



Informal Settlement Eikenhof

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Dear friends,

More than 20 years ago, in 1999, a group of mothers asked the Salesian Sister Mary Hughes to help them look after their small children. She didn't hesitate and started a small development project for women and a creche for a handful of children. The seed for a project of love to help children thrive in a world of hunger, social tension, and hopelessness.



Sister Mary charmed many people into supporting Lerato, and we registered Lerato formally in 2004. In all these years, we were lucky to be supported by many donors who enabled us to improve our services for the community of the informal settlement Eikenhof (also called Jacksonsdrift).

We are recognised by government but can't be registered because of our 'illegal' status. As a result, we are excluded from government subsidies, and we rely on private and corporate donation to continue with our project

We would love to see you come on board and help us to make many more children happy. You can support us financially, with food, clothing, shoes, or blankets. Ask your company to help - we are entitled to issue Section 18A certificates for tax purposes, and all our books are audited.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused hardship in the Eikenhof community, and donations to Lerato have decreased by more than 50%. We can only continue our project if we get more support.

The biggest reward for us is the children's happiness – reflected in their smiles. Come for a visit and experience what love can do for a child! It's safe to come. You won't regret the experience!

We strongly believe that every child, regardless of their socio-economic status or educational background of their parents, must have access to quality education, healthy nutrition, and support to grow, develop and thrive into responsible and successful adults.

We provide quality education, life skills training, and balanced meals to 500 children aged 03 – 10 years in our care. We offer supporting projects like afterschool learning support for high-school learners, library, toy library, computer literacy, learnership programs, sports (netball, soccer) and cultural activities.



We fight for women and children's rights in the local community, including preventing and dealing with violence against children and women. We have a sound child protection policy, ethics charter, and anti-corruption policy.

Where do we work?

Lerato Educational Centre is located in Eikenhof Informal Settlement in the south of Johannesburg. Eikenhof and surrounding communities are classified as predominantly rural areas with high levels of poverty and poor infrastructure. Most community members are unemployed men and women who have migrated in search of work from manufacturing companies. They live in shacks, and many families go hungry regularly.



The community is characterised by low literacy levels and lack of marketable skills resulting in social and health disparities. According to our records, about 70% of children enrolled in our project are from foreign countries with no access to social grants or educational institutions.



Risky sexual behaviour is one of the key drivers to high HIV incidences. Many young people who would have otherwise been productive members of the community are engaged in alcohol and drug abuse and violence in the community resulting in a complicated multi-faceted problem.

Our Mission

Lerato is a learning centre for 500 children ranging from age 3 to 10 years up to grade 3. The kids play, learn and get three meals a day. In total, we employ 28 people and run 18 classes. We have electricity and borehole water. Our teachers follow the national curriculum, and so far, we had excellent feedback from authorities



Our staff consists mostly of women who live locally in Jacksonsdrift and have been trained by us or are in training to become teachers. One experienced fully qualified teacher and one auxiliary teacher who attends a part-time teaching course teach a group of 25 - 30 children.



In addition to our school and pre-school education, we offer an active after school program.

- *At a newly developed playground, the children can use the equipment, play soccer and netball.*
- *Art and cultural programs include drama, music and dance and depend on volunteers offering their skills.*
- *We offer computer literacy and reading support and have a well-equipped library. The computer program had to be suspended due to Covid-19 but will commence soon in a brand new computer centre.*
- *A small but successful bursary scheme for young adults is in place that helps them to obtain tertiary education. If you want to sponsor a student: don't hesitate to give a child a better future.*
- *Two of our teachers run a successful support program for high school learners, where 60 children can study together and improve their school marks. This group needs stationery, school books and other learning materials.*
- *Three community members run a soccer and netball team for nearly 80 children. These kids practice almost every day and stay off the street. We are looking for funds to support these kids financially. It would be great if we could train some coaches, referees and maybe one day we could even train and employ a sports teacher. For now, they need equipment and soccer gear and transport money so that they can play at tournaments.*



We offer family support in form of financial contributions, clothing, shoes, blankets and other material that is donated to us through various parishes. We help with applications for grants, hospital visits and offer HIV/AIDS counselling through one of our community developing worker.

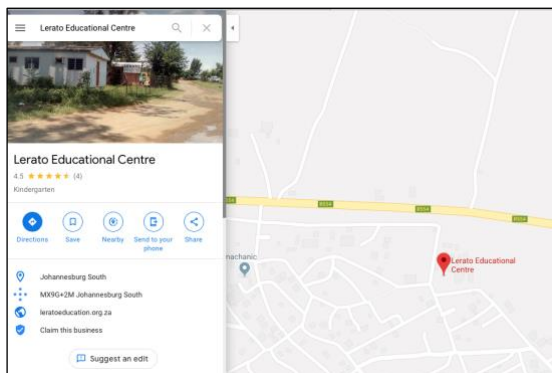
Over the past 20 years, we served as many as 6000 children, raised funds to the equivalent of 4,5 Million Rand, trained more than 50 teachers and ran more than 30 computer classes. Our social worker has supported numerous families in the application for grants and documents. We have a vibrant support system for families in need where we distribute clothing, shoes, blankets and meals to the community. We distribute about 30000 meals per month.

Sister Mary has retired, but with years of experience, she still gives valuable advice and is an essential member of the board. Sister Helen has taken over the leadership of the project and is doing an equally good job. Netsai Maposa is our principal leading a great team of dedicated teachers and staff.

We would like to thank all those who made Lerato possible. We could not have done it without you.



Dr Bruno Pauly, Chairperson



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