NTATAISE

To lead a young child by the hand



ANNUAL REPORT

2024



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What We Do

Ntataise: 'To lead a young child by the hand.'

For more than four decades, Ntataise has been helping to build a stronger, more equitable foundation for South Africa's youngest children. Founded in 1980, the organisation was one of the first in the country to focus on early childhood development (ECD) as a pathway to breaking cycles of poverty and inequality.

Today, Ntataise continues this mission through a national Network of 21 independent ECD training and resource organisations that reach deep into communities across South Africa. Together, we partner with a range of players at national, provincial and local levels, to ensure that every child, no matter where they are born, has access to quality care and early learning opportunities that prepare them to thrive in school and in life.

Our approach combines training and capacity building, programme quality improvement, and strategic partnerships that align with government priorities. Through collaboration, shared learning, and practical experience, Ntataise is demonstrating what quality early childhood development looks like in practice and how it can be scaled sustainably to reach those most in need.

We build quality in ECD through four strategic areas

Collaboration & Coordination

Working with government and other stakeholders at all levels, sharing knowledge and partnering with others to improve quality and to scale ECD services.

Learning & Development

Leading learning across the Network to strengthen and grow the knowledge, skills, and confidence of those who care for and nurture young children every day.

Digital Integration

Using accessible technologies with partners, trainers, practitioners and parents to improve understanding of ECD and the importance of learning through play.

Research & Innovation

Learning from what works, staying relevant, and pioneering new approaches to better support young children and their communities.

The Ntataise Monitoring & Evaluation system gathers data across all areas and programmes to inform strategic planning

The Ntataise Network Reach

7 355
ECD practitioners/ managers/ owners/ supervisors reached

4 344
Community and home-based ECD facilities

300
Playgroups

194 806
Children aged birth to six years

54 702
Parents/ caregivers trained and supported

21
Network Partners

Our Trustees



Simon Mokalodise
Chairperson



Robyn Evans Cunningham
Treasurer



Jane Evans
Founder



Kalim Rajab



Johannes Machatola



Maggie Nkwe

Our Team



Sarah McGuigan
Executive Director



Puleng Motsoeneng
Programme Director



Kaley Le Mottee
MERL Director



Sophie Masilela
Quality Assurer and Project manager



Sibusisiwe Ndlovu
Quality Assurer and Project manager



Simone Rawling
Fundraising



Carla Prinsloo
Administrator



Pearl Ndovela
Administrator



Kiewit Motsoeneng
Data Capturer



Matshidiso Mabena
Data Capturer



Mantoa Mokhothu
Facilitator and Assessor



Moleboheng Leburu
Facilitator, Assessor and Moderator



Ntsoake Msimanga
HUB Facilitator and Mentor



Malebogang Moopeloa
HUB Facilitator and Mentor



Palesa Tsuela
Outreach Facilitator



Maria Selialia
Outreach Facilitator



Melita Kakudi
Outreach Facilitator



Tseleng Mkhwanazi
Outreach Facilitator



Mohanoe Tsie
Driver and caretaker



Margaret Sothoane
Housekeeping



Emma Guza
Housekeeping

Our Donors and Partners

Bokomoso Solar Energy (RF) (Pty) Ltd
Deutsche Bank South Africa Foundation
DG Murray Trust
ELMA Philanthropies
Federated Employers' Mutual Assurance Company (RF) (Pty) Ltd
HCI Foundation
Hope Worldwide SA
Jim Joel Fund
Marion Lahann Trust
New Settlers Foundation
Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation
The Davies Foundation Trust
The Grain Care Trust
The Haggie Charitable Trust
The Inglis Family Charitable Trust
The French Embassy in South Africa, Lesotho and Mauritius
The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust
The Sisi and Savita Charitable Trust
VVOB








Directors' Report

2024 was a defining year for Ntataise - a year of reflection, renewal, and realignment. As the organisation deepened its role as a strategic partner to South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE), we continued to strengthen the systems, partnerships, and evidence base needed to strengthen early childhood development across South Africa.

A central milestone for the year was a full strategic review, which shaped a new framework to guide Ntataise into the future. This process reaffirmed our purpose: to ensure that every young child has access to quality early learning. It also helped us refine how we work, strengthening our focus on evidence, collaboration and long-term sustainability.

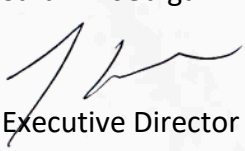
To support this new direction, we introduced a tripartite leadership model that brings together three directors, each responsible for a key area of the organisation. The addition of a Director for Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL), alongside the Executive Director and Programmes Director has enhanced coordination, accountability and shared leadership across Ntataise. This structure ensures that strategy, implementation and evidence are all closely aligned.

Throughout the year, our work remained guided by the DBE's 2030 Strategy, the national commitment to give every young child access to quality early learning by 2030. Ntataise's relationship with the DBE continued to grow through a new partnership with the French Embassy in South Africa supporting 100 ECD centres across the North West province. The project brings together national, provincial and local government to put a social compact into practice and strengthen quality early learning in communities. As part of this partnership, Ntataise was invited by the French government to participate in a study visit to Réunion Island, alongside representatives from the National DBE and the North West Department of Education. Puleng Motsoeneng's participation in this visit provided valuable exposure to international ECD systems and affirmed the strength and relevance of Ntataise's own models for improving quality at scale.

Within the Ntataise Network, the year saw renewed commitment to collaboration and accountability through a refreshed Network Compact. An independent evaluation confirmed that this approach is building organisational strength, improving quality and helping more children access meaningful early learning opportunities.

As we look ahead, Ntataise enters 2025 with strengthened leadership, clearer strategy, and a deepened sense of purpose. Our tripartite directorate provides the structure and focus needed to sustain excellence, while our evidence-driven practice ensures that every lesson learned contributes to better outcomes for children.

Sarah McGuigan



Executive Director

Puleng Motsoeneng



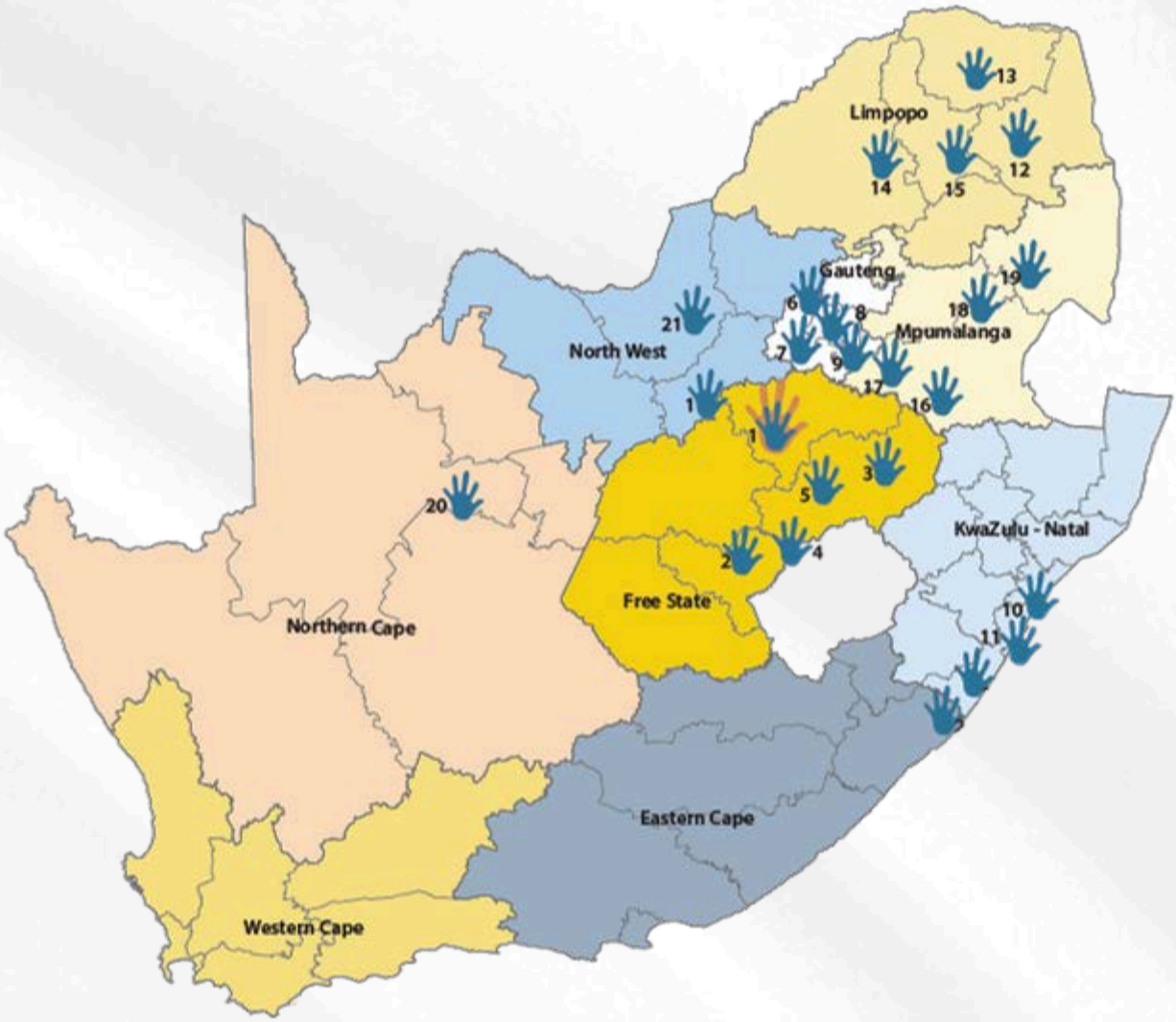
Director

Kaley Le Mottee



MERL Director

Ntataise Network



Free State

1. Ntataise
2. Lesedi Educare Association
3. Ntsoanatsatsi Educare Trust
4. Realeboga-Bakubung Training & Development Agency
5. Tshepang Educare Trust

Gauteng

6. Education Africa
7. Greater Soweto Association for Early Childhood Development
8. Katlehong Early Learning Resource Unit (KELRU)
9. Safe and Sound Learning Association

KwaZulu Natal

10. Natal Early Learning Resource Unit (NELRU)
11. New Beginnings Training and Development Organisation
12. Impande

Limpopo

13. Golang Kulani Early Learning Centre
14. Khanimamba Training & Resource Centre
15. Thukakgaladi
16. Thušanang Trust

Mpumalanga

17. Masakane Trust
18. Siyathuthuka Nursery School Project
19. Ntataise Lowveld

Northern Cape

20. Custoda Trust

North West

21. Royal Bafokeng Institute

Ntataise Programmes

Network Support Programme

The Ntataise Network Support Programme lies at the heart of our approach to collective impact. In 2024, we focused on reinforcing the Network's shared quality standards, data systems, and capacity for evidence-based decision-making. Two Directors' Forums and the Ntataise Network Annual Conference served as key platforms for reflection and collaboration, bringing together leaders from across provinces to co-design a draft Ntataise Network Quality Manifesto and shared measurement tools aligned with DBE priorities.



A major highlight was the successful piloting of a Quality Assurance and Support System (QASS) tool, which saw 194 quality assessments and 366 ECD programme profiles completed across eight Network organisations. This process not only strengthened data literacy and monitoring skills but also provided valuable insights into the quality landscape of early learning settings across diverse contexts. Complementary initiatives, including the Ntataise Network Learning Lessons series and an interactive MERL Amazing Race at the Ntataise Network Annual Conference, further deepened peer learning and practical understanding of monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) concepts.



The year also marked significant progress in workforce development, as Ntataise in consultation with the Network, completed the review and updating of training materials to ensure alignment with national occupational pathways and support for improved teaching practice. These efforts, underpinned by our long-standing experience in practitioner development, ensure that our training remains relevant, rigorous, and responsive to context, sectoral and practitioner needs.



The Network's capacity to work collaboratively was demonstrated through the formation of a multi-provincial consortium led by Ntataise for submission to the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF). The Ntataise Network consortium being one of ten selected nationally to proceed to full proposal stage. This milestone underscores the power of collective action and the credibility of the Ntataise Network as a platform for scale and innovation.



Ntataise Accredited Training Programme

Ntataise's Accredited Training Programme continued to build the skills and confidence of South Africa's early childhood workforce. In 2024, 790 new ECD practitioners enrolled in the Ntataise Further Education and Training Certificate: ECD Level 4 qualification through twelve Ntataise Network member organisations, with 135 practitioners trained directly by Ntataise in the Free State and North West. Together, these practitioners are responsible for nearly 3,000 young children, bringing quality learning to the communities that need it most.



790 new practitioners enrolled



135 practitioners trained directly by Ntataise in the Free State and North West



practitioners are responsible for nearly 3,000 young children

Practitioners demonstrated excellent progress, showing greater reflective practice, confidence, and playroom application. Over the year, Ntataise continued to review, refine, and align training materials with national qualifications, occupational pathways, and SAQA frameworks, ensuring that the qualification programmes remains relevant, rigorous, and responsive to the evolving ECD landscape. At the same time, the focus has remained firmly on strengthening teaching practice, helping practitioners translate their learning into nurturing, play-based environments where young children can thrive.

With refreshed, future-fit materials and a blended digital approach integrating the Ntataise App, the programme is equipping a new generation of ECD practitioners to deliver quality early learning in a changing educational landscape.







Ntataise ECD Centres of Excellence Programme

The Ntataise ECD Centres of Excellence Programme continued to serve as Ntataise's flagship model for strengthening the quality and sustainability of ECD centres in under-resourced communities. Over the year, the programme supported 203 ECD Centres across the Free State and North West provinces, reaching 5,221 young children, 244 ECD practitioners, 52 government officials, and 3,387 parents and caregivers through direct capacity-building and learning-through-play initiatives.

Grounded in Ntataise's whole-centre support model, the programme builds excellence across four core pillars:



Building sustainable and compliant ECD programmes through registration and capacity-building support



Improving playroom quality through practitioner training, mentoring, and on-site coaching



Engaging parents and caregivers to promote play-based learning and nurturing care at home



Strengthening systems and governance through multi-level collaboration and advocacy

A defining milestone in 2024 was the deepened partnership with the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the French Embassy in South Africa, which enabled the expansion of the programme to 100 ECD Centres in the North West province. This collaboration, involving Ntataise, national, provincial, and district DBE structures, and local community stakeholders, brings South Africa's national social compact to life. It demonstrates how coordinated partnerships across all levels of government and civil society can drive real, systemic change for young children.

Baseline assStrengthening systems and governance through multi-level collaboration and advocacyessments using the DBE's QASS tool identified quality gaps across several domains, allowing Ntataise to design targeted support interventions for practitioners and centre managers. At the same time, the introduction of the ECD Connect App marked an important innovation, piloting real-time digital tracking of child attendance and developmental progress in both provinces, laying the foundation for data-driven improvement in ECD settings.

Through monthly capacity-building workshops, ECD practitioners strengthened their digital literacy, deepened their understanding of play-based learning, and refined their implementation of theme-based classroom activities aligned with the National Curriculum Framework.

By integrating training, mentoring, parental engagement, health and nutrition support, and governance strengthening, the ECD Centres of Excellence Programme continues to transform ECD centres into vibrant community hubs of quality learning and care. Places where children, practitioners, and families can thrive.

Ntataise Community Outreach Programme

Ntataise's Community Outreach Programme continues to reach young children who are not enrolled in formal ECD centres or home-based programmes by offering accessible, play-based learning opportunities within their communities. Through a combination of mobile playgroup units, toy library resources, and community-based events and activities, the programme helps ensure that vulnerable children are not left behind in the critical early years. In 2024, the programme supported 304 young children across 10 playgroups in Rammulotsi, Viljoenskroon. These children attend regular, structured sessions where they engaged in early learning through play and receive a nutritious daily meal, made possible through continued support from the Lunchbox Fund. The growing consistency and reach of the programme reflect Ntataise's ongoing commitment to expanding access to quality early learning in our home base of Rammulotsi.





Youth Power

The Ntataise Youth Power: Cultivating a New Generation of Changemakers in ECD

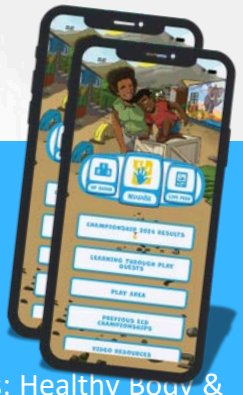
South Africa faces a double crisis - soaring youth unemployment and a major early childhood development (ECD) workforce gap. Yet within this challenge lies opportunity: purpose-driven youth careers in early learning, if nurtured with connection and care. The Ntataise Youth Power (NYP) Activation was created in response to this reality. Rather than treating ECD as a one-size-fits-all vocational path, NYP invites young people to reimagine it as a journey of leadership and enterprise.

As Christina Williams of the Generation Unlimited Global Leadership Council notes, "Young people do not just want jobs. They want sustainable careers – the kind that foster independence, purpose, pride, and dignity, and take them and their families out of poverty.."

At the heart of NYP lies a nature-based growth arc – **"I Am Valuable → I Learn → I Connect → I Sustain Myself → I Contribute"** – supported by in-person workshops, low-data digital tools, and the Ntataise Learning Experience App. This is not about passing tests; it's about growing roots.

Launched in 2024, NYP positions young people as rooted leaders of transformation. One participant shared, "I have learned to trust myself enough with the decisions that I make… to not be scared to make my own mistakes. Because even after falling, toddlers stand up and take the next step."

The impact extends beyond employment. Youth describe the journey as one of confidence, connection, and community impact: “We become inspired by different insights.” “My network provides nourishment for my mind, heart, and soul.” “Last year I was a seed now I’m a strong tree that gets more water to grow well.”
Through Ntataise Youth Power, young people are not just entering the workforce, they are shaping the future of ECD and their communities.



2024 Ntataise Championship

Theme: “The Olympics – Healthy Body & Mind”

In 2024, Ntataise hosted its annual ECD Championship under the inspiring theme “The Olympics: Healthy Body & Mind.” The initiative invited early learning centres across South Africa to celebrate holistic child development by combining physical play with emotional well-being activities in fun and accessible ways.

Centres organised “mini-Olympics” events that promoted movement, teamwork and joyful learning. Children developed balance, coordination, and strength through obstacle courses, relay races, and creative movement games, while also learning to pause, breathe, and express their emotions through story-based mindfulness and reflection activities.

Practitioners reported high levels of participation and excitement among children, with visible improvements in focus, cooperation and the ability to transition smoothly between active and quiet play. Notably, many centres observed increased confidence among children who are usually hesitant to join group physical activities, reinforcing the Championship’s inclusivity and reach.

The Championship reflects Ntataise’s ongoing commitment to quality, holistic early childhood development — nurturing both the body and mind to build strong foundations for lifelong learning. It also supports national ECD priorities by promoting physical literacy, emotional resilience and school readiness.







Special Projects

Caregiver Learning Through Play Project – CLTP



Ntataise was one of four members of the CLTP consortium, led by HOPE Worldwide South Africa in partnership with Save the Children South Africa and ELRU. Funded by The LEGO Foundation, the consortium set out to train and support 450,000 caregivers and ECD practitioners over a four-yearperiod.

2024 marked the final year of implementation for the LEGO-funded CLTP programme. The project has significantly strengthened awareness around early learning and deepened connections between Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) and parents and caregivers. It has also enhanced the organisational capacity and systems of Ntataise and its Network partners.



In partnership with 15 Network member organisations, Ntataise directly reached 99,150 caregivers of young children across six provinces and trained 2,913 ECD practitioners to facilitate parent meetings.

This cascading model further extended the project's reach, engaging an additional 59,135 caregivers through ECD Centre-based sessions and messaging that emphasised the importance of play and early stimulation in a child's development. The success of the programme demonstrates the strength of the Ntataise Network in achieving scale and impact through shared systems, local expertise, and collaborative delivery. By building on its networked approach, Ntataise achieved broad geographic coverage, while also strengthening the long-term capacity of Network members to support Early Learning Programmes in engaging families meaningfully beyond the project's lifespan.

Funda Udlale Nathi (F.U.N.) Project

Ntataise is a key partner in Funda Udlale Nathi (F.U.N.), a 4-year and 5-month project also funded by The LEGO Foundation. The project is implemented in partnership with VVOB and Neil Butcher & Associates (NBA), and aims to strengthen the use of Learning through Play (LtP) pedagogy among ECD practitioners in community and home-based ECD centres and Grade R teachers in primary schools.

At the national level, the project works in partnership with the National Department of Basic Education, UNICEF, and SACE (the South African Council of Educators). At the provincial level in KwaZulu-Natal, it engages with the KZN Department of Education (KZNDoE), Midlands Community College, and Ntataise Network members including NELRU, New Beginnings, Masakane, and Impande.

In 2024, the project piloted two modalities for delivering an online short course with 1,000 ECD practitioners and Grade R teachers across six districts in KwaZulu-Natal. As a key implementing partner, Ntataise and Network members are gaining valuable insights into provincial dynamics and helping to shape innovative approaches to teacher professional development.

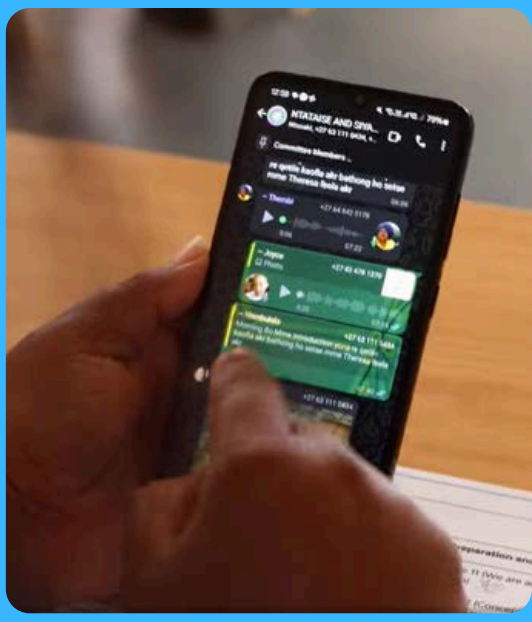
The 2024 pilot exceeded its target reach, successfully engaging 1,254 participants, including 670 ECD practitioners from community-based ECD centres and 584 Grade R teachers from primary schools. The pilot phase was instrumental in testing and refining a delivery modality for the F.U.N. short course. Building on the success of the pilot, the project is set to scale up in 2025, with a target of reaching 1,400 ECD practitioners through expanded implementation in the six districts of KZN.



Siyalingana



A new Special Project launched in 2025, this Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) professional development initiative forms part of the Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa (RTIA). Under this initiative, VVOB - Education for Development, in partnership with National DBE and the South African Council for Educators (SACE), supports the continuing professional development of ECD practitioners in gender-responsive teaching approaches.



As part of this project, VVOB contracted Ntataise to implement training for 180 ECD practitioners, with the goal of strengthening their knowledge, attitudes, and practices to promote gender equality in play-based learning environments. The project is being implemented in the Free State province, specifically across the Motheo, Fezile Dabi, and Thabo Mofutsanyana districts.

Ntataise is delivering the programme in collaboration with all five Free State-based Ntataise Network members, each supporting a cohort of 40 ECD practitioners. The participating organisations include: Ntataise, Lesedi, Ntsoanatsatsi, Realeboga Bakubung, and Tshepang.

NTATAISE

To lead a young child by the hand

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