

Tears of joy follow radical makeover at preschool

This Women's Month the Shoprite Group is celebrating ordinary women doing extraordinary things in their communities, like Buyi Mdinisi, whose partnership with the retailer saw the learners of her early childhood development (ECD) centre benefiting from a school feeding scheme for the very first time.

"Before our children had to bring all meals for the day from home," says Buyi, who five years ago founded Khulakahle Preschool in Groutville, an informal settlement in Kwadukuza, north of Durban.

"Shoprite installed a kitchen for us and is providing nutritious meals for our learners for a year through the Lunchbox Fund," she adds with tears of joy and gratitude streaming down her face.

Not so long ago she considered closing the school because running it without support had just become so difficult. Now Buyi is in the process of applying to the Department of Social Development for a state subsidy for each of the 21 children in her care.

Shoprite has and will continue to take hands with women, like her, who head up ECD centres. Its implementation partner in this multi-pronged initiative is the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CEDC), who initially alerted the retailer to Buyi's plight.

"The training offered to the carers and the school principal forms the heart of what we do at these schools," says Rukea Shaik, operations manager for CEDC. "The teacher's training is not only for Khulakahle facilitators - we also trained teachers from ten ECDs in the surrounding area."

The training offered to Buyi and her peers at neighbouring ECDs is crucial as governance structures, like a constitution, registration with SARS and a mission statement, are among the things that the Department of Social Development requires for the awarding of the subsidy.

"Besides the training and the establishment of a feeding scheme, Shoprite refurbished the school building and playground and provided educational equipment for the learners. The end result is that the learners now have access to a safe, stimulating learning environment in which they are able to thrive," explains Lunga Schoeman, Shoprite's CSI spokesperson.

Khulakahle is the latest ECD benefitting from this extensive initiative by Shoprite. To read about some of the other schools in South Africa where the retailer has also made a difference, click [here](#).

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The state of Early Childhood Development in South Africa

- Almost 4 million children in South Africa do not have access to any form of Early Childhood Development
- 70% of early childhood development (ECD) centres in South Africa are not suited to provide the necessary services to young children
- Close to 3 million of these children do not receive their daily nutritional requirements
- 51.7% of children aged 0-4 years have no access to any form of ECD
- 13% of 5 year olds have no access either
- The first 1 000 days of a child's life has a significant impact on their development, well-being and earning potential.

Source: Department of Social Development's Audit Report of ECD centre