregiver network

Download the
Seriti aRe Bapaleng APP



Essential
kit for
parent
caregiver

aReBapaleng.co.za

Seriti
A Development Facilitation

011 265
www.

*I'm more patient
and no longer
shout — I talk
calmly now.*

— Caregiver

*Colouring and
dancing with my
child reduces my
anxiety — we're
calmer together.*

— Parent (Orange Farm)



← Face painting



Home visit
(Deelpa) →

SECURITY & SAFETY (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH)

Caregivers now manage stress more effectively, show greater emotional intelligence, and feel proud of their parenting.

Physical punishment has largely ended, replaced by calmer, more predictable homes where children feel safe and secure. Parent-child relationships have deepened, creating happier and more trusting families.



PARENT CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY (CROSS-CUTTING)

Caregivers feel empowered: 'I didn't know I had this power to shape my child's future.'

They're knowledgeable, capable, and proud as "better parents," with greater agency via resources/creativity (e.g., homemade toys, gardens).

Edutainer
Launch →



Polokwane
Parents club

Before the sessions,
I hardly participated
in my child's learning.
Now I help with
reading, and we play
educational games
together.

— Parent Participant



ECD Champions
(Polokwane) →



I'm more confident
and skilled — now
I contribute to my
community while
building my future.

— ECD Champion

ECD CHAMPIONS: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Over 4,000 unemployed youth have been transformed into ECD Champions through NYS: stipends, training, and community roles (home visits, awareness campaigns, ECD volunteering).

98% report improved caregiving, empowerment, and employability — starting businesses, advancing education, and leading locally.

← Jolly Event
(Standerton)



WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2026+, we will deepen impact in Agrinode communities: strengthen ECD Champion networks for local ecosystems, advocate for parenting programs, and bridge ECDs with parents, as well as continuing to build our existing parent clubs.

Join us – partner, donate, or volunteer to nurture tomorrow's leaders.

Since 2020, aRe Bapaleng has **driven social change**: better parenting, healthier communities, and greater cohesion. Parents and caregivers feel more confident and have agency.



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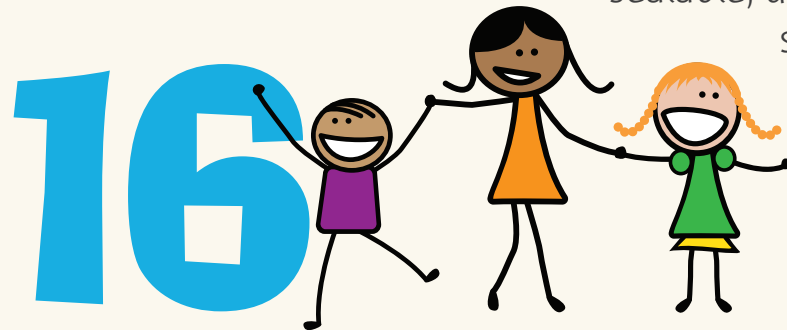
The aRe Bapaleng App strengthens the programme's digital ecosystem by delivering trusted parenting content, practical activities, and timely reminders directly to caregivers and ECD centres.

It showcases ALW animated training videos, curated resources on child developmental stages, and practical guidance that responds to common parent concerns. Through the App, caregivers can better understand child development milestones and access relevant support from the aRe Bapaleng network.

The platform enables moderated peer learning among practitioners and parents, while supporting surveys, feedback, and real-time community data collection – strengthening monitoring, responsiveness, and programme quality.

Through centre-based digital access hubs, families with limited connectivity are included, ensuring broader and more equitable participation.

By combining strong community relationships with practical digital infrastructure, the App transforms informal caregiver support into a scalable, data-informed, and sustainable system that strengthens the entire aRe Bapaleng network.



THE aRe BAPALENG APP STRENGTHENING A CONNECTED CAREGIVER NETWORK



Download
the App

aRe Bapaleng.co.za



THANK YOU!

We extend our sincere gratitude to our donors, communities, and partners – especially Standard Bank, whose investment and belief in caregiver empowerment have helped scale aRe Bapaleng nationally.



