

TOGETHER WE CAN

2024 IMPACT REPORT



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECD Early Childhood Development
SEN Special Educational Needs
OT Occupational Therapy/ist
PT Physiotherapy/ist
SALT Speech and Language Therapist
ASD Autism Spectrum Disorder
CP Cerebral Palsy
CDG Care Dependency Grant
SASSA South African Social Security Agency
IT Inclusion Tool
M&E Monitoring & Evaluation
CHW Community Healthcare Worker

DEFINITIONS

Siyasiza Siyakwazi community-based fieldworker

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

To all Siyakwazi's stakeholders and interested parties,

As we begin 2025, Siyakwazi enters a year of continued progress and opportunity. Building on last year's achievements in school readiness, we aim to deepen our impact on education while strengthening our organisation to better support the communities we serve.

In the last 12 months, we have made significant progress toward succession planning, expanding our skill base and thereby improving our operational resilience. We are committed to refining our leadership structures and developing the capacity needed to meet the demands of our expanding work.

We will also maintain our focus on advocacy, particularly around the inclusion of children with disabilities. Through our work in early childhood development, we aim to ensure that children receive the support and early interventions they need for future success. Our goal is to create a more inclusive society, engaging key stakeholders across education, healthcare, and other sectors to drive lasting change.

We are grateful for the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and supporters. Your commitment makes everything we do possible. Special thanks are due to Cathy Mather-Pike, our Director, and the entire team at Siyakwazi for their dedication and hard work in delivering impactful programmes.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on making meaningful, systemic changes, advocating for policy reforms that ensure children with disabilities are included and supported.

On behalf of the Board, thank you for your continued trust and support. We look forward to another successful year together.

RORY O'DONNELL
CHAIRMAN

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As Siyakwazi moves into 2025, we are entering a phase of consolidation, with a focused drive to enhance professionalism, consistency, and sustainability across all areas of our work.

This past year, we have seen significant progress in our team dynamics and programme delivery. The leadership and responsibilities of our senior management team have expanded, with clear team portfolios enhancing focus and efficiency. Encouraging greater agency among staff has been central to our efforts, creating capacity within roles and embedding a culture of shared responsibility.

A defining achievement of 2024 has been our strengthened safeguarding commitment. Safeguarding is now a cornerstone of our operations, underpinned by robust protocols and a zero-tolerance approach. This has been pivotal in fostering safe environments for children at our Resource Centre and in their homes, offering reassurance to caregivers and stakeholders alike.

From a programme perspective, the expansion of our Respite Play & Learn initiative stands out. Originally designed to support overburdened caregivers, it now reaches more children than anticipated, responding to an overwhelming demand. As we head into 2025, we are determined to develop sustainable ways to support these children and their families, who carry lifelong caregiving responsibilities.

Looking ahead, growing our funding base is a key priority. We are grateful for the continued support of funders and donors, whose contributions are the bedrock of our work. With plans to digitise M&E processes, we aim to ensure greater transparency and demonstrate the impact of every donation.

I also would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporters, funders, and team members for their unwavering commitment.

**"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."
– Helen Keller**

**CATHY MATHER-PIKE
DIRECTOR**

DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

145

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES SUPPORTED WITH INTERVENTIONS IN 2024







At the end of 2024, Siyakwazi received an external analysis of the Inclusion Programme, offering a closer look at the difference its interventions are making for children with disabilities and their families. The study, based on before-and-after assessments of 21 families who joined between June 2022 and July 2023, revealed significant improvements across multiple areas after 12 to 18 months within the programme:

- **140% increase** in access to diagnosis for invisible disabilities.
- **162% increase** in children accessing therapy services, both through government and Siyakwazi.
- **266% increase** in families accessing the Care Dependency Grant (CDG).
- **83% of parents** whose children use assistive devices reported gaining access only after joining the programme.



Top 4 prevalent disabilities 2024

	Diagnosed	Suspected Diagnosis	% of total
 Cerebral Palsy	32		22%
 Autism Spectrum Disorder	19	1	14%
 Speech Delay	1	13	10%
 ADHD / ADD	7	6	9%

3,935 home visits were conducted by Siyasizas for children with disabilities in 2024.

RESPITE PLAY & LEARN

Expanding Care: Respite Play & Learn’s Growing Reach in 2024

2024 marked significant progress in expanding the Respite Play & Learn initiative to address growing demand in KwaNzimakwe and KwaXolo tribal authorities. Caregiver burnout is a harsh reality for many families providing full-time care. Respite Play & Learn eases this burden, giving guardians vital time to recharge and manage other responsibilities. Initially supporting 10 children fortnightly, the programme now accommodates **18 children in twice-a-week sessions**, highlighting the urgent need for specialised, individualised care.

As one of the few organisations on the KZN South Coast offering this support - and the only one operating within these tribal authorities - Siyakwazi remains steadfast in addressing the complex needs of vulnerable children and their families.



WHY I WANT TO BE PART OF THE RESPITE TEAM

“For me to be part of Respite makes me happy because we work with different children with different disabilities. I am always learning new ideas from the team. Seeing the children smile, playing, and learning motivates me to give my best effort to this programme.” - Bongisile Mpisane, Siyasiza and Respite Play & Learn team member

45 Respite Play & Learn sessions in 2024.

“This expansion highlights just how essential community-based programmes are in bridging educational gaps for children with disabilities. For many children, it’s their first time experiencing structured learning in a setting that’s built to support them as individuals. Our mission is to uphold every child’s right to learn, and with more support, we can keep building an inclusive space where no child is excluded.” - Cathy Mather-Pike, Director



ELIZABETH & ASIPHE'S STORY

Asiphe*, an 11-year-old girl from KwaNzimakwe, has faced profound challenges due to her diagnoses of microcephaly, global developmental delay (GDD), epilepsy, and ataxia. Her journey has been lovingly supported by her grandmother Elizabeth, 62, who has been her devoted caregiver since infancy.

From the start, Elizabeth noticed Asiphe's development was slower than expected. Worries deepened when Asiphe's first birthday passed without typical milestones. At three, Asiphe's first steps brought joy, but progress was overshadowed by seizures and later, a stroke.

With little support from family, Elizabeth embraced her role as Asiphe's primary caregiver. Yet, the journey often left her feeling isolated and inadequate. Reflecting on earlier struggles, she shares: "Before joining Siyakhwazi, I felt ashamed and as if I wasn't loved."

In 2013, Siyakhwazi began supporting Asiphe through its Inclusion Programme, providing therapy, assistive devices, and tailored interventions to promote holistic development. For Elizabeth, counselling, home visits, and support groups offered vital emotional relief. Through Siyakhwazi's care, Elizabeth found renewed strength. "Siyakhwazi showed Asiphe so much love; it helped me grow love for her too. They gave me hope. Asiphe is like my own child now. I understand her better than anyone. I fear being apart from her might make me sick," she admits.

In 2023, the Respite Learn & Play initiative became an invaluable addition, offering Elizabeth much-needed breaks while Asiphe engaged in a safe, supportive environment. Despite her own health challenges, Elizabeth is a proud advocate for her granddaughter. No longer hiding her disability, she takes Asiphe everywhere. "Siyakhwazi taught me that Asiphe is like all other children. I don't hide her anymore," Elizabeth says with pride.

*"Siyakhwazi showed Asiphe so much love; it helped me grow love for her too. They gave me hope. Asiphe is like my own child now."
- Elizabeth, grandmother*



“I feel like I understand him now. It’s not witchcraft or blame.
It’s just the condition he has, and I can support him.”
- Guardian attending Block Week in 2024

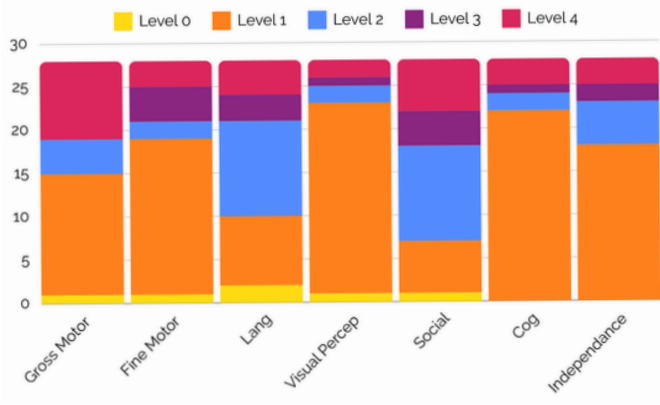


Therapy Block Weeks Deliver Targeted Support in 2024

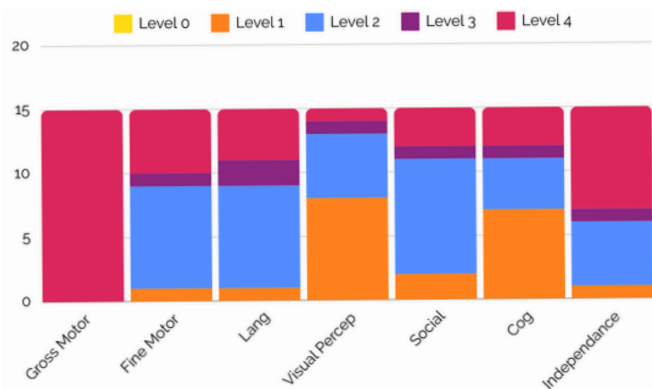
In 2024, Siyakwazi hosted three specialised Therapy Block Weeks at the Resource Centre, focusing on cerebral palsy (CP) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These intensive weeks reached **18 children and their guardians**. Therapy Block Weeks provide an opportunity for in-depth knowledge-sharing beyond routine therapy sessions, with a focus on specific disabilities.

CP and ASD account for **37%** of children with disabilities supported by the Inclusion Programme.

The graph on the right from the Inclusion Tool assessment for children with ASD shows that over 50% of children scored an average of 2.5 or higher, with all children scoring L4 on gross motor, indicating that mobility is not a challenge for those with ASD. The most challenging areas are visual perceptual and cognitive skills. However, language and communication, along with independence, show relatively stable averages, reflecting the support provided through the Inclusion Programme, Block Weeks, and therapy sessions.



The graph above from the Inclusion Tool assessment for children with CP shows varying functional abilities, emphasising the need for individualised interventions. For instance, while two children scored an average of L4, three scored below 1, highlighting that a “one size fits all” approach is ineffective. Additionally, the high prevalence of Level 1 and 0 scores in gross motor, fine motor, and independence suggests a strong reliance on guardian support for daily activities.



HOW THE INCLUSION PROGRAMME IS MAKING AN IMPACT

“I used to think I was the only one, but now I see other families like ours. I don’t feel so alone anymore.” - Grandmother

“Now I know what to do when my son gets upset. I try to stay calm and not shout – I’m learning to help him instead of making it worse.” - Mother

“Since I started playing with my son and letting him make choices, I see his sister now treats him better too. Our whole family is changing.” - Mother

“She can now straighten her feet, and they’ve become strong [using the standing frame].” - Guardian

576 hours of therapy provided in 2024.



Access to Services in 2024



9 children accessed SEN schools



13 children supported accessing diagnosis



14 children accessed assistive devices of which 86% of devices were provided by Siyakwazi or Siyakwazi’s partners



11 families of children with disabilities successfully supported accessing the Care Dependency Grant (CDG)

Barriers to Accessing the Care Dependency Grant (CDG)

In 2024, only 39% of children in Siyakwazi’s Inclusion Programme accessed the CDG. Barriers include the absence of medical diagnoses, which are required even when a child’s disability is clearly evident, and a paperwork-heavy process often necessitating repeated, costly visits to SASSA offices. For families in under-resourced areas, these challenges make the CDG inaccessible. Siyakwazi provides essential support, helping families navigate these barriers to uphold children’s rights.





LINDOKUHLE'S STORY

Lindokuhle, 12, high-energy child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), inspired a partnership between Siyakwazi and CS Learning Centre. His journey highlights how early intervention and individualised care can transform the experience of a child with a disability.

His enrolment at CS Learning Centre - the first referral by Siyakwazi - marked a turning point. Initially, he struggled with anxiety and relied on rote memorisation. "When he started at our school, he could write 1 to 10 easily, but without real understanding," recalls Tammy Smulders, CS Learning Centre's principal and Lindokuhle's first teacher. Over time, he gained confidence, developed early literacy skills, and became more independent in daily routines.

A key breakthrough came with Makaton, an augmentative and alternative communication system. "He's become more sociable, loves greeting people, and participates in group activities," says Tammy. Though still in the pre-reading stage, he enjoys math and is making steady progress.

Siyakwazi first met Lindokuhle at Thandalani Crèche in 2013. "I remember the first time I met Lindokuhle," recalls Nontuthuko, a Siyakwazi manager. "He was a dog-loving child, like many non-verbal children who love animals, but from the start, you could tell he wasn't like the others." Initially, his family struggled to understand his needs, attributing his behaviour to inherited traits or witchcraft. Siyakwazi played a key role in securing his ASD diagnosis and Care Dependency Grant, ensuring he received the right support. Today, Lindokuhle thrives at CS Learning Centre, embracing routine, learning life skills, and growing in confidence - proof of the power of early intervention and collaborative support.



Read more:
siyakwazi.org

"Siyakwazi changed Lindokuhle's life - and mine. I had lost hope, but now I see that he has a future. I want him to be successful, to have something to do when he grows up, just like other children." - Happiness, grandmother



38 children with disabilities supported accessing SEN schools since 2020.

#PROJECT ACCESS

Strengthening Support for Children with Disabilities

Encouraging momentum was gained for #ProjectAccess in 2024, which launched in the first quarter of the year. Four disability awareness sessions were held, with an **average of 37 participants per session**. Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) explored different scenarios and disabilities, identifying the type of therapist required for specific cases and learning about the roles of audiologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists.

One CHW reflected: "We will now refer children to the correct therapists because we know more about them now." Another shared: "We now know what to do for those children in our communities that we noticed had problems, but we didn't know what to do."



WHAT IS #PROJECTACCESS?

#ProjectAccess is a collaboration between Port Shepstone Hospital physiotherapists and Siykwazi's therapy team, enhancing rehabilitation therapy access for children with disabilities in Ugu's underserved areas while upskilling healthcare workers to provide improved support within their communities.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2025?

#ProjectAccess will continue mentoring CHWs in Assisi District through termly sessions. Plans are underway to expand into the Port Shepstone Hospital catchment, with the potential launch of a new clinic pending DoH approval. The team will also begin trialling methods to track referrals, ensuring improved monitoring and impact.



Read more:
siykwazi.org

"The most rewarding part of my job is seeing people gain new knowledge, and then getting help because of that new information. You find people not knowing much – and in some cases, they blame witchcraft for illness or disability. But after teaching them, they come back and thank you for helping them." - Community Healthcare Worker

PARENT SUPPORT



Siyakwazi has long recognised that a child's wellbeing is closely linked to their family's stability. One key intervention is mentorship for micro-enterprises, developed through new skills such as baking, sewing, and secondhand clothing sales. By gaining access to training and income-generating opportunities, guardians can improve their financial stability, be active participants in their communities, and invest in their children's future.

Parent counselling, support groups, and mental health awareness - especially for primary caregivers - are additional pillars of this support. Through structured sessions, guardians have a space to share experiences, navigate emotional challenges, and develop coping strategies. Sessions provide essential psychological and emotional support while fostering stronger family participation and a deeper understanding of each child's unique journey. In a context where disability is often misunderstood, these initiatives have a profound and lasting impact.

- 6 Guardians and/or family members participated in income generating Siyakwazi microbusiness initiatives
- 30 Avg. attendees in each guardian support group.
- 4 Guardian support group meetings held in 2024.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2025?

Parent support groups continue to play a vital role in reducing isolation and strengthening community bonds. With additional funding and increased staffing capacity, Siyakwazi plans to launch a new quarterly support group in KwaXolo. This initiative will provide more guardians in the neighbouring tribal authority the chance to share experiences, gain practical insights, and build confidence within a supportive peer network.

"I realised that it is possible to help your child, you just have to be a parent that is willing and who listens to the advice that is given - anything is possible." - Nomfundo, parent



100% Parents feel they now understand the challenges their children deal with on a daily basis due to Siyakwazi support.*

*Based on before-and-after assessments of 21 families who joined between June 2022 and July 2023.



AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

Disability Rights Awareness Month

What was your first encounter with disability?" This thought-provoking question set the tone for Siyakwazi's November 2024 community awareness events, held to celebrate Disability Rights Awareness Month. Throughout the month, Siyakwazi hosted a series of engaging pop-up events across the KwaNzimakwe and KwaXolo tribal authorities. These events featured interactive games for children, the distribution of Bookdash storybooks, and the sale of pre-loved clothes, all while raising awareness about Siyakwazi's work to support the inclusion of children with disabilities.

"We want to make disability awareness something people talk about every day. These gatherings aren't just about raising funds - they're about creating a space where everyone can feel welcome, learn from each other, and support a community that includes all abilities." - Mpume Somana, Inclusion Coordinator

2024 marked the first year Siyakwazi ran this type of campaign, which also included a digital marketing initiative across all social media channels. These efforts showcased the stories of children supported by Siyakwazi and shared educational content around the theme "1 in 10," referencing UNICEF's statistics on childhood disability. The aim is to repeat a similar campaign at the end of 2025.

The month's celebrations culminated with an Open Day at Siyakwazi's Resource Centre on 3 December, which coincided with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and National Disability Rights Awareness Day. Visitors were welcomed with refreshments, given the opportunity to tour the Resource Centre, and participated in activities designed to promote understanding of disability and inclusion.

Campaign Highlights

Siyakwazi's 2024 Disability Rights Awareness Month campaign raised nearly R70,000 through donations and secondhand shop sales. Partnering with the Caxton newspaper South Coast Herald and appearing on Inanda FM's drivetime radio show expanded its reach, featuring educational pieces and commentary on disability rights.



RED FLAG & CATCH-UP



63 Primary Schools & ECD teachers supported.

665 Children identified at risk of falling behind

36 Schools & ECD centres received learning resources

Record Number of Academically-Behind Children Identified in 2024

In 2024, approximately **665 children** aged 4 to 7 years (3 out of 10 screened) were identified at risk of falling behind, the highest number ever recorded by Siyakwazi (total screening of 2,000 children). The majority of children identified were from pre-Grade R (ECD centres), but Grade R children showed a surprising increase, with more than **double the number identified compared to the previous year**.

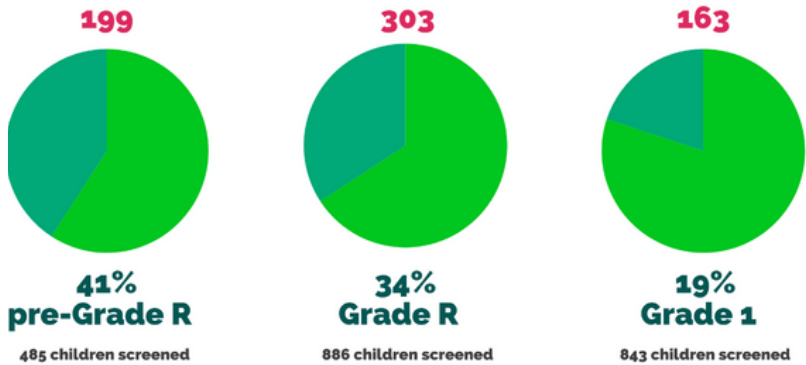


children 4-7 years at risk of falling behind in 2024.

This year marked the seventh consecutive year of the School Readiness Red Flag and Catch-up programme, which expanded to include two new primary schools and one new ECD centre in KwaXolo. Overall, **36 learning institutions were supported**. Feedback from teachers highlighted challenges such as absenteeism, overcrowded classrooms, poor parent involvement, and limited teacher capacity to support children with learning barriers.



RED FLAG CHILDREN 2024

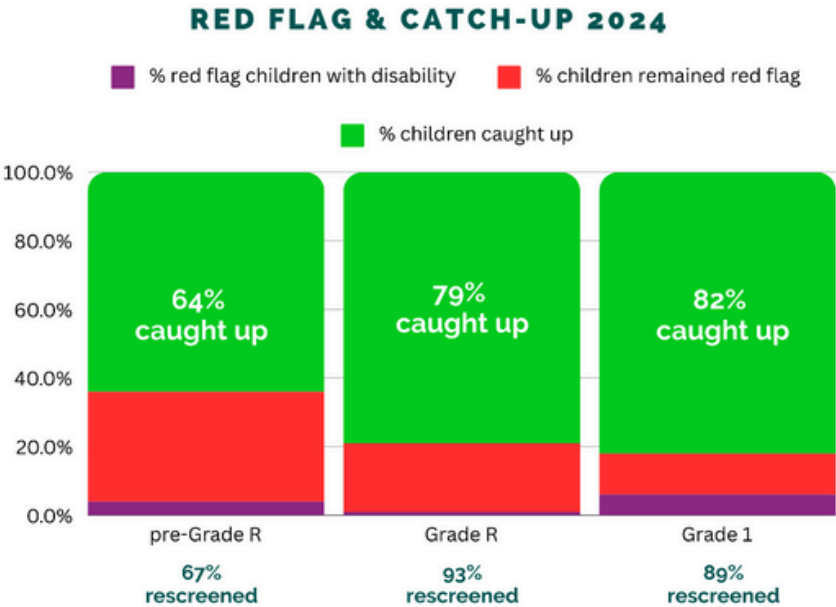


2024 Catch-Up Programme: Insights and Challenges

In 2024, nearly double the number of children remained at risk ('red flag') compared to previous years, highlighting significant barriers to learning. The pandemic's lasting effects on ECD centres, coupled with staffing issues, contributed to lower catch-up rates, particularly in Grade R. However, **Grade 1 showed improvement, with a 4% increase in children catching up compared to 2023.**

The percentage of children rescreened in pre-Grade R was lower, and absenteeism was a key challenge, particularly in younger age groups. Despite these challenges, the programme supported **53% more children in catching up compared to 2023.**

426
flagged children caught up by the end of the year.



166%
increase in the number of children with disabilities identified.

This year saw a **166% increase in the number of children with disabilities identified and referred** to Siyakwazi's Inclusion Programme, emphasising the importance of early intervention. Attendance rates were also tracked, revealing that while Grade 1 and Grade R had better attendance, pre-Grade R showed concerning absenteeism, impacting catch-up results. Overall, the data underscores the need for continued focus on early identification, teacher training, and family involvement to address learning barriers effectively.

“Most of the children improved in handwriting, reading and have self confidence. They are willing to participate when working in groups. They improve interaction and friendship building. Children who did not have speech are now trying to sound out words. Some have developed self confidence and help their peers out with the class work.” - Grade 1 and Grade R teachers, Emthini Primary School

Areas of Improvement

Analysis of the 2024 Catch-up Programme data reveals notable improvements in key developmental areas across age groups, with specific attention given to numeracy and fine motor skills.

- **Overall improvement in counting:** Counting showed remarkable progress, with Pre-Grade R improving by 225%, Grade R by 152%, and Grade 1 by 257%, reflecting the consistent implementation of numeracy activities.
- **Pre-Grade R developments:** Challenges in fine motor skills, visual sequencing, and crossing the midline persist, though improvements were noted. In 2025, Siyakwazi plans targeted interventions for ECD centres.
- **Grade R developments:** Significant strides were made in crossing the midline (188% improvement) and fine motor skills (193%), preparing children for formal learning.
- **Grade 1 developments:** Although listening and language understanding remain areas for growth, Grade 1 saw the highest percentage of children catching up.
- **Puzzles and confidence:** The introduction of puzzles helped improve concentration, while teacher feedback indicated a notable boost in confidence and expressive language development, especially for Grade R and Grade 1 learners.



"It mostly benefited their short span of concentration.

Now they are able to concentrate for the whole period of 30 minutes. They are able to listen and answer back when they participate in group work." - Grade 1 teacher, Dlukulwane Primary School

"I noticed all the children in the catch up programme were very active to listen and answer the questions." - Grade R teacher, Enkoneni Primary School



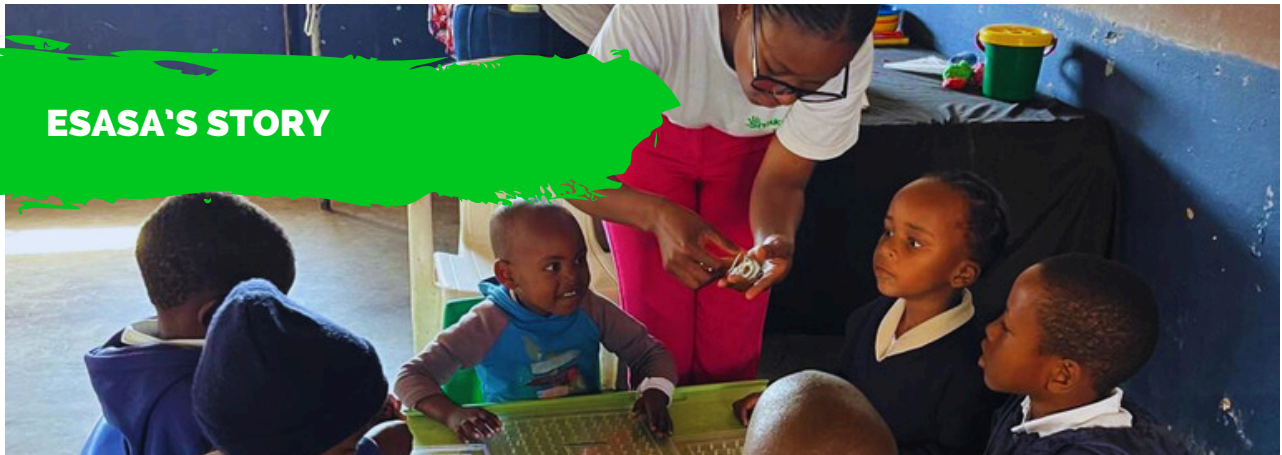
Supporting Invisible Disabilities

In 2024, the School Readiness Programme became more focused on identifying invisible disabilities, with many more children being recognised. By addressing barriers early, Siyakwazi promotes inclusion, reduces the risk of academic failure, and helps children reach their full potential. For those unable to transition to mainstream schools, Siyakwazi assists with enrollment in Special Education Needs (SEN) schools via the Inclusion Programme, ensuring they continue to receive the support they need.

WHAT IS AN INVISIBLE DISABILITY, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AFFECTED?

An invisible disability is a condition that isn't immediately visible but impacts a child's daily life, such as learning disabilities or sensory processing issues. These challenges can make it harder for children to focus, keep up with schoolwork, or interact socially, even when the difficulties aren't apparent to others. Supporting these children ensures they receive the help they need to succeed, fosters an inclusive environment, and empowers them to reach their academic potential.

ESASA'S STORY



When Siyasiza Nokwe first stepped into Esasa's Grade R classroom at Dlukulwane Primary School in KwaXolo, her attention was drawn to a petite, quiet girl who rarely joined class activities. "I noticed this tiny girl and wondered what was going on," recalls Nokwe. "She failed the Red Flag screening, and her teacher said she barely spoke in class. But when I started our catch-up groups, everything changed. She loved the sessions so much that she would cry if she wasn't included!" With each small-group session, Esasa grew more engaged. Her speech was unclear, but she started trying to communicate more. Her mother, Thandi, had long been concerned about her speech delay and possible hearing issues.



Read more:
siyakwazi.org

Siyakwazi facilitated a referral to an audiologist, but accessing support was not straightforward. A middle-ear infection prevented the test from being completed. Then, after a reaction to prescribed medication, Esasa needed further medical clearance before she could be reassessed. Delays like these are common in rural South Africa, where healthcare barriers can slow a child's progress in school.

At school, her teacher noticed she could write but often refused to. This shows why Siyakwazi's catch-up activities are so important. In a focused, supportive space, children like Esasa build confidence in ways that a traditional classroom might not allow. At the end of 2024, when rescreened, Esasa was still at risk of falling behind. This confirmed that her challenges go beyond a delay. Now, as she transitions from the School Readiness Programme to the Inclusion Programme, she will receive therapy at home and at the Resource Centre in 2025, guided by a personalised therapy plan from Siyakwazi's team.

"Before, she was very slow [in speech], but now she's getting better. Even though some words aren't clear, you can hear what she's trying to say... My relationship with Nokwe is great. Even when Esasa doesn't have an appointment, she calls to check on her. She told me I can call her anytime if I'm worried about something. We work well together. Nokwe is very patient and caring." - Thandi, Esasa's mother

KWAXOLO SCHOOLS SUCCESS



78 children supported to catch-up at two new KwaXolo schools in 2024.

“The programme has been incredibly helpful. We have built a great relationship with Nokwe [from Siyakwazi]. We sit down together to discuss the children’s needs and use Siyakwazi’s resource box. We’ve learned so much from Nokwe and hope the programme continues in the future.” - Teacher, Dlukulwane Primary School

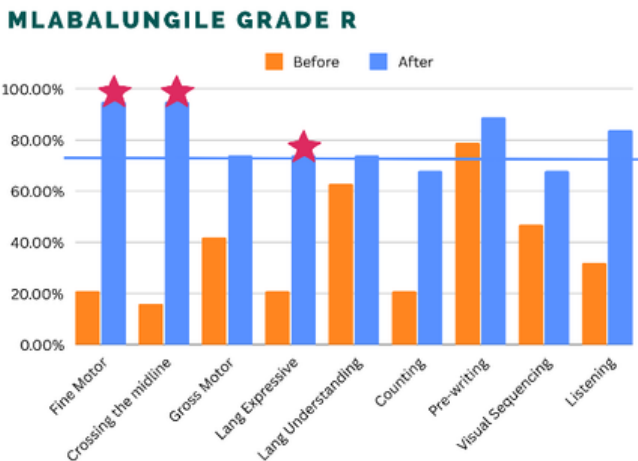
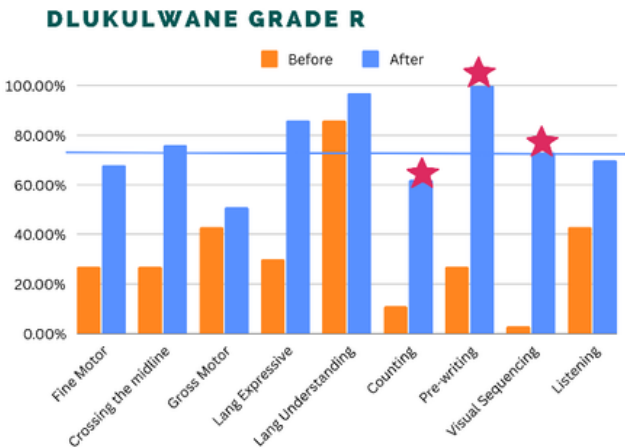
Siyakwazi welcomed two new schools in KwaXolo into the programme in 2024 as part of the organisation’s expansion in the area: Dlukulwane Primary School and Mlabulungile Primary School. Working in these two new schools highlighted a significant challenge, with a total of **78 children identified as being at risk of falling behind academically**. Like many no-fee rural schools, both face challenges such as high absenteeism and a lack of early childhood education experience. In particular, the number of Grade R children with potential barriers to learning was notably high, underscoring the impact of limited access to quality ECD learning programmes.

Throughout the year, Siyakwazi’s team worked closely with both schools, implementing a range of classroom activities to support learners. As a result, just over **78% of the identified children have shown progress**, successfully catching up with their learning.

A significant improvement in the Grade R classes was reported, especially in:

- Fine motor development
- Crossing the midline
- Visual sequencing
- Counting

CATCH-UP RESULTS AT DLUKULWANE & MLABULUNGILE AT END OF 2024.





EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMME

150 PARENTS AND THEIR BABIES UNDER TWO PARTICIPATED IN THE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMME.

Strengthening Early Learning at Home and in ECD Centres

Siyakwazi's Early Learning programme continues to make a meaningful impact on young children and their families, equipping guardians and ECD practitioners with the tools and knowledge to support early development.

In its fourth consecutive year, the programme enrolled 150 guardians and their babies, providing structured support through home visits, training sessions, and resource distribution to strengthen early learning at home and in ECD centres.

- 2,611** Home visits to provide at-home support.
- 450** Baby bags and books distributed.
- 142** Avg. children accessing monthly porridge and eggs.
- 106** Audiologist hearing screenings.



"She now started to build using lego. She knows how to put it together."

"I noticed that she can share and play with others very well and she also likes to listen to storytelling. "

"As a parent my role has been to change the food that I was feeding them and find healthier foods, to teach them how they should play with toys and assist them when they need help. "

Ensuring Nutrition and Sustainable Learning Resources

A key focus of the programme is ensuring that children receive appropriate stimulation and nutrition during their critical first years. Monthly distributions of porridge and eggs reached an average of 146 children, while carefully curated baby bags and early learning resources, including 300 Book Dash books, were provided to families.

Recognising the need for sustainable learning tools, Siyakwazi introduced workshops for guardians, demonstrating how to create educational resources from recyclable materials, ensuring that learning continues beyond the programme.

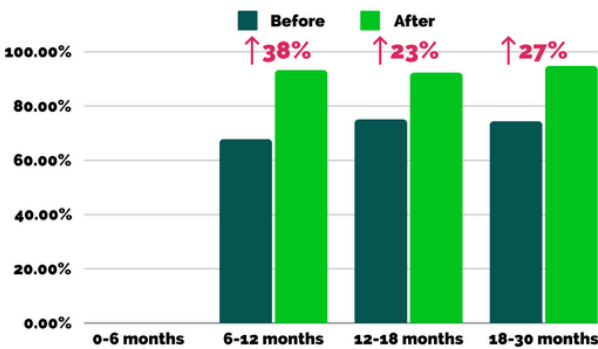


Tracking Progress: Guardian and Practitioner Assessments

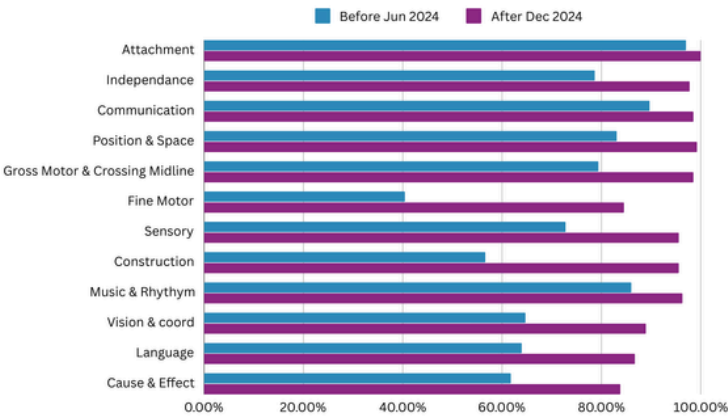
To measure the programme's impact, Siyakwazi conducts bi-annual assessments with guardians to track their progress in implementing early learning activities. The **latest results indicate that 96% of participating parents showed improvement or maintained** their level of engagement, with the 6-12-month age group demonstrating the most significant growth. Despite progress, guardians continue to find fine motor skills, cause-and-effect learning, and language development the most challenging areas to support. However, feedback suggests notable improvements in children's interest in books, social interactions, and problem-solving skills, reinforcing the programme's effectiveness in preparing children for ECD centres.

Alongside supporting families, Siyakwazi worked closely with 16 ECD centres to enhance practitioners' ability to implement age-appropriate learning activities. Assessments revealed a **100% improvement (or no regression) across all sites**, with fine motor development showing the most **significant growth at 109%**. These results highlight the programme's role in bridging the gap between home-based early learning and formal ECD settings.

BEFORE & AFTER JUN-DEC 2024
AGE GROUPS



BEFORE & AFTER JUN-DEC 2024
ACTIVITY



MOST IMPROVED LEARNING AREA:
109% INCREASE IN FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Activities measured across the different age groups included:

- Posting and fitting different objects
- Completing a simple puzzle
- Manipulating different objects
- Practising manipulating smaller objects like beans

"I have given myself time to play with my children and also teaching them new things. I now make time for them to go outside and play, which is something that I did not do before, because I was worried about them running around and falling. But now I realise that that time is important because it helps my children learn."

Early Identification and Intervention for Developmental Delays

Early identification of developmental delays remains a cornerstone of the programme. In 2024, **106 children aged 0-2 years received hearing screenings** by a private audiologist, with 54 referred for further intervention. Additionally, a small-scale pilot using the **ASQ®-3 screening tool for 27 children** (aged 18-27 months) identified that 62% required additional support.



Q: How is hearing screening conducted for young children?

A: Hearing screening for young children is typically done using otoacoustic emissions or auditory brainstem response tests. These are quick, non-invasive procedures that measure the ear's response to sound.

Q: Why is early hearing screening important?

A: Early hearing screening helps identify children with hearing loss or impairments before they reach critical developmental milestones. Detecting hearing issues early allows for timely intervention, such as medical treatment, hearing aids, or speech therapy, preventing long-term communication challenges.

Q: How does hearing loss impact a child's development?

A: Hearing loss can delay speech and language development, affect social interactions, and limit learning opportunities. Without early identification and support, children may struggle with communication, which can impact their confidence, school readiness, and overall cognitive development.

Rolling out a new tool: ASQ®-3 Screenings

The ASQ®-3 (Ages & Stages Questionnaires®) is a standardised tool used to assess children's development from birth to 5 years. It helps identify potential areas of concern, such as developmental delays or milestones that children might not be meeting. The ASQ®-3 focuses on key developmental areas, including communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem-solving, and personal-social development.

Siyakwazi began using the ASQ®-3 screening tool at the end of 2024 to monitor children's development and refer those flagged for concerns to a local clinic or occupational therapist. These children are rescreened in six months to track progress and determine whether the interventions have supported their development.



SINETHEMBA'S STORY

Ntombikayise is a devoted mother raising her two children, including 21-month-old Sinethemba, whose real name means "bright light". Despite financial challenges, she has embraced motherhood with resilience, ensuring her children are loved and cared for. Through Siyakwazi's Early Learning Programme, both mother and child have experienced meaningful support and positive change.

Sinethemba's favourite activities include playing outdoors, especially with sand and water. She loves using a shape sorter - though not for its intended purpose. Instead, she uses the bucket to collect sand and water, joyfully building her own creations. She is an adventurous eater, and through the programme, she has grown to love eggs, which have contributed to her weight gain and improved overall health. Her mother has noticed that when she gets ill, she recovers much more quickly than before.

During an audio screening facilitated by Siyakwazi, an infection affecting her hearing was identified. A referral to Murchison Hospital led to successful treatment, improving her hearing. While her speech development remains a work in progress, she actively imitates songs and points to objects, showing growing communication skills.

The programme also fostered a love of learning for both mother and child. Ntombikayise enjoyed attending meetings, connecting with other parents, and engaging in activities with Sinethemba, such as reading stories every night. Though challenges remain, including limited access to crèche facilities, Ntombikayise dreams of a bright future for her daughter - one where she makes good choices, continues learning, and one day, attends university. With early support, Sinethemba's future is already shining.

"I love being a parent, and being there for my children. What makes me most proud is when I see my children are happy."
- Ntombikayise



MEET THE TEAM

Fiki shares her experience

Fikelephi Ngeleka, known as Fiki, is a 29-year-old therapy assistant and Siyasiza at Siyakwazi, making a significant impact in KwaNzimakwe and KwaXolo. With an ECD Level 4 qualification, Fiki's journey has been shaped by both professional growth and personal resilience.

Fiki's connection with Siyakwazi began during a difficult period of unemployment. A chance encounter with a CHW led to a job opportunity. After interviews and training, Fiki became a full-time employee, playing a key role in the team.

In her role, Fiki helps manage communication between therapists, parents, and children, creates therapy programmes, and supports the School Readiness Programme in two KwaXolo schools, working with six children with disabilities or learning difficulties. Her passion for supporting children with disabilities stems from her own experiences.

Now, Fiki uses her experiences to advocate for the children she works with, ensuring they receive the understanding and support she lacked. Her story is one of resilience, demonstrating how she turned adversity into strength. Through her work at Siyakwazi, Fiki is making a lasting impact, ensuring that no child is left unsupported.



Read more:
siyakwazi.org

"I was bullied a lot in school for my disability. In grade 1, children refused to sit with me, and teachers didn't care. When I moved schools, things got worse, with no one standing up for me. I've learned that accepting myself is the first step to being accepted by others."

"My greatest achievement has been learning to accept myself just the way I am. Siyakwazi has shown me that there's a place for people with disabilities in this world, and that's something I want to pass on to the children I work with."



OUR FINANCES

The 2024 financial year marked a period of remarkable growth and success for Siyakwazi. With a 74% increase in revenue compared to the previous year, Siyakwazi demonstrated its ability to attract increased donor support, host successful fundraising events, and secure additional grant funding. Importantly, no single funder accounts for more than 10% of the overall budget.

Prudent financial management ensured that expenses remained focused on impactful programmes, resulting in a surplus that will be reinvested into future initiatives. This reinforces Siyakwazi's commitment to sustainable development and responsible budgeting.

R4,4 million invested in our programmes to support children with disabilities & barriers to learning.

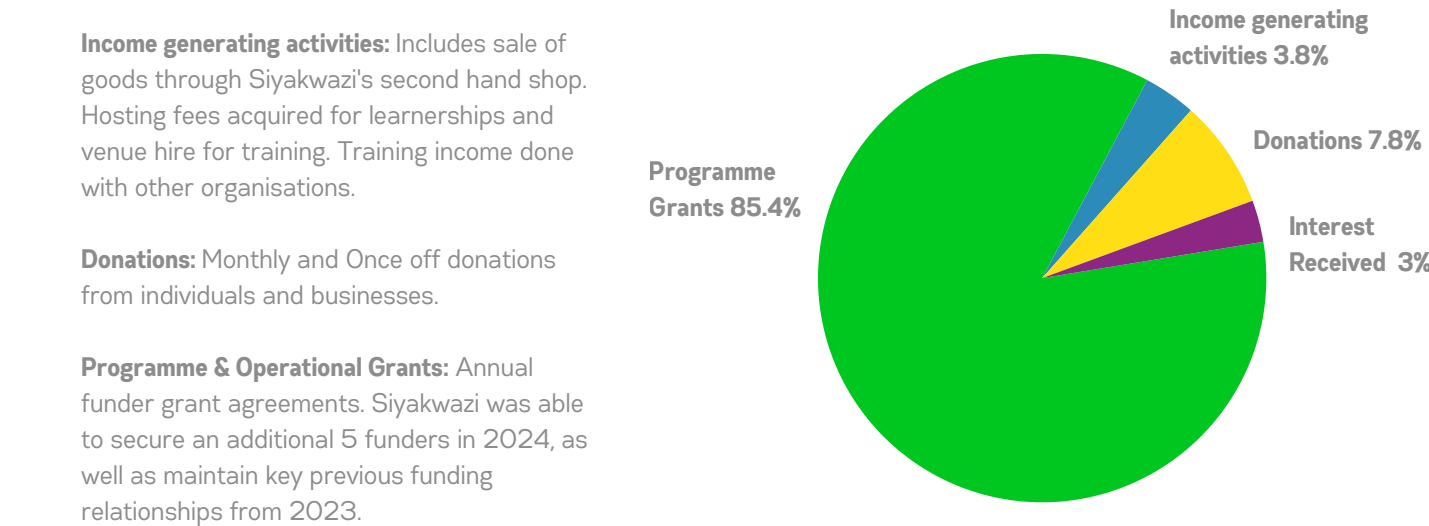


Fig 1.1. Sources of Revenue

"I am immensely proud of the financial stewardship demonstrated by Siyakwazi's management team throughout 2024. Their unwavering commitment to transparency, prudent budgeting, and strategic growth has positioned the organisation on a solid footing for the future. The significant increase in revenue and the careful allocation of resources reflect a deep sense of responsibility and purpose. I am confident that Siyakwazi will continue to build on this success." - Graeme Gawler, SAPT Solutions

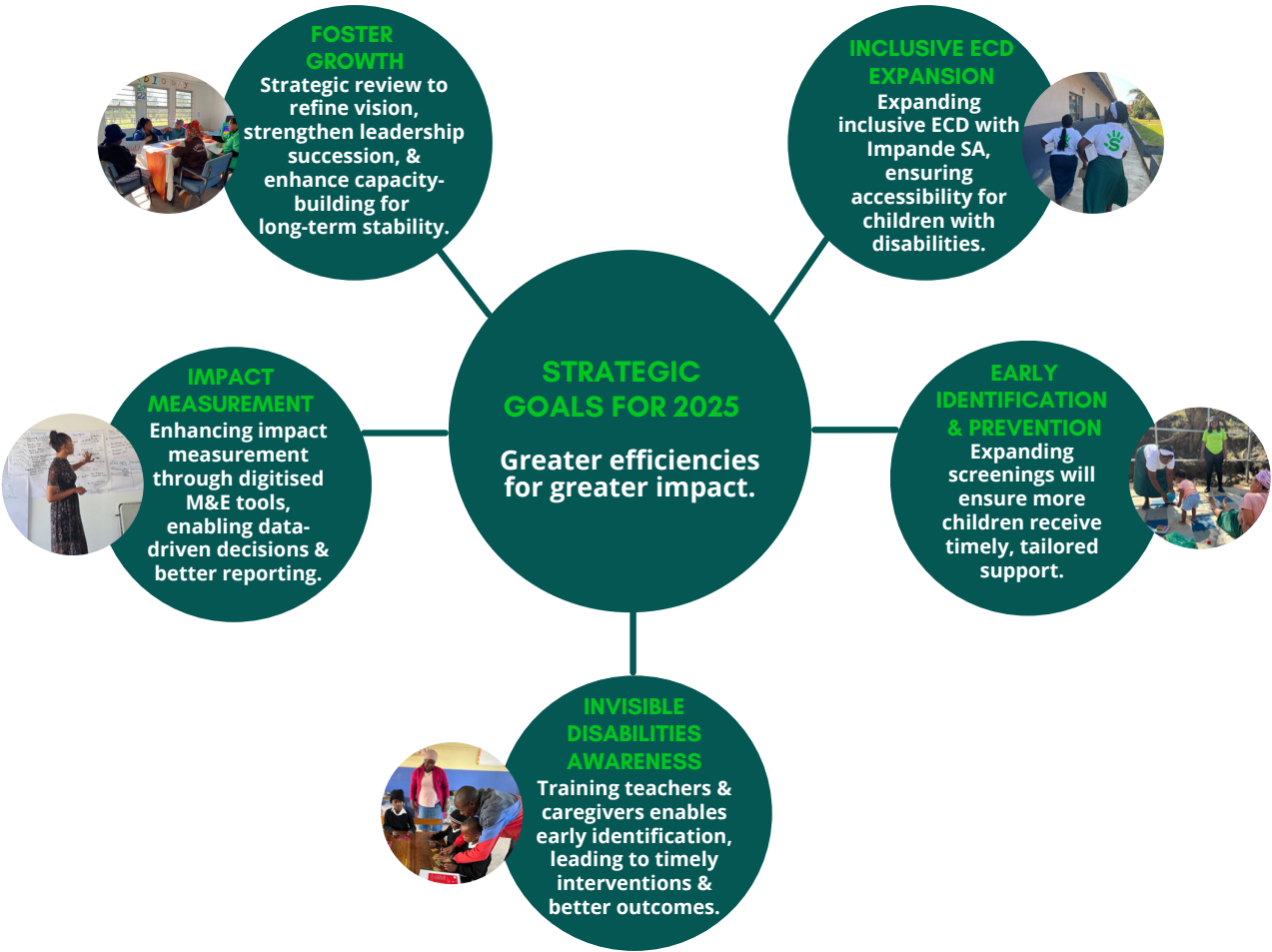
72%
Increase in investment income


22
Grant agreements to support Siyakwazi's programme implementation in 2024.

R140,000
Generated through Siyakwazi's secondhand shop.

OUR 2025 GOALS


Siyakwazi is dedicated to fostering a culture of continuous growth and evolution. By consistently evaluating the effectiveness of its programmes, identifying areas for improvement, and responding proactively to the evolving needs of beneficiaries, Siyakwazi remains committed to delivering interventions that are both impactful and sustainable. In 2025, Siyakwazi will build upon its strong foundation with the following key strategic goals:





INCLUSION

1. Develop Respite curriculum
2. Develop after school therapy groups for children with learning difficulties
3. Increase guardian participation, skills and confidence



SCHOOL READINESS

1. Deepen teacher participation
2. Strengthen foundational learning with renewed focus on "Back to Basics"
3. Extend learning with new initiatives



EARLY LEARNING

1. Strengthen parental capacity
2. Expand developmental screening for milestone delays
3. Maintain and improve nutrition support



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