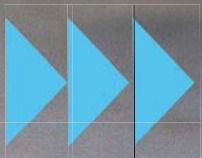




ROOTED IN RESILIENCE

IMPACT REPORT 2024



REFLECTION FROM THE DIRECTORS



Over the past 17 years, Thanda has evolved from focusing on individual children to supporting entire households—and, in 2024 we've broadened our scope even further. We now offer neighbourhood level programmes too! We believe this is essential as sustainable change is effected best when everyone is on the same page and there is buy-in, support and accountability at every level of a child's life: individual, household, and neighbourhood.

We started quarterly Learning Circles across 32 neighbourhoods in 2024. It has been amazing to see stronger social cohesion forming between neighbours around issues related to household gardening, child development, and parenting. When people come together, communities are stronger, and we are excited to see this resilience building in action!



Angela
Larkan

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AND CO-FOUNDER

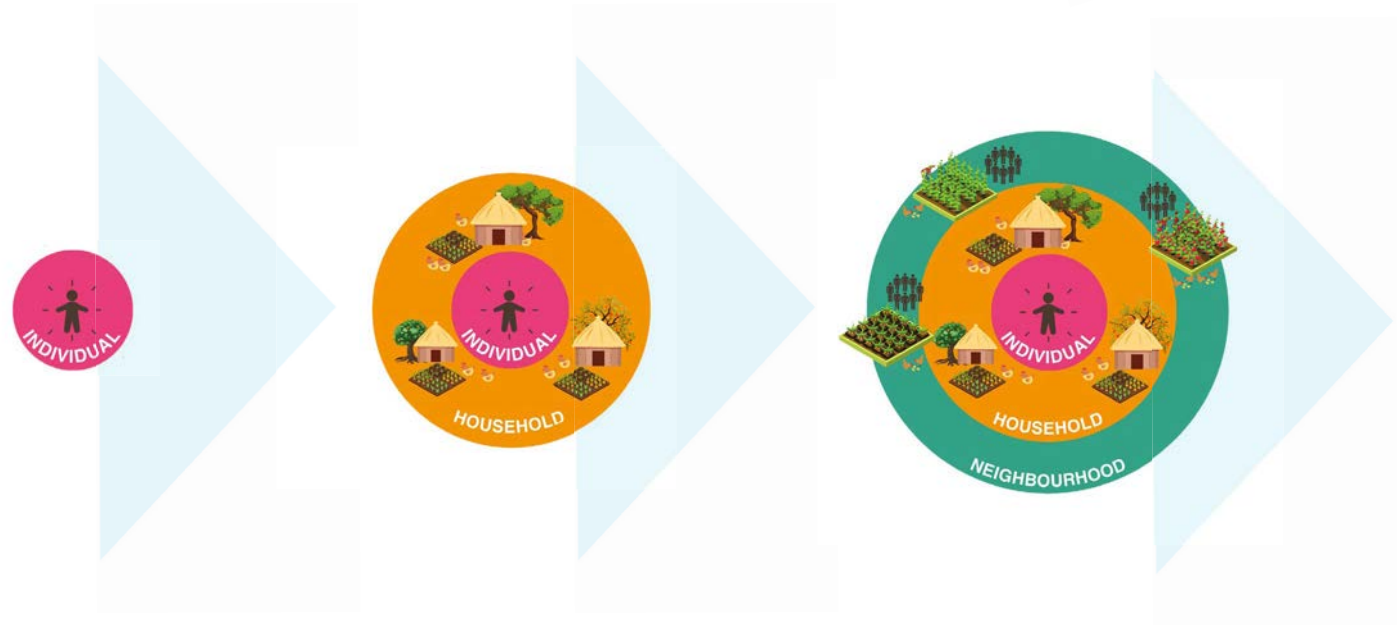


Tyler
Howard

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR
AND CO-FOUNDER

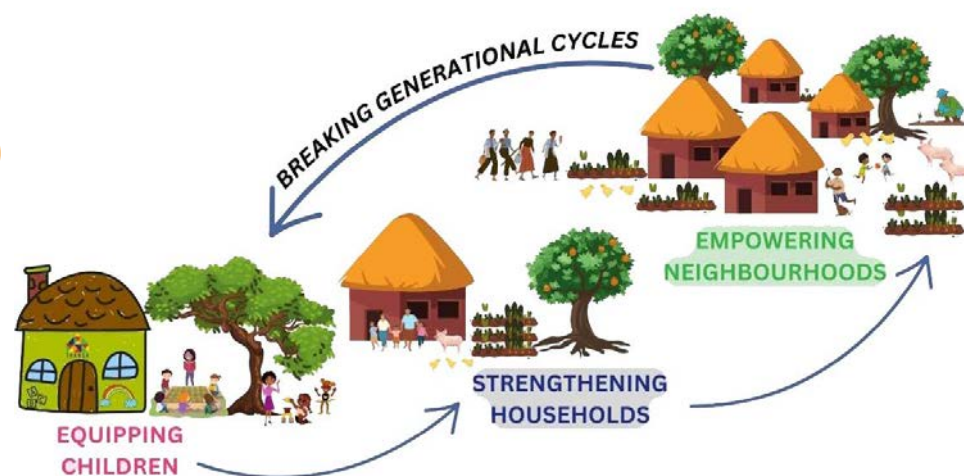
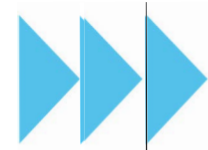


REFLECTION ON RESILIENCE



How have we introduced support at a neighbourhood level? Through regular group workshops, known as Learning Circles, we teach everything from childhood development to practical farming techniques. The shared space encourages neighbours to learn together and forge ahead on a similar path but, more importantly, it strengthens bonds between neighbours themselves. It shows them the person next door is dealing with similar issues and they can trust each other, lean on each other and grow together, ultimately building a more resilient community, that can weather the challenges experienced by individuals and families together.

THANDA'S 3-LAYERED APPROACH TO RESILIENCE



At Thanda, we see interconnectedness as the key to lasting impact. Our systems-approach ensures that interventions in Early Childhood Development, Child & Youth Development and Food Security & Economic Development strengthen individuals, households, and entire neighbourhoods. By leveraging local resources—*whether rich soil for gardening or community members opening their homes for learning* – we foster sustainable change from within.

EMPOWERING NEIGHBOURHOODS: 2024'S FIRST YEAR OF INCREASED RESILIENCE

Building strong community bonds are important for widespread resilience. Learning Circles replaced our programme-specific guardian workshops, and shifted from gathering individuals from various communities to uniting all members within a single community. This change has fostered a deeper collective understanding of shared challenges, such as raising children and food security, while strengthening local community bonds and collaboration.

In 2024, Thanda's Neighbourhood Learning Circles were implemented across 32 neighbourhoods, with one session held per quarter in each area. These gatherings provided a valuable space for guardians to engage in meaningful discussions and practical learning opportunities.

Each session, led by Thanda's team, focused on a key topic relevant to childhood development and family dynamics, including:



- The Role of Stories (Traditional) and Books (Modern) & How Change Can Be Both Good and Bad
- Understanding Children's Behaviour vs. Adults' Behaviour
- Forgiveness
- Understanding Children's Intentions & Behaviour

In addition to these discussions, Household Gardening mentors facilitated sessions on household gardening, equipping guardians and individuals with valuable skills to enhance food security, including:



- Nutrition
- Greywater and rainwater harvesting
- Pest Control
- Mulching & Composting
- Participants also received their quarterly seedling packs during these sessions.

128 Neighborhood Learning Circles were hosted, achieving an 84% attendance rate.

The feedback from guardians and individuals has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the impact of these learning circles in strengthening community knowledge, parenting approaches, and self-sufficiency. We are excited to continue building on this





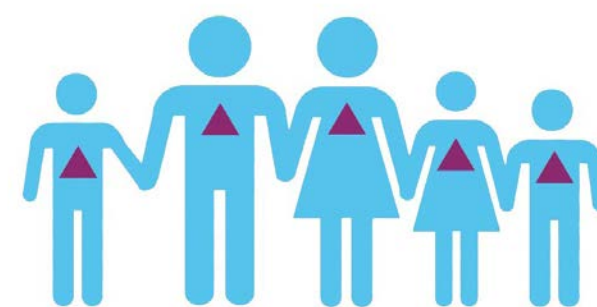
EMPOWERING HOUSEHOLDS: HOME VISITS IN 2024

GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

"By participating in this group, I feel like I have people I can talk to about how our gardens are going and what they are doing that I am not doing differently. I was just asking Mam'Shozi the other day what she is doing differently in her garden because the cabbages she is growing are beautiful and her garden is very clean."

"The workshops have strengthened our relationships with neighbours. We support each other more and work together on community projects."

"They also taught us teamwork, humility, and sharing of ideas which creates an environment where people live in peace and harmony in the community."



We completed 3,847 home visits in 2024, and have distributed 3,098 Book Dash books.

523 guardians supported



744 children benefitted from home visits

GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

"I feel relieved because you find that at times they find me in a bad place emotionally, then they are able to motivate and educate me mentally and emotionally."

EMPOWERING HOUSEHOLDS: FOOD SECURITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Vegetables with a food value over R43 million (if they had to be purchased at retailers) were grown between 2015-2024.



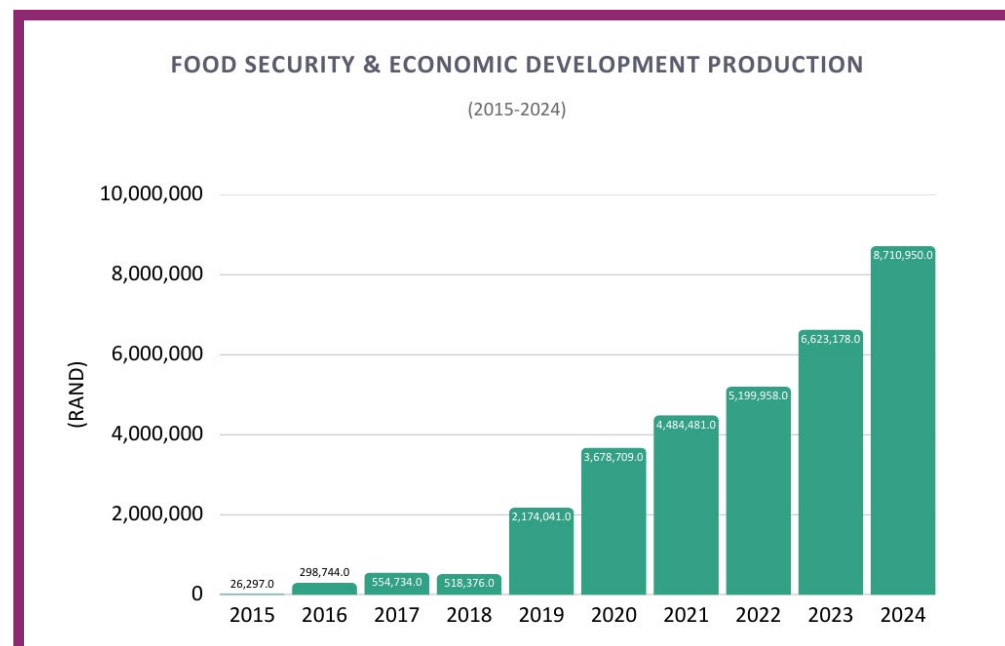
R8,710,950 production value of vegetables consumed, sold and given away within the local community in 2024.



Total of 1,084,928 seedlings planted and 193,786 m2 of seed planted in 2024.

R3,616,204 of actual income in farmers pockets in 2024.

R12 197 859 FOOD VALUE GROWN IN 2024



In 2024, Thanda successfully supported 380 active farmers at 31 farms in the Mtwalume community. Each smallholder farmer has an average of 5 dependants, many of which are young children.





EMPOWERING HOUSEHOLDS: NISELA ORGANIC FARMING PROGRAMME

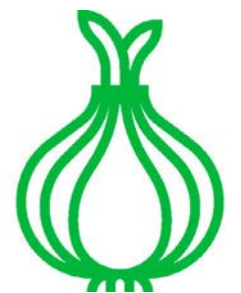
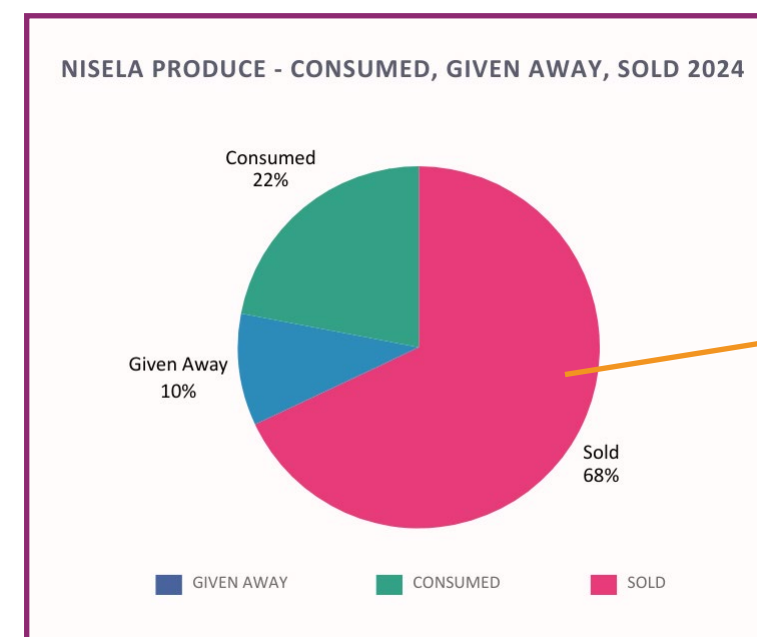
90% OF ADULTS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY ARE UNEMPLOYED.

In 2024, Thanda successfully supported **380 active farmers at 31 farms** in the Mtwalume community. Each smallholder farmer has an average of 5 dependants, many of which are young children.

In Thanda's Nisela Organic Farming Programme, the average production per farmer in 2024 was **eight times** what it was in 2016.

BOOSTING LOCAL FOOD SECURITY IS THE MOST FOUNDATIONAL GOAL

68% of Nisela produce was sold, generating valuable income for the farmers. Additionally, 22% of the produce was consumed by the farmers and their families, while the remaining 10% was shared with friends, neighbours, and other relatives, significantly boosting local food security.



67% of all produce sold by Nisela farms was kept locally for the nourishment of those living within our community.

EMPOWERING HOUSEHOLDS: HOUSEHOLD GARDENS

Our Household Gardening Programme empowers **650 local households**—primarily those with children in our ECD or Child & Youth Development programmes—to grow food and feed their families by cultivating produce in their backyards.



650 household gardens established to date



3,975 household members supported through the Household Gardens



1,519 individual visits to households in 32 neighbourhoods



187 new enrolments in 2024, showing great enthusiasm for farming, improved household nutrition, and better food access.



115% of the 2024 target was achieved, with vegetables worth R3,410,250 grown at household level.



We completed a household baseline to benchmark for future improvements, and for the first time we have some household resilience indicators: 22% are mulching, 10% are composting and 84% are using greywater or rainwater harvesting for irrigation.



*[NDoH, Stats SA, SAMRC, & ICF. (2019). South Africa Early Childhood Review 2024. Retrieved March 18, 2025, from <https://ilifalabantwana.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/SA-early-childhood-review-2024-FINAL.pdf>]



STRENGTHENING HOUSEHOLDS: HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE

In 2024, an exciting development in our Household Gardening Programme introduced layer hens as part of our 3-layer resilience approach. 25 households were selected for a pilot project, receiving 3 fruit trees (1 banana and 2 others), 5 layer hens and 50 kg of layer mash feed each. Participants were chosen based on two criteria: consistent, excellent farming practices, and their willingness to act as role models in caring for the hens and trees.

▶▶▶ NEIGHBOURHOOD FEEDBACK

NOBUHLE JEZA
Dibi Neighbourhood

"The reason that I have kept going is because I see the results and the impact of growing food in my garden. I may not have much, but I have enough to keep me going and I am grateful to Thanda for that. I do not even go to the store anymore. I could go on and on about how much Thanda has saved me...I am trying to get the small ones interested in farming and knowing how to grow their own food because, one day I will be gone and it is important to pass on the skill so the following generations do not starve."



**Feathers in
household
caps !**

AGRI-HUB INPUTS & SERVICES IN 2024



The Thanda Agri-Hub is crucial to the success of our Household Gardening and Nisela programmes, acting as the core of our operations and farmer support. It serves as a key buying hub for Thanda’s guaranteed market system and a distribution centre for seeds, seedlings, layer mash feed, and bio-inputs. It also stores essential tools, including a biodigester and a tractor.



41,000 kgs of press mud distributed



110,000 kgs of kraal manure distributed



25,170 kgs of Nutricast distributed

415 tractor hours at farms



Over 11,000 litres of nitrogen rich biodigester ‘liquid gold’ distributed



2,340 litres of homemade concentrate ‘apeche’ used for organic pest control at farms



201 logged and fixed irrigation & fencing repairs at farms



Estimated 2,772 mentor visits, 11 088 hours at farms & 93 spot checks by senior management



EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: STARTING FROM BIRTH

Our Baby Programme encourages playful interactions between guardians and babies within select neighbourhoods through home visits and monthly playgroups, which offer a chance for guardians to meet up with their babies to learn and play together. The programme focuses on helping children reach key developmental milestones in social-emotional growth, physical health, and cognitive and language skills.

In 2024, we had 39 babies, who were cared for by 31 different guardians.

Across all five neighbourhoods, those with monthly playgroups (Creche and Plazini) achieved similar final scores to those without. This suggests that rather than being the main driver of infant development, playgroups help foster a stronger sense of community and strengthen bonds between neighbours.

Baby Programme participants showed a 46% improvement from their total average baseline scores to their final score, affirming the programme's effectiveness.

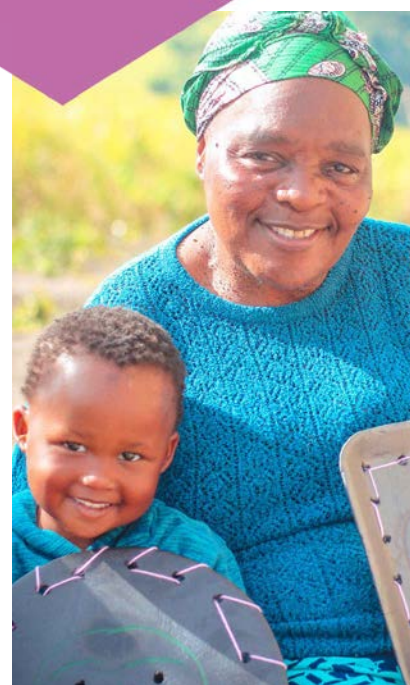
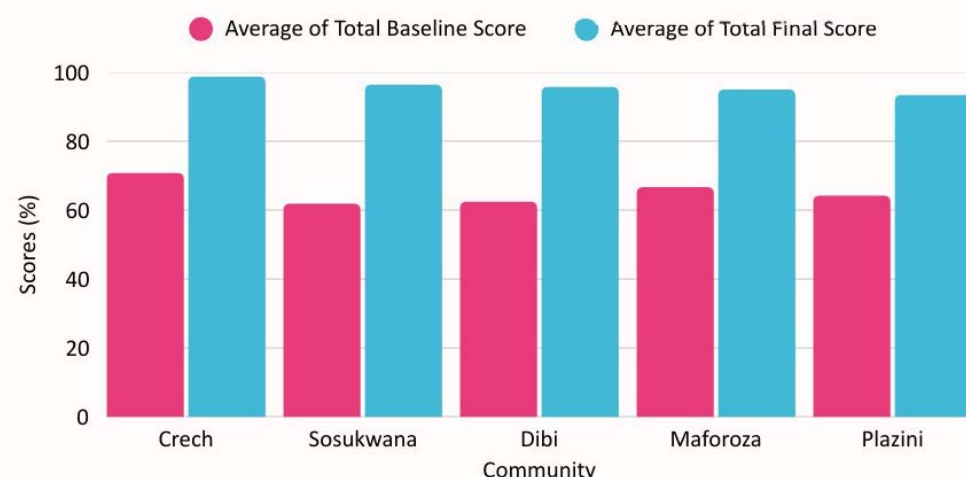


GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

PHUMZILE KHUZWAYO is the guardian of two babies, both aged 2 years, Nhlohle and Yamkela

"Having the home visits is valuable and the group meetings with the other guardians has been really beneficial for me because I see and hear other guardian issues or pick up advice from the other guardians on how to deal with certain matters. It makes me feel that I am not alone. We are a community with my neighbours. I have definitely grown as an individual because I feel more a part of my community. As mothers we know that we will meet up and we look forward to it, because we know that we will be together having fun and learning. Thanda has been very instrumental in encouraging us to get together as neighbours. We are now very comfortable with each other. No area is out of bounds - we know each other and care for each other. This has been a wonderful initiative by Thanda!"

BABY PROGRAMME SCORES PER COMMUNITY





SHIFTING PARENTAL PERSPECTIVES THROUGH THE PROGRAMME:

BEFORE & AFTER: PARENTAL MINDSET TRANSFORMATION

An independent evaluation of the programme showed notable shifts in guardians' knowledge and understanding of parenting, childhood development, and the role they play.

BASELINE

Focused mainly on fulfilling children's basic physical needs (food, shelter, hygiene).

Limited understanding of broader developmental responsibilities.

Parenting seen as providing necessities rather than engagement.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Recognised the importance of emotional support, cognitive stimulation, and early education.

Viewed themselves as active participants in their children's growth.

Equipped with skills to foster learning and meaningful interactions from infancy.

GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

"The programme has opened our children's minds before they go to school."

"It has helped us bond more with our children."

"The programme gives us knowledge about raising and communicating with a child."

"The programme helps us be aware and part of the child's life."



EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: ENABLING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Our Community Centre-based Imbewu, Satellite, and Fun Foundations ECD groups ensure that children have access to learning opportunities—no matter how remote their location.

In 2024, 287 children attended these programmes, gaining access to Early Learning opportunities they otherwise would not have had.

Our curriculum, designed specifically for the rural South African context, has been validated by independent assessments, which have shown significant improvements in children's skills.

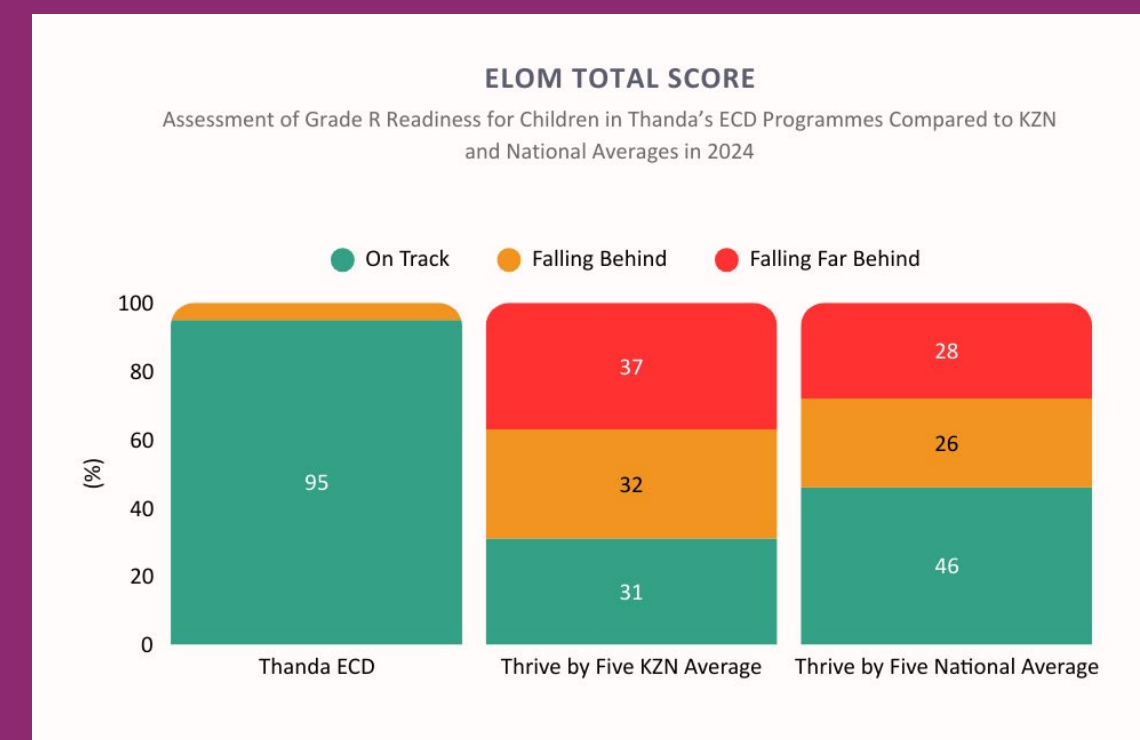


Who are their guardians?

Aunt	33
Father	3
Grandfather	2
Grandmother	109
Mother	132
Sister	2
Brother	1

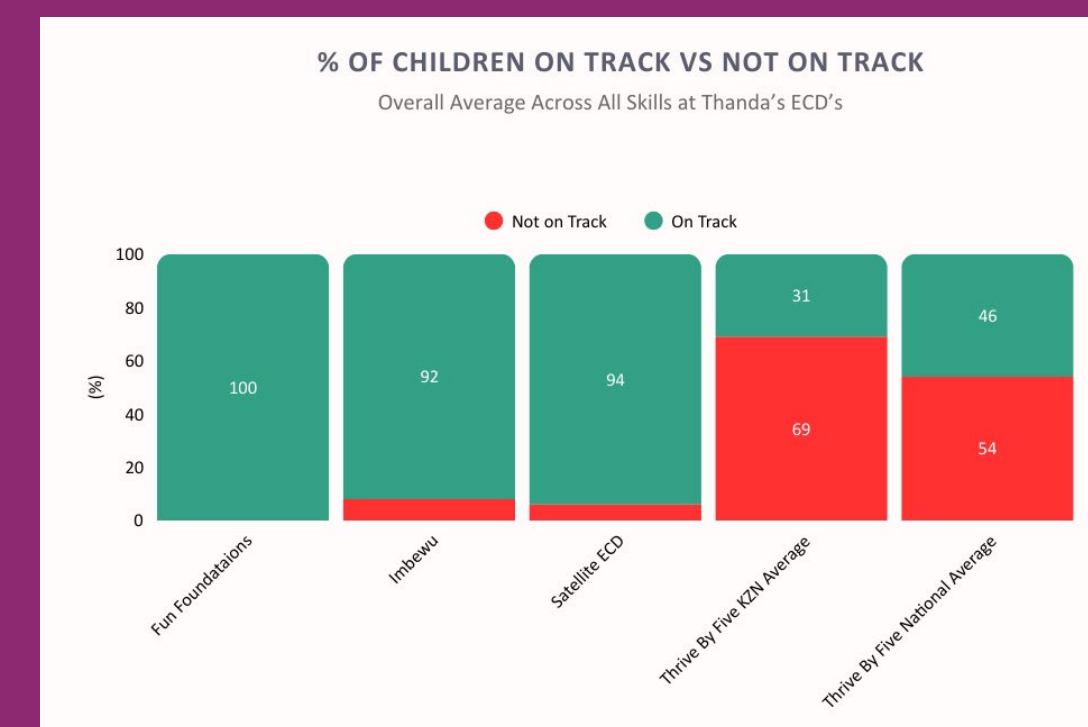
ECD Centre	Total Children
<i>Imbewu (Community Centre)</i>	
Six Classrooms	106
<i>Satellite ECD</i>	
Mkhumbini	17
Ndunge	25
<i>Fun Foundations</i>	
Dweshula	29
Etsheni	15
Hukwini	21
Gqayinyanga	18
Nanini Nanini	28
Ntengo	11
Vukuzenzele	17

Programme	No. Library Books	Learning at Home Packs
Baby Programme	4	126
Fun Foundations	2,047	440
Imbewu	1,261	433
Satellite ECD	570	202
Total Reach	3,890	1,201

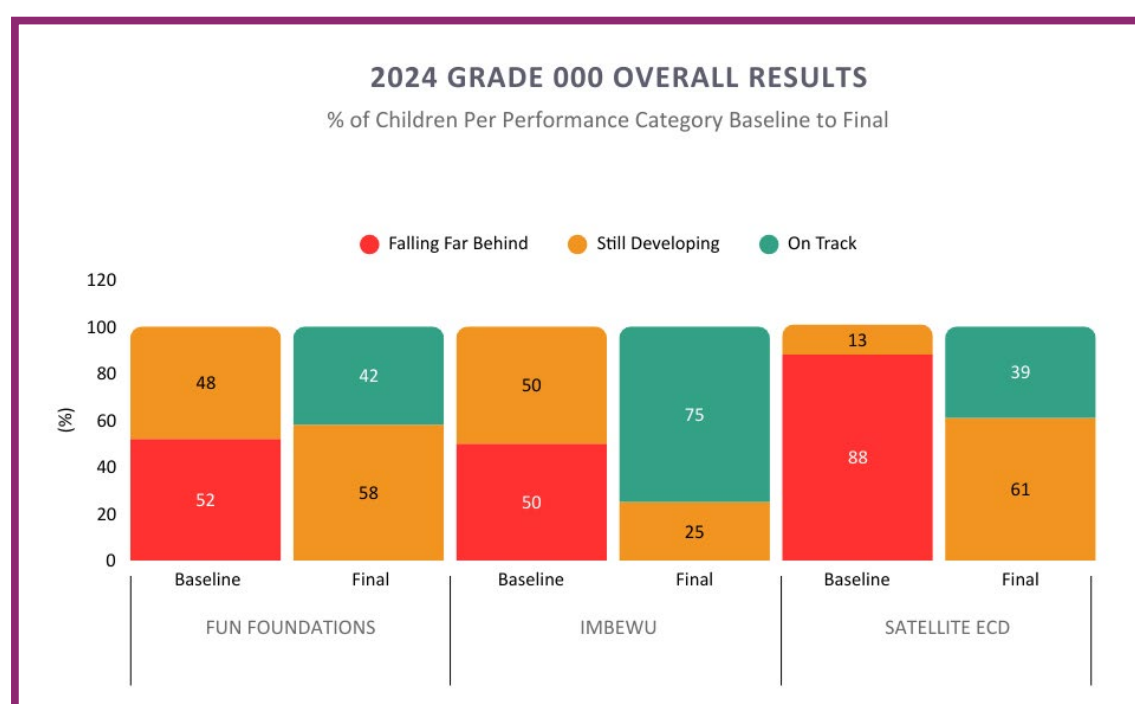


The independent Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM) conducted by DataDrive showed that that 95% of children leaving Thanda's ECD programme at the end of 2024 were on track to start Gr. R, compared to 31% of 4-year-old children in KwaZulu-Natal. *

The graph below supports our belief that the teacher and curriculum play a greater role than the physical building where the programme is housed. Most Fun Foundations activities take place outdoors—under a tree or in extra huts generously offered by households to serve as classrooms.



*General Household Survey (2023)



The graph above highlights the significant improvement of the 000 children from Baseline to Final Assessment. At Baseline, the majority were in the 'Falling Far Behind' category, with 0% in the 'On Track' category. By the Final Assessment, 0% of children were falling far behind, and each Early Learning Programme had many children in the 'On Track' category.

What's more—our detailed internal data allows the Grade 00 teachers of 2025 to use the Grade 000 assessments from 2024 to identify which children need additional support in their 'still developing' areas.

EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: EMPOWERING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



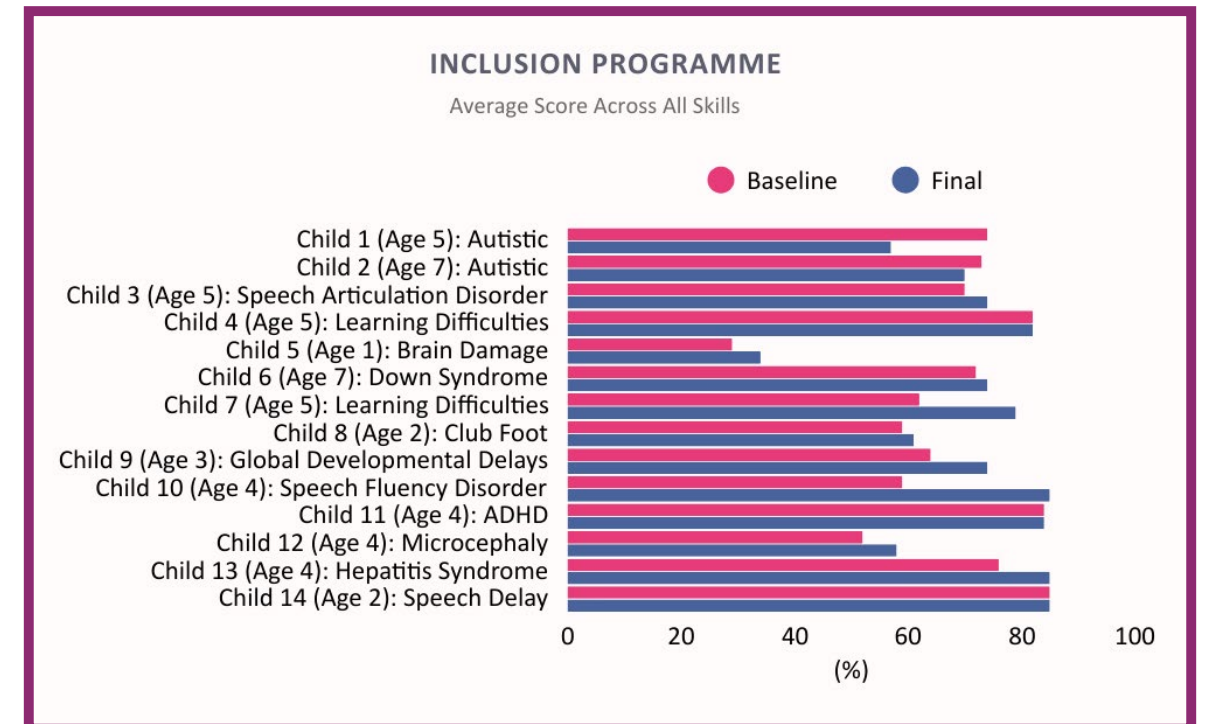
Our Inclusion Programme empowers children with disabilities to reach their full potential, while fostering greater awareness, inclusion, and understanding in the community. By breaking down stigma, the programme has created a more accepting and supportive environment for both children with disabilities and their families across neighbourhoods.

- ◆ **14 children**
- ◆ **2 Therapy Days**
- ◆ **184 Home visits**
- ◆ **10 children transitioned into Special Education Needs and local schools for 2025 academic year**
- ◆ **6 children supported with admissions to special schools**
- ◆ **Supported all children in acquiring referrals, diagnoses, therapy services and Care Dependency grants**

In 2024, we also supported 8 older children with disabilities, enrolled in the 14+ age group, who receive assistance at home.

In 2024, we supported children with disabilities including:

- Speech Delay
- Down Syndrome
- Global Developmental Delays
- AD/HD
- Brain Damage
- Clubfoot
- Microcephaly



The impact of our Inclusion Programme for ECD-age children reveals promising progress, with most children showing improvements in their specific developmental areas. Two children experienced a decline in their skill scores.

These two children initially received home visits and attended our ECD but were removed from our ECD (by decision of their parents) during the year. This correlation suggests that daily exposure to structured learning and peer interactions at the ECD played a significant role in improving their baseline scores. The absence of consistent stimulation, social engagement with peers, and reinforcement of developmental skills may have contributed to the slowing of their progress after being removed from the ECD.

This affirms our belief that children with disabilities benefit from being included in mainstream learning environments.



EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Our Child & Youth Development programmes help to guide children during an impressionable time in their lives with positive adult role models in a safe space.

94% beneficiary retention rate

Programme	Enrolment
Thandukwazi	265
Literacy	103
Siyazazi	264
Girls Leadership	73
Girls Programme	143
Boys Programme	129
Umthombo	7,003 Engagements



40,921 meals were served to children across all Child & Youth Development Programmes

1,041 books borrowed to Child & Youth Development children

1,633 visits to the Thanda Library for digital research



EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: THANDUKWAZI

In 2024, 265 children in Grades R-3 engaged in hands-on, fun activities designed to build academic and life skills for success—both in school and beyond.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHT

Science was the most popular theme of the year, sparking curiosity and hands-on learning. Inspired by popular children's show 'Ada Twist, Scientist', children engaged in exciting experiments, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

This theme was an absolute blast for the children with loads of experiential learning experiences.

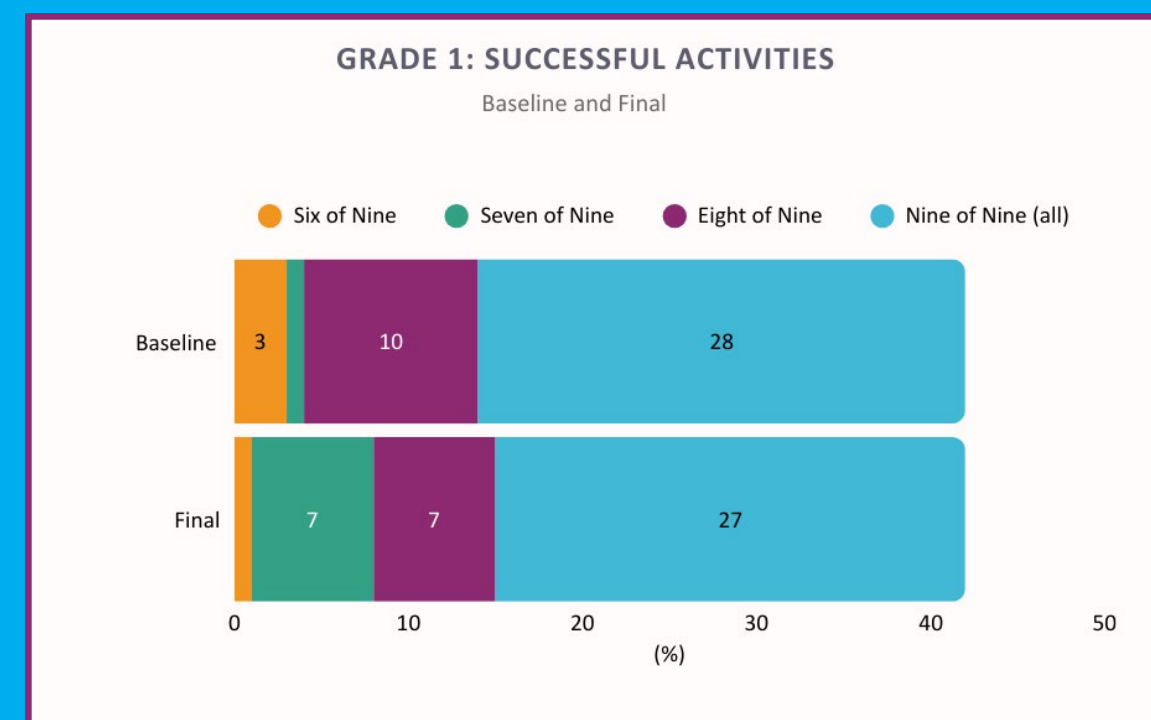
- Learning about trailblazers like Ada Lovelace.
- Observing germination by planting and caring for their own beans.
- Exploring force and motion through Hot Wheels ramp experiments.
- Constructing robotic hands with paper, tape, and string, boosting creativity and problem-solving skills.
- Designing water filtration systems in the Clean Water Challenge, learning about purification and environmental responsibility.

Through these interactive experiences, children developed a love for learning while grasping complex scientific concepts – often without even realising it!

THANDUKWAZI PROGRAMME: TRACKING

Our Thandukwazi Programme continues to monitor individual development using the Red Flag Assessment tool, developed by our partner Siyakwazi. This tool helps assess whether children are meeting key cognitive and motor skill milestones for their age, enabling targeted interventions to help these children catch up.

Facilitators guide children through nine interactive activities, evaluating coordination, writing, memory, counting, pattern recognition, and the ability to follow instructions. Children who complete fewer than six receive a 'red flag,' signaling areas where additional support may be needed.



PROGRESS AND ATTENDANCE INSIGHTS FOR GRADE 1s

At baseline, all children successfully completed at least 6 of 9 tasks, meaning none were red-flagged. By the final assessment, this remained true, but more children were able to complete at least 7 tasks, showing clear progress.

Interestingly, while there were no red flags, 19% of children improved their scores, while another 19% saw a decline. Attendance appeared to play a role—those who improved had an average attendance of 83%, higher than the group's average 77% rate. Meanwhile, children whose scores declined had attendance in line with the group average. This reinforces the link between regular participation and skill development!



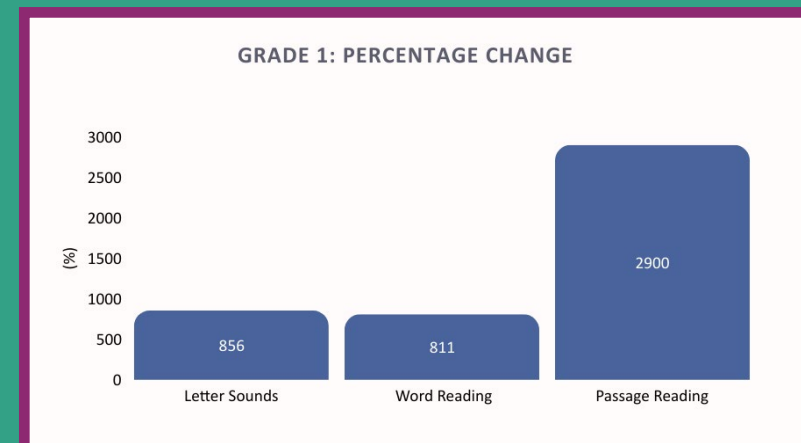


EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: LITERACY PROGRAMME

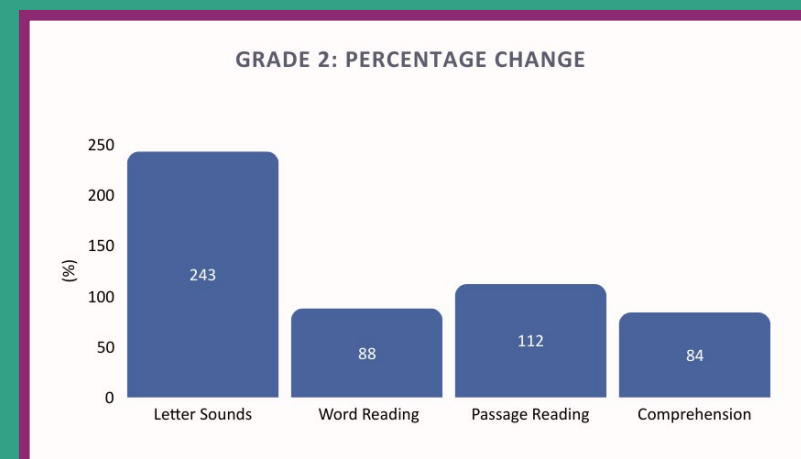
Thanda has always encouraged a love for reading through storybooks and activities, but many children still struggled with grade-level reading skills. In 2024, we launched a pilot of a new literacy programme called Reach Out to Read (RoTR), developed by the Family Literacy Project. This is the first programme designed for learning to read in isiZulu and its focus on phonics makes it a great complement to our after-school programmes. Starting in April 2024 at Msinsini Primary School, our specially trained Thandukwazi facilitators implemented the programme with children during the school day, providing more time to help children reach their grade-level reading skills.

FACILITATOR FEEDBACK

"Asipe" attends Thandukwazi in the Dibi area. Her facilitator, Mfundo, says that when she started she did not like to participate and she would often give up on activities if she made a mistake or thought her work wasn't up to scratch. Through increased attention and focus, Mfundo was able to help Asiphe with increasing her grit and determination, and not be so hard on herself because we all make mistakes! Mfundo says: "Now Asiphe is much more confident and asks questions if she does not understand instead of her feeling like she's not doing a great job."



For our grade 1 participants completing the EGRA assessment, the rate of improvement was over 800% for letter sounds and word reading and close to 3000% for passage reading.



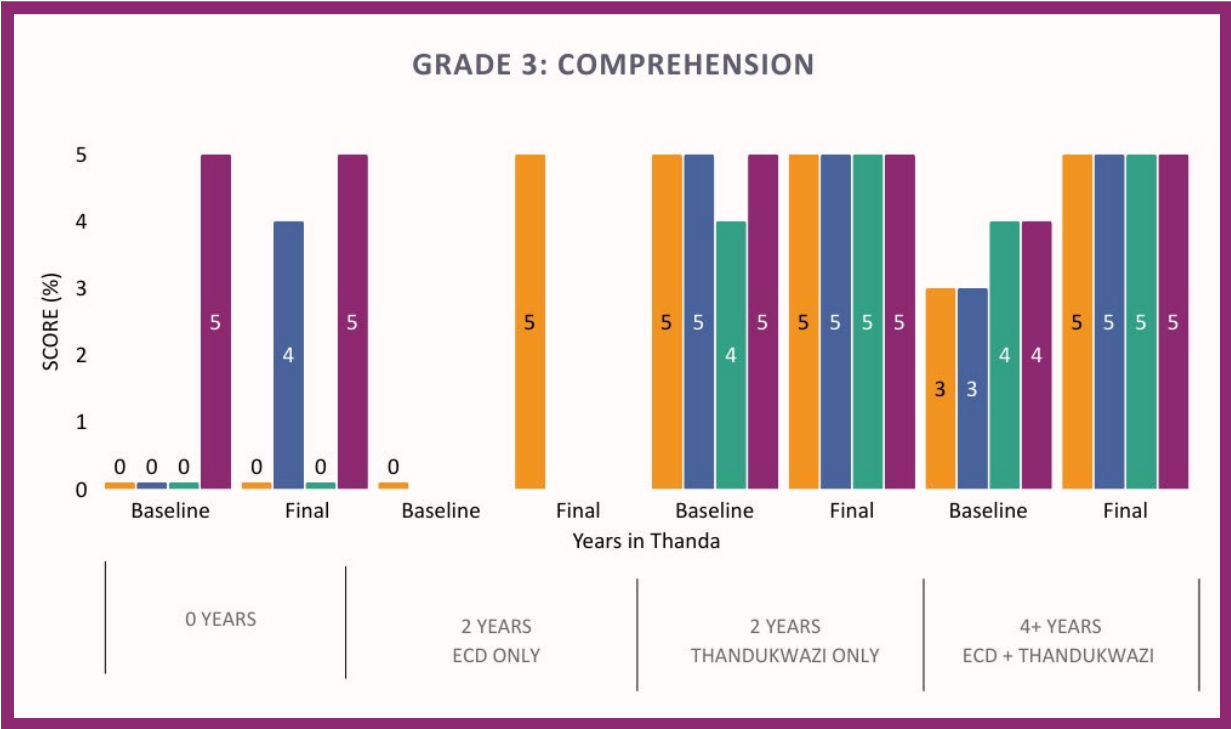
For our grade 2 group, the largest percentage change was seen in the recognition of letter sounds test, with their percentage change nearing 250%.

YAMKELA NGUBO

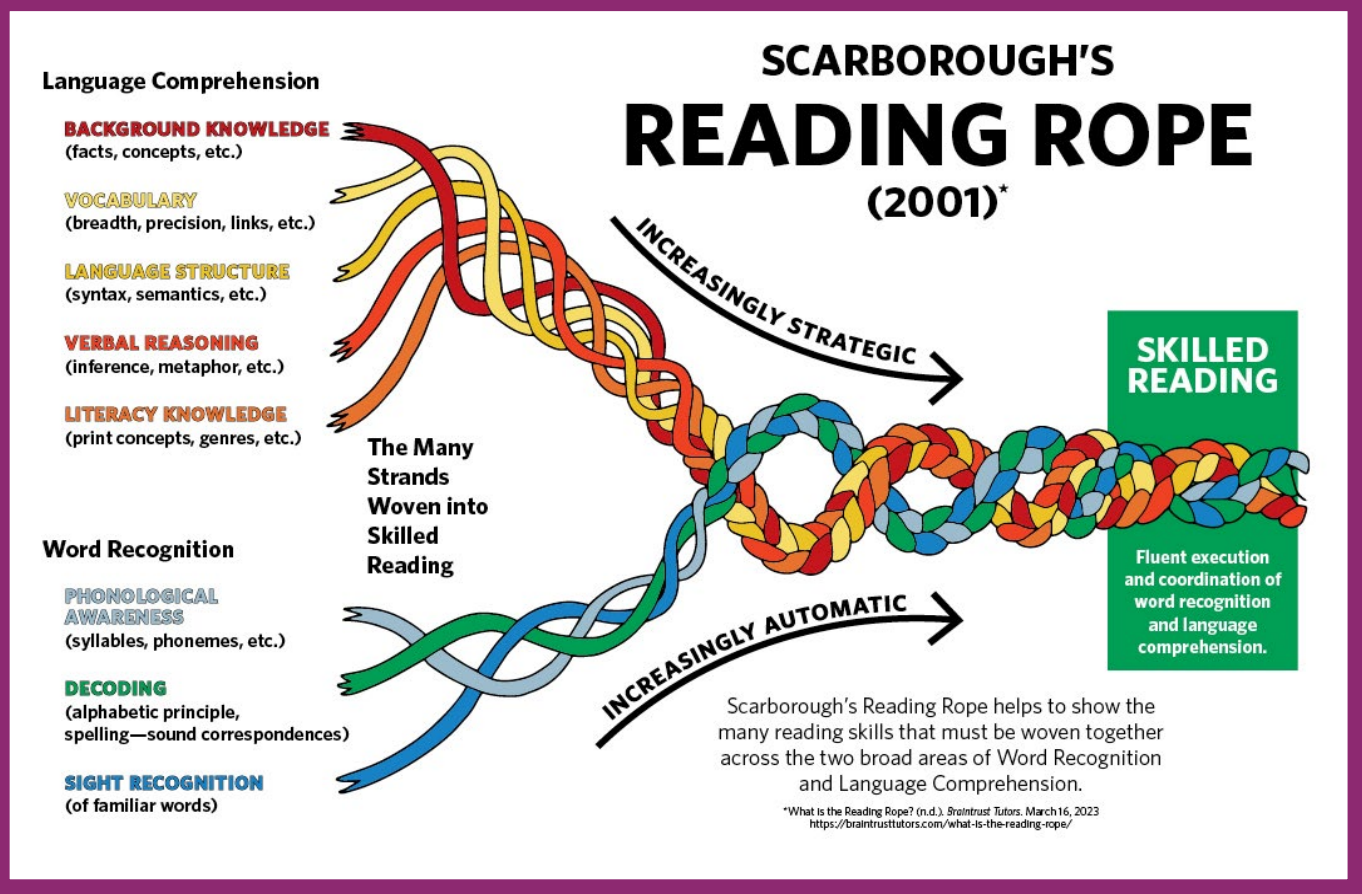
I am in grade 2. I love reading! I like these books because they teach me about animals, and also how to be a nice person. I like animals very much. I have learnt that it is important to look after the environment so that animals also have a home. In the book Uvemvane (butterfly) it teaches us about the butterfly, its beautiful colours, and why it is so important. It is very small but does so much for the environment.



To understand how Thanda’s programmes and the RoTR pilot support skills development, we analysed Grade 3 children based on their years at Thanda. The results showed that the longer a child participated in Thandukwazi, the stronger their performance in letter sounds, word reading, passage reading, and comprehension—especially with the added support of RoTR in 2024. The graph below illustrates the results in comprehension.



When we look at Scarborough’s Reading Rope, we see that both language comprehension and word recognition are essential for skilled reading, or for the ‘fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension’ (Scarborough, 2001, figure 8.1, p. 98).



At Thanda, we’ve always viewed Thandukwazi as a natural progression of our investment in children from our ECD programmes. While Thandukwazi strengthens language comprehension, the RoTR programme has made remarkable progress in improving word recognition. Together, these programmes provide a balanced approach to literacy, giving children a strong foundation for reading success.



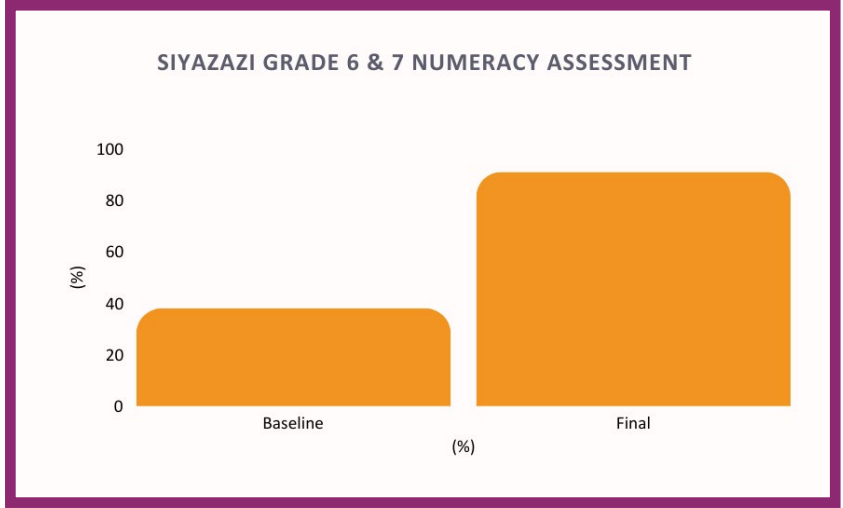
EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS:

SIYAZAZI (GRADE 4-7)

Siyazazi guides children to build confidence and make intentional and informed life choices. For 264 students in Grades 4-11, the programme runs on weekends and holidays at our Thanda Community Centre, offering specialised classes in performing and visual arts to support self-discovery and the transition to empowered young adulthood.

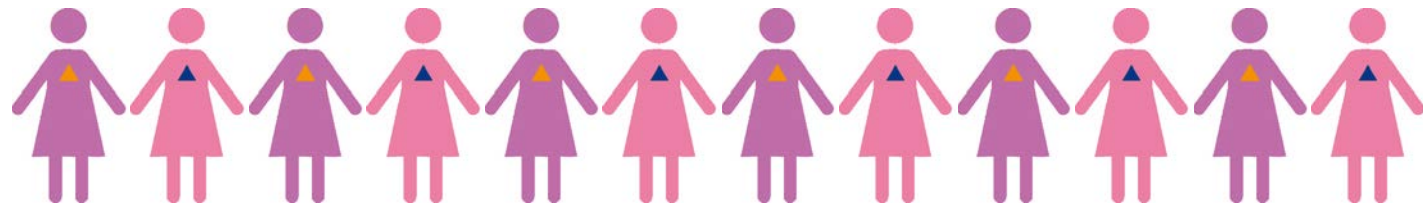
In 2024, we dedicated significant time to the theme of beads, exploring their origins, cultural symbolism, and their role in developing pattern recognition and numeracy skills. Beads provided an engaging and creative way to integrate curriculum themes into lessons on numeracy, graphing, and data analysis.

At the start of the beads theme, we assessed children's numeracy skills and conducted a final assessment after implementing these targeted lessons. The graph below highlights a strong positive impact, demonstrating notable improvements in children's numeracy abilities throughout the programme.



EQUIPPING INDIVIDUALS: BUILDING AGENCY AMONGST GIRLS AND BOYS

Our Girls Programme continued to act as a safe space to explore gender-specific questions. It not only provides a nurturing environment for personal growth but also fosters self-awareness, confidence, and practical skills essential for the girls' overall development and future success.



GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

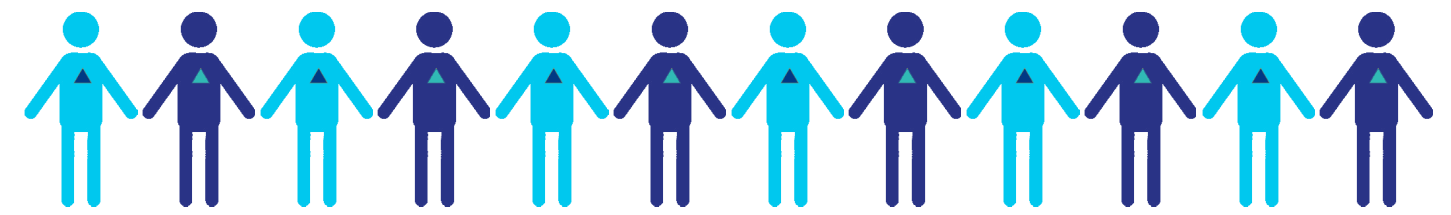
"The Girls Programme helps girls grow by supporting their thinking, teaching them how to make decisions, and preparing them for adult challenges and how to solve them."

"The reason I like the programme is because it tells us things that our parents do not tell us."

GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

"I am very excited about the programme because the child is now very intelligent and active. When she brings her books, she works on them and asks for assistance if she doesn't understand something"





129 boys enrolled with a 88% attendance rate

Each weekend, a small peer group gathers overnight to explore key topics for navigating adolescence. Discussions cover conflict management, belonging, dating, abuse, violence, bullying, media, self-confidence, puberty, hygiene, goal setting, family roles, cultural diversity, and power.

▶▶▶ GUARDIAN FEEDBACK

"They are very important as they teach children to harmoniously engage with each other, which is crucial for a child."

"They learn discipline; now he all of a sudden knows how to carry himself with respect and dignity."



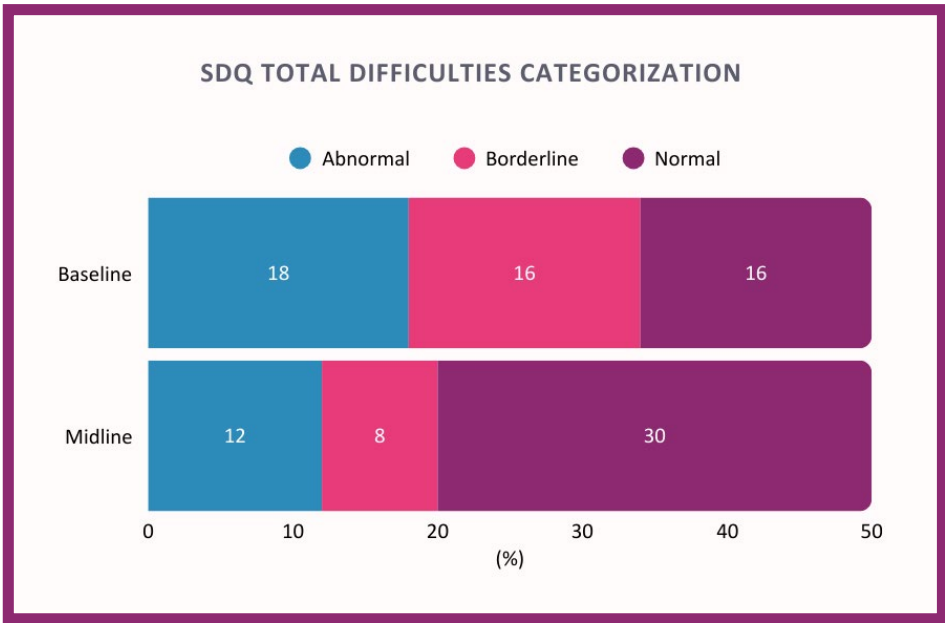
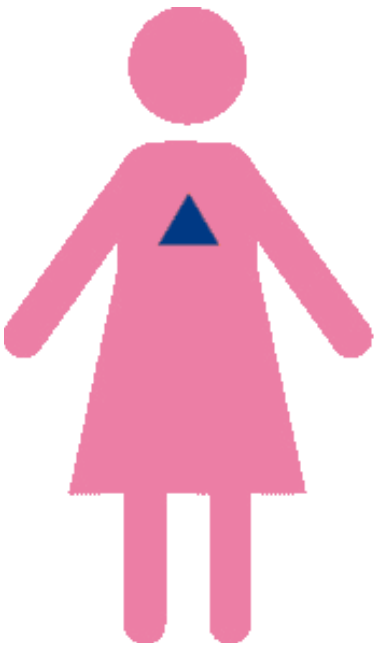
AMAQHAWEKAZI: GIRLS LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

73 girls enrolled with a 79% attendance rate

KEY AREAS OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Decision Making
- Leadership
- Communication
- Community Responsibility
- Self defence
- Financial Literacy
- Digital Literacy
- Journey into Healing
- Farming

The SDQ assesses emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity problems, peer problems and has a prosocial scale. From 2023 to 2024, girls in the Girls Leadership Programme decreased their difficulties score.



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“It is important to know who you are [a leader] and how to behave like one and not change yourself.”



PARTNER WITH US

Thanda is a registered non-profit organisation (085-981-NPO) and public benefit organisation (930031027). We currently have over 30 partners working toward building a stronger community in Mtwalume. As our work grows, so too does our need for more partners.

Contact us at info@thanda.org if you would like to explore a possible partnership!



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