

NECDA

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

"Building a better Future for Children"

National Early Childhood Development Alliance



THE NEED TO
SAVE THE
EARLY
CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT
RESOURCE AND
TRAINING
ORGANISATION
SECTOR FROM
COVID-19
COLLAPSE

MAY 2020

Our Young Children's Futures Matter



Conclusive evidence from global scientific and economic research has confirmed the critical importance of optimal development in the first years of life as foundational in the success of individuals and of nations. 90% of brain growth and development takes place between conception and school-going age, making this a crucial period of life and the foundation for any country's human capital development and economic progress.

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What are ECD Resource and Training Organisations (RTO's)?

These are the organisations that support the training, programme development, resourcing and quality implementation for the early childhood development (ECD) sector – its preschools; playgroups; toy libraries and home visiting programmes and the thousands of ECD practitioners who work in these facilities to offer quality daily programmes and use curricula that supports early literacy and numeracy, amongst other things, for South Africa's most vulnerable children. The staff of these Non-for-Profit ECD resource and training organisations (RTOs) have the qualifications, skills, experience and contextual understanding to support ECD personnel in resource poor communities.

The ECD RTOs contribution to South African society

Over the last 40 years these RTOs have pioneered a rich variety of ECD programmes and resources and have been an essential provider for Government in training ECD practitioners around the country, as well as delivering direct ECD services to marginalised communities where Government has not been in a position to do so.

ECD RTOs are organised in a membership body called the National ECD Alliance (NECDA) which represents 103 RTOs across all nine provinces. Collectively they contribute roughly R375 million to the South African GDP and employ some 3 000 people. RTO's annually train and capacitate some 45 000 ECD practitioners and reach well over 2 million vulnerable young children. This is a considerable contribution towards the development of our nation. Within these ECD RTO's resides the intellectual capital, expertise, skill and experience so desperately needed to provide and scale up ECD programmes to ensure every South African child has the opportunity of reaching his or her potential.

The current crisis in the ECD RTO sector

ECD RTO's rely largely on funding from corporate companies, private philanthropy organisations and family foundations. They are now at risk because of the diversion of funds towards the COVID-19 relief efforts. A recent survey of NECDA members on the impact of lockdown and the closure of ECD sites revealed that 53% are only able to sustain their organisations for a period of 3 months and then will face closure, many organisations had already or were considering retrenchments, temporary layoffs, salary cuts, short time pay and unpaid leave and some staff are working remotely using their own resources. Many organisations are currently involved in delivering food parcels to their ECD services together with key COVID-19 messaging around safety and hygiene and distributing early learning activities for parents to do with children at home. Staff morale is low and there is great uncertainty over job security. Most critically a number of regular funding partners have indicated that future funding would be scarce in the coming months and limited government funding that is usually available for training of practitioners and programmes aimed at increasing access to early learning programmes has likely been redirected towards COVID-19 relief efforts.

What about young children?

The South African ECD Review of 2019 (<https://ilifalabantwana.co.za/sa-early-childhood-review-2019/>) estimates that there are 7 million children under the age of six in South Africa. 65% of these children live below the poverty line and only 12% of poor children under 6 have access to a partially subsidised early learning programme. 1.1 million 3 to 5 year olds still do not have access to any form of early learning and they are predominantly from low income families. Lack of access to quality ECD programmes contributes to the poor academic achievement of South Africa's learners in literacy and mathematics, as seen by the finding that 78% of Grade 4 children cannot read for meaning in any language compared to 4% internationally. Many of the ECD learning programmes are run by unqualified teachers, while research shows that it is only quality ECD programmes that achieve the required early learning outcomes. ECD RTO's address issues of access and quality of ECD programmes.

RTO's and young children

Universalising ECD services is a South African policy priority because it is a proven intervention for equalising and maximising the opportunities for vulnerable children to develop to their full potential. However only access to quality services will provide the needed improvements to child outcomes. The Departments of Education and Social Development have commissioned work on the development of a Human Resource Strategy for the training of the ECD workforce in order to scale up. NECDA's membership of RTO's work exclusively within the early childhood development sector to train and support ECD practitioners who work directly with children from these vulnerable and marginalised communities. Without the training and on-site support service ECD RTO's offer, ECD practitioners are unable to implement quality active early learning programmes.



Our appeal

In addition to the devastation facing ECD facilities for children and ECD practitioners, ECD RTO's equally face massive losses. If South Africa's ECD expertise is lost through the closure of RTO's, it will take years to rebuild and substantial investment into ECD from the donor community over the last 40 years will be lost. The RTO's have, over decades, developed tried and tested and modelled alternatives to traditional ECD programmes and are uniquely positioned to reach the children that are most vulnerable.

It is imperative that this unique sector is saved.

Cyril Ramaphosa, our President, announced an incredible financial rescue package to support businesses and individuals facing ruin from the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a possibility that the joint appeal from NECDA and our colleagues at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Ilifa Labantwana, Bridge, SmartStart and the South African Congress for ECD to support ECD programmes for children will be successful within the R500 billion package, together with continued support from the Department of Social Development for those facilities that are subsidised.

We understand that there is no similar mechanism for the not-for-profit sector, and specifically the ECD RTO's sector to appeal for relief.

We therefore appeal to Donors, Partners, Civil Society and Government to consider NECDA and it's 103 RTO members as worthy recipients of some form of financial relief at this time.

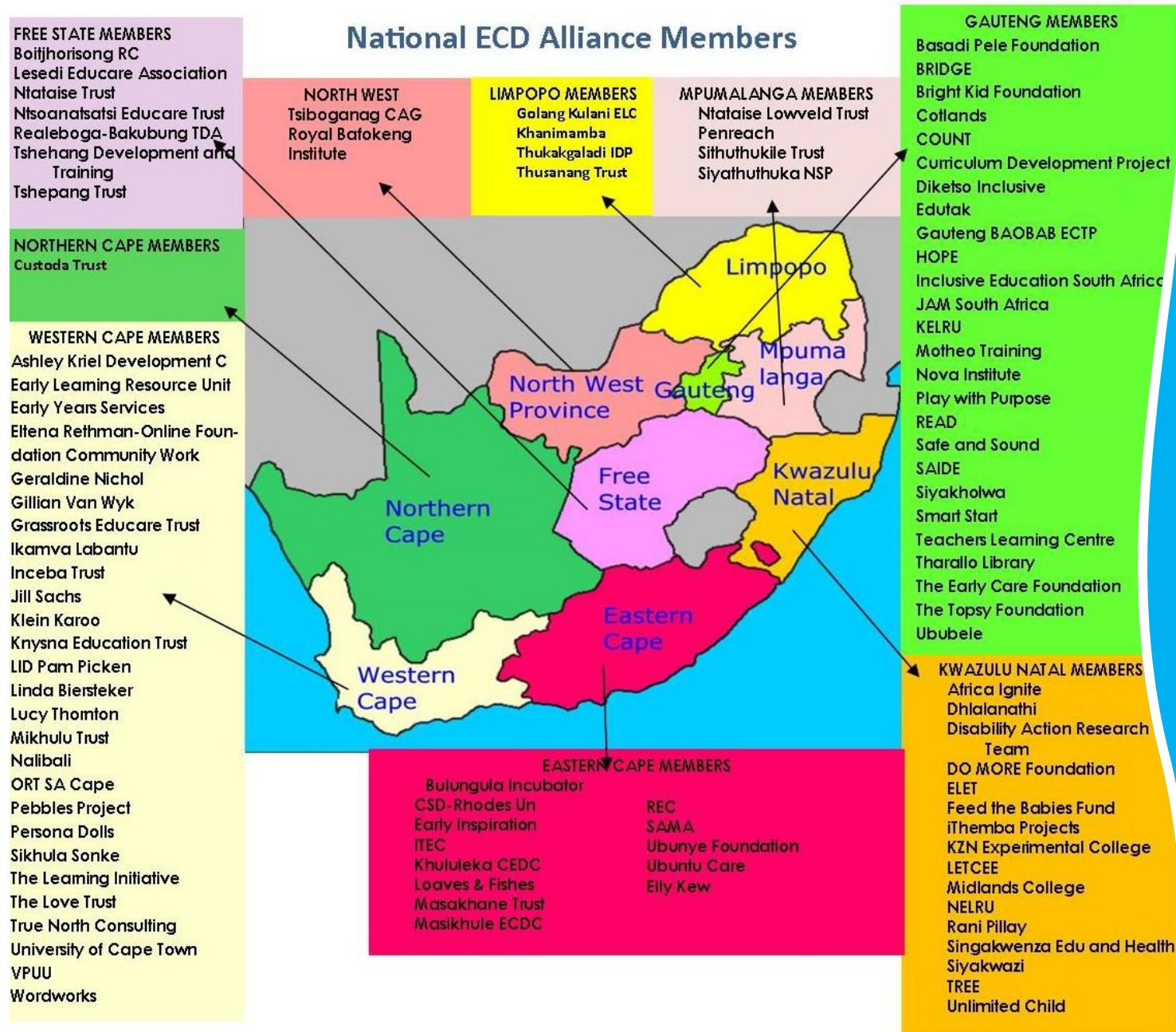
Your Sincerely



Rene King
NECDA Chairperson



NECDA currently serves 103 members across the nine provinces of South Africa. Its primary function is to strengthen the RTO's operating within the ECD sector and advocate for ECD. Its mission is 'to build a better future for our children, by strengthening member organisations capacity to serve and advocate for children and their families.



The following programmes and activities have been undertaken by NECDA over the past two years:

- Delivery of the DSD Parenting Support Programme where 17,000 parents were trained over an 18 month period
- Providing Assistance to Members in their application for Accreditation as Service Providers; by the QCTO
- Continuation and finalisation of the UNICEF/DSD contract for the production of Learner Support Materials for the National Curriculum Framework and the Realignment of the materials for the Level 4 ECD Qualifications Project
- Training of Trainers for the Realigned Level 4 ECD Qualification and the Fundamentals Literacy and Numeracy Short Courses
- Establishing a resource base for the administration, printing and distribution of learning programme materials for the Level 4 Programme
- Management and support for the DoMore Foundation's RePurpose 4 Purpose Project and the ECD WaziMaps Data Collection Initiative
- Active involvement and representation as a critical structure in the ECD space at Project Steering Committee Level for the DSD and DBE's Quality Assurance and Human Resource Strategy Development Projects and on all key strategic national platforms including the ECD Inter-sectoral Co-ordinating Committee, the DBE's Action Group for the ECD Function Shift; SA Congress, CECDN, UNICEF, DBE, DSDB, ETDP SETA and SACE
- Distribution of the NECDA Monthly Newsletter as well dissemination of critical information on issues such as funding opportunities, legislative requirements, new resources available etc. and the hosting of NECDA's AGM which includes the opportunity to showcase member's examples of good practice, innovative solutions and key speakers to inform and bring those in attendance up to date with new trends and developments in the sector.

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