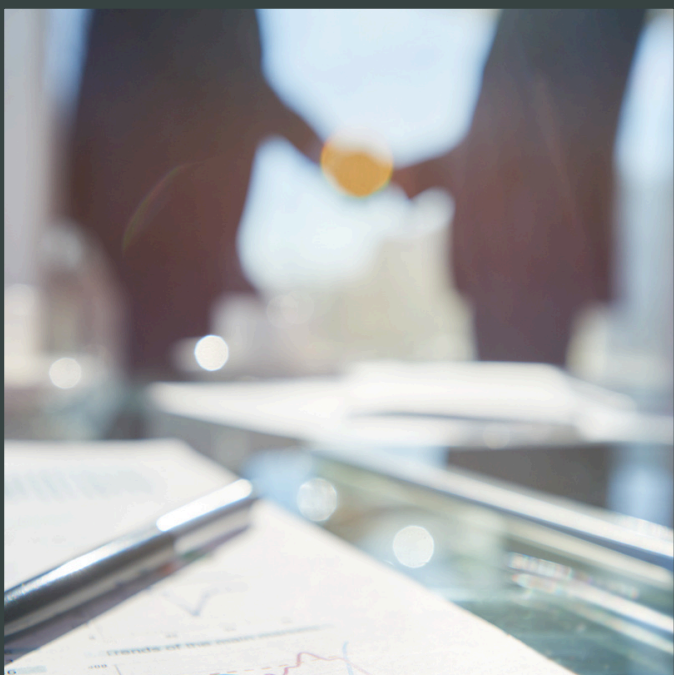




**Vulindlela Educational Trust**

Educate a child and provide lifetime empowerment



# 2025 Annual Report



[www.vulindlelaeducationaltrust.co.za](http://www.vulindlelaeducationaltrust.co.za)

# Table of Contents



Foreword	01
Message from the Chairperson	02
Our Response: A Holistic Approach to Change	04
Key Highlights of 2024/25	05
Program Focus Areas	06
Community Partnerships and Collaboration	09
Strategic Shift and Financial Model	11
Donors, Partners & Stakeholders	13

# Foreword



In Tsojana, the story of possibility is often interrupted, by weathered roads, by silence in households, by the long distances between dreams and the means to reach them.

For too long, rural communities like ours have carried more than their share of difficulty, unseen, under-resourced, and underserved. But even in the absence of infrastructure, hope survives.

At Vulindlela Educational Trust, our work begins where others might say it's too hard. We believe education is not simply about classrooms, it is about conditions, at home and at school and an enabling environment. For learning to thrive, there must be care, safety, access, and belief.

This past financial year, ending February 2025, marked a transformative chapter in the lives of the community we serve. The opening of the Tsojana Resource Centre by Vulindlela Educational Trust was more than a ribbon-cutting event. It was a declaration: that the Tsojana community deserve access to basic services they have been denied for so long and opportunities no less than anyone else. The Tsojana resource Centre has become a place where learning and healing coexist; where young people can access technology, educators can find support, and elders can gather with dignity.

Beyond bricks and programs, what drives us is this belief: that when a community becomes the architect of its own future, real change takes root. Whether through Saturday STEM classes, career mapping sessions, GBV prevention workshops, or mobile clinics, we are building not just services, but self-determination.

Our work as Vulindlela Trust has only just begun. There are still too many learners facing too many barriers to quality education.

To our donors, partners, teachers, caregivers, and learners, thank you for believing with us. May this report remind you that change is already underway, and that it began with choosing to show up, again and again, in the places most people overlooked.

# Message from the Chairperson



Sango Ntsaluba



As Chairperson of Vulindlela Educational Trust, it is my honour to reflect on a year marked by both progress and partnership. The 2024/25 reporting period was defined not only by what we achieved, but by how we achieved it, through collaboration, shared intent, and a deepening relationship with the communities we serve.

The launch of the Tsojana Resource Centre in April 2024 stands as a powerful milestone achievement this year. What was once a vision becoming a functioning, community-rooted hub for education, healthcare access, and public services. This moment was made possible through the combined leadership of our board of trustees, the support of Traditional Leader, Chief Zulu and his people, and the presence of families, youth, and elders who welcomed the centre with enthusiasm and vowed to protect and preserve it., The Tsojana resource centre brings basic services including being a place for students to do their homework, a dignified and secure place to receive the mobile clinic, are the result of layered partnerships with the Department of Education, Department of Health, and Department of Home Affairs, among others.

In early childhood development, we advanced our impact through partnership with The Unlimited Child, whose training of 41 ECD practitioners laid the groundwork for stronger learning environments. That effort was further complemented by our joint caregiver workshop with Bulungula Incubator, which brought the criticality of early learning directly into the home, especially the role of grandmothers and extended family members who carry the everyday work of care.

The Trust's commitment to learner safety and wellbeing was reinforced through our work in gender-based violence prevention. Here, too, partnerships were central: with the Department of Social Development, South African Police Service, and community leaders who stood with us during our campaigns, the 16 Days of Activism and beyond. We understand that education cannot thrive where fear and silence persist.

We also extended our Career Awareness Campaign in collaboration with the Department of Education in Tsomo, connecting learners to institutions like the University of Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu University, King Hintsa TVET College, and Sol Plaatje University. This was more than an event, it was a step toward equalising access to information and raising the aspirations of young people across five high schools.

Our alignment with the Eastern Cape Department of Education's policy priorities has ensured that our work complements, not duplicates, government efforts.

To all who have supported this work, our donors, including SN Leisure Investments, Aurelian Capital, and the Ntsaluba Family; our public partners across departments; our community champions and friends of the Trust, I extend my heartfelt thanks. Your trust is what allows us to keep building, keep adapting, and keep delivering. To my fellow trustees, thank you for your steadfast guidance; to our management and staff, thank you for your unwavering commitment; and to our communities, thank you for walking with us. Together, we have made the possible visible.

# Our Response: A Holistic Approach to Change

At Vulindlela Educational Trust, we believe that education is not just about what happens in a classroom, it's about what surrounds it.

When a child walks to school hungry, learning is delayed. When a teacher is unsupported, teaching loses its power. When a young girl is afraid, her voice becomes small. In rural communities like Tsojana, these are not occasional hurdles, they are everyday realities. That's why our response is not fragmented. It is ecosystemic.

Our vision is to ensure that through education, every learner in the community of Tsojana and surrounding areas develops knowledge, skills, talents, and a sense of their own uniqueness for success in their chosen careers.

To fulfil this vision, our mission is clear: to facilitate the breaking of barriers to quality education. We understand that these barriers are not only academic, they are emotional, structural, economic, and social. That's why our work meets learners not just in the classroom, but in the community, the home, and we reach out to their hearts.

Everything we do is guided by our belief that education is a foundation of empowerment, not just for the individual and their families, but for the whole community and the nation at large. This belief is made real through the values we live by: Integrity in our actions, Compassion in our service, Excellence in our standards, Sustainability in our decisions, and Commitment to those who are most often overlooked.

Our programs are not parallel streams; they are interconnected roots nourishing a shared purpose: to make thriving sustainable. Whether it is the parent learning how to support a child's early development, the high school learner discovering a career pathway, the elderly caregiver receiving health guidance, or a survivor of violence finding safety, we believe each one deserves to be supported by a community that is equipped, connected, and hopeful.

Our model is shaped by place and partnership. We don't impose solutions; we listen, adapt, and co-create with those who know their needs best, community members, educators, caregivers, and young people. Our flagship project of this year, Tsojana Resource Centre stands as a living symbol of this commitment: a place where learning, healing, and connection converge under one roof.



*“ Our vision is to ensure that through education, every learner in the community of Tsojana and surrounding areas develops knowledge, skills, talents, and a sense of their own uniqueness for success in their chosen careers.”*

# Key Highlights of 2024/25

The 2024/25 reporting period represented a step change for Vulindlela Educational Trust, from laying foundational infrastructure to activating full-scale programmes across education, health, and community support. With the Tsojana Resource Centre fully operational, the Trust moved into a new phase of delivery, anchored in partnerships, shaped by local needs, and aligned with provincial strategy.

The most defining moment of the year was the successful launch of the Tsojana Resource Centre in April 2024. The facility opened as a fully functioning community hub, offering structured academic support, access to mobile health services, and a dignified space for public engagement. The launch event itself reflected strong intergenerational and institutional support, signalling that the centre had been embraced not just by stakeholders, but by the community it was established to serve.

Early childhood development also took a significant step forward. In partnership with The Unlimited Child, forty-one (41) ECD practitioners and supervisors received training aligned with the National Curriculum Framework. These sessions, held at the Resource Centre, were followed by a home-based caregiver workshop co-hosted with Bulungula Incubator. These interventions reinforced the role of extended families, particularly grandmothers, in child development, and laid the groundwork for stronger ECD services in remote communities.



The Trust's commitment to learner wellbeing was evident in its approach to gender-based violence prevention. Informed by local research and grounded in multi-agency collaboration, VET organised at least 7 gender-based violence (GBV) awareness campaigns in different villages/schools and worked with social workers to provide trauma care and early intervention. These efforts recognised GBV not only as a social ill, but as a direct barrier to educational participation, particularly for girls.

In June 2024, the Career Awareness Campaign reached five high schools in Tsomo in partnership with the Department of Education. Through structured sessions with university and TVET representatives, learners were exposed to post-school opportunities, financial aid information, and alternative education pathways. For many, this was the first direct engagement with institutions beyond their immediate community. Behind these programme outcomes was a notable shift in resource allocation. As infrastructure demands decreased, organisational spending was redirected towards personnel and programme support.

Above all, the year was marked by strong collaboration. The Trust worked closely with the Departments of Education, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, Home Affairs department, and the South African Police Service. It also continued to build trust with traditional leadership, educators, and community-based players, ensuring that each intervention was context-appropriate and sustainable.

These highlights reflect not only what was achieved, but how it was achieved: through shared effort, transparent practice, and a commitment to making access to basic services real in rural communities.





# Program Focus Areas

## Gender-Based Violence and Educational Access

In South Africa, gender-based violence (GBV) has become what many now call a “second pandemic.” In Chris Hani District alone, in the Eastern Cape, there were 1,577 reported cases of sexual offences and over 3,300 incidents of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm during 2023 — placing the district among the worst-affected in the Eastern Cape (Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2024, p. 54). Behind those brutal statistics lies a quieter tragedy: the trauma GBV leaves in its wake, particularly for children in rural communities. These wounds are not just physical. Survivors often live with depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress that make learning impossible.

At Vulindlela Educational Trust, we do not treat this as a policing issue. We treat it as what it is: an educational emergency. Since 2022, we have responded with a community-first model of prevention and support. Across our partner villages, we host at least 7 awareness campaigns per year in collaboration with the South African Police Service and the Department of Social Development. These events create safe spaces for honest conversations, link families to trauma-informed counselling referrals, and offer clear pathways for reporting abuse. In schools, our GBV prevention campaigns are rooted in visibility and voice, especially during the annual 16 Days of Activism. In 2023, learners, educators, and the youth gathered at Tsomo Town Hall for campaign launch and to declare that violence has no place in education and the community at large.

Informal monitoring already shows signs of change: a drop in GBV-related absenteeism during exam periods, and a rise in early reporting. These small but significant shifts affirm what global research consistently shows, when communities own the conversation around GBV, transformation becomes possible.

Still, this work is not linear. It is emotional, cultural, and intergenerational. But we remain steadfast. Because until girls are safe, on the road, at home, and in the classroom, they cannot learn, lead, or live freely.

VET’s commitment is simple but non-negotiable: every child deserves to learn free from fear. Through a careful blend of advocacy, healing, and accompaniment, we are working toward a future where classrooms are not places of quiet suffering, but spaces of restoration, confidence, and hope.

## Early Childhood Development in Rural Contexts

At Vulindlela Educational Trust, we believe that the caregivers, often working with little more than love and instinct, deserve professional support, practical resources, and the affirmation that they are indeed educators. In 2024, we took a significant step toward this vision through a partnership with The Unlimited Child. What began with a community-wide orientation at the Tsojana Resource Centre soon evolved into a deeply immersive learning experience. Over four days in July, 41 practitioners and supervisors gathered to explore pedagogy, lesson planning, and play-based learning techniques, grounded in the National Curriculum Framework, but made relevant through shared language and lived examples.

These efforts respond directly to one of the province’s most persistent challenges. According to the 2024 Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Review and Outlook, foundational literacy and numeracy remain weakest in quintile 1–3 schools, and the province has called for improved support to informal ECD practitioners in rural areas, particularly in districts like Chris Hani (Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2024, p. 61).

This was not training for its own sake. Each practitioner returned to their centre with curated resource kits, training manuals, and a formalised service agreement that made their role visible, and accountable, in the wider ECD ecosystem. What emerged was not only more structured programming, but a renewed sense of confidence and legitimacy among caregivers who had long worked in the margins.



At the same time, we recognised that early development does not begin in a crèche alone. That is why, in partnership with Bulungula Incubator, we hosted a second workshop, this time focused on supporting caregivers at home. Held at the Resource Centre and attended by women, youth, and elders, the session explored the importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, the learning role of grandmothers and extended families, and the value of structured play using everyday objects. The workshop was not just informative, it was transformative. With the official presence of Traditional Leader Nkosazana Zulu and her delegation, the session affirmed what caregivers have always known but seldom heard aloud: that learning begins in the lap, not the lecture.

The response was overwhelming. Participants shared how the training gave language to what they were already doing intuitively. Some described the feeling as being “seen” for the first time. Others left with simple tools to help children count, explore colour, or sing with purpose.

Through these efforts, we are not just strengthening early learning, we are restoring dignity to those who make it possible. We are shifting perceptions: from “babysitting” to foundational teaching. From improvised routines to intentional learning. From invisible care to professional practice.

And as these caregivers grow in confidence and capacity, so do the children in their care. In Tsojana, the foundation is forming, quietly, gently, and with deep local roots.

## Career Awareness and Post-School Pathways

As children grow, so do their questions. What comes after school? Who will I become? Where will I go? In Tsojana and the surrounding villages, these questions often arise in a context where opportunity feels distant and undefined. Geography, poverty, and the absence of visible role models make it difficult for many learners to imagine futures beyond their immediate environments. Career counselling is limited, and many schools lack the capacity to offer structured guidance on life after matric.

At Vulindlela Educational Trust, we believe that every learner deserves not only education, but orientation. Young people have the right to be shown the map, to understand the options before them, and to meet those who have walked those paths before them.

This work is especially urgent in the Chris Hani District, where youth unemployment remains critically high. According to Statistics South Africa, over 62% of individuals aged 15–24 are not in employment—a figure that includes many who are also not enrolled in education or training (Statistics South Africa, 2024, p. 8). While 15-year-olds are typically still in school, this statistic reflects a broader trend of disengagement among young people, particularly those who leave school early or complete secondary education without clear pathways forward.





Compounding the issue, only 7.2% of unemployed individuals in the Eastern Cape hold any form of tertiary qualification (Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2024, p. 32). Without structured, early career guidance and exposure to opportunities, many young people exit the education system disconnected from further study, employment, or skills training—trapped in a cycle of limited prospects.

On 14 June 2024, this belief, that no young person should be denied access to opportunities due to preventable systemic barriers, was put into action through a large-scale Career Awareness Campaign coordinated in collaboration with the Department of Education in Tsomo. Hosted at Gobinamba and Tsomo Senior Secondary Schools, during a winter school camp, the campaign brought together learners from five high schools, Gobinamba, Langaletu, Ndyebo, Tsomo, and Mangelengele, for a full day of exposure to post-school opportunities.

Tertiary institutions were well represented, with participation from Sol Plaatje University, King Hintsa TVET College, the University of Fort Hare, and Walter Sisulu University. Their representatives engaged directly with students, offering critical information on access requirements, study options, and institutional support systems. The campaign also included targeted sessions on NSFAS application processes, digital literacy, and the value of alternative education pathways for those not pursuing traditional university routes.

For many learners, the experience offered something rare: direct access to people, processes, and possibilities that had previously seemed abstract or out of reach. The inclusion of branded materials, motivational sessions, and structured post-event follow-ups gave the event not just visibility, but continuity.

Building on the success of this initiative, VET is preparing to host new career awareness campaigns in June 2025. These events will deepen the model of early exposure, collaborative delivery, and learner engagement that proved effective in 2024. They are part of a long-term commitment to ensure that learners do not reach their final year of school only to discover they are unprepared to move forward.

Our approach to career development is grounded in proximity and practicality. When rural learners can speak directly to institutions, receive guidance in familiar environments, and see the road ahead with greater clarity, their relationship to education shifts. They are no longer just finishing school; they are beginning to shape a future.



# Community Partnerships and Collaboration

In April 2024, Vulindlela Educational Trust officially launched the Tsojana Resource Centre, a multipurpose facility designed to support education, health access, and information-sharing within the community. The launch, held at the newly completed centre, was led by Trustee Sango Ntsaluba with the support of Traditional Leader Chief Sizwe Zulu. The event featured a keynote address by Dr. Maphelo Malgas, who underscored the significance of local infrastructure in advancing rural development through education. Coordinated and curated by the Programme Director Busiwe Maqungo, the launch drew wide participation from learners, educators, traditional leaders, various government officials and families from across the area and of course the community was in huge numbers.

The process leading up to the launch was supported by Trustee Nomfesane Dinga, whose steady role in community mobilisation helped ensure that the centre would be welcomed and utilised by those it was established to serve. Through early engagement with residents and consistent coordination with local structures, she contributed meaningfully to the centre's integration into the life of the community.

Since its opening, the Tsojana Resource Centre has begun fulfilling several vital functions within the community. One of its primary roles is hosting regular mobile clinic visits, utilizing its consultation rooms to provide a clean, safe, and private environment for healthcare access. This development has significantly reduced pressure on other local facilities, especially preschools, that were previously used to accommodate basic services. Today, visitors to the centre benefit from access to essential amenities, including water, sanitation facilities, and electricity for charging mobile devices, greatly enhancing the centre's practical value and accessibility.

A deeply meaningful feature of the facility is the dedicated consulting room, named in memory of 11-year-old Buhle Mlunguza, a member of the community who tragically passed away due to the late detection of her illness, an outcome directly linked to the lack of accessible healthcare services. Her story moved the Board of Trustees of the Vulindlela Educational Trust to act decisively. In her honour, and with a resolute commitment, the Board declared that never again should preventable diseases claim the lives of our people—particularly the young—due to a lack of access to timely and adequate healthcare.



In the education space, the centre has established a growing academic support programme. In partnership with Sango Ntsaluba Primary School, structured afternoon sessions focused on mathematics, science, and literacy are offered for learners in Grades 4 to 7. The centre also serves as a quiet study space, where learners receive homework assistance and guided use of the internet for research and revision.

Beyond academics, the centre has also taken on the role of a community access point for information. Residents use it to learn about bursaries, job opportunities, and application processes. In the past year, it hosted an outreach programme by the Department of Home Affairs, which assisted community members in resolving outstanding issues related to birth certificates and identity documentation. This service brought real relief to individuals who often face costly and time-consuming travel to access such support elsewhere.

The Tsojana Resource Centre has also been used for a number of workshops and events, including early childhood development training, community dialogues on gender-based violence, and sessions promoting digital literacy. While still growing in its reach, the centre is beginning to show its value as a stable, community-based platform for delivering educational and social services in a coordinated way.



# Strategic Shift and Financial Model

Vulindlela Educational Trust's strategy for 2025/26 reflects a deliberate alignment with the Eastern Cape Department of Education's (ECDoE) provincial priorities as outlined in the 2025 policy speech by MEC Fundile Gade. These include a sharpened focus on foundational learning, early childhood development, teacher support, digital inclusion, and learner well-being. These priorities are not arbitrary — they reflect urgent structural gaps highlighted in the 2024 Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Review and Outlook, which notes that literacy and numeracy scores in quintile 1–3 schools remain the lowest in the country, rural internet access is below 8%, and the early childhood workforce remains largely informal (Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2024, p. 59–61). VET's approach remains rooted in the rural Eastern Cape context, with a commitment to practical, locally led delivery.

## Strengthening Foundational Literacy and Numeracy

In response to the Department's emphasis on foundational learning by Grade 4, VET will expand afternoon academic sessions at the Tsojana Resource Centre. These structured sessions focus on literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking for learners in Grades 4 to 7, particularly those in underperforming schools and multi-grade environments.

## Supporting Teacher Development

In line with ECDoE's efforts to improve curriculum delivery in quintile 1–3 schools, VET will enhance its support for teacher development in the Mtawelanga Circuit. Planned interventions include mentorship opportunities, subject-specific workshops, and closer collaboration with circuit officials to improve educator readiness in mathematics, science, and life skills.

## Advancing Early Childhood Development

Aligned with the shift of ECD to the Department of Education, VET will continue to develop its partnership with Unlimited Child and other institutions and explore outreach strategies for ECD support in remote villages. This includes expanding caregiver training, piloting mobile classroom models, and integrating family engagement, responding directly to provincial goals of increasing rural access and improving ECD quality.

## Closing the Digital Access Gap

To contribute to the province's strategy on digital transformation in rural schools, VET is working with Snapplify to roll out offline digital libraries and learning hubs. Starting with the Tsojana Resource Centre and selected partner schools, the initiative includes device deployment, basic ICT training, and content integration, all designed with low-connectivity and energy challenges in mind.

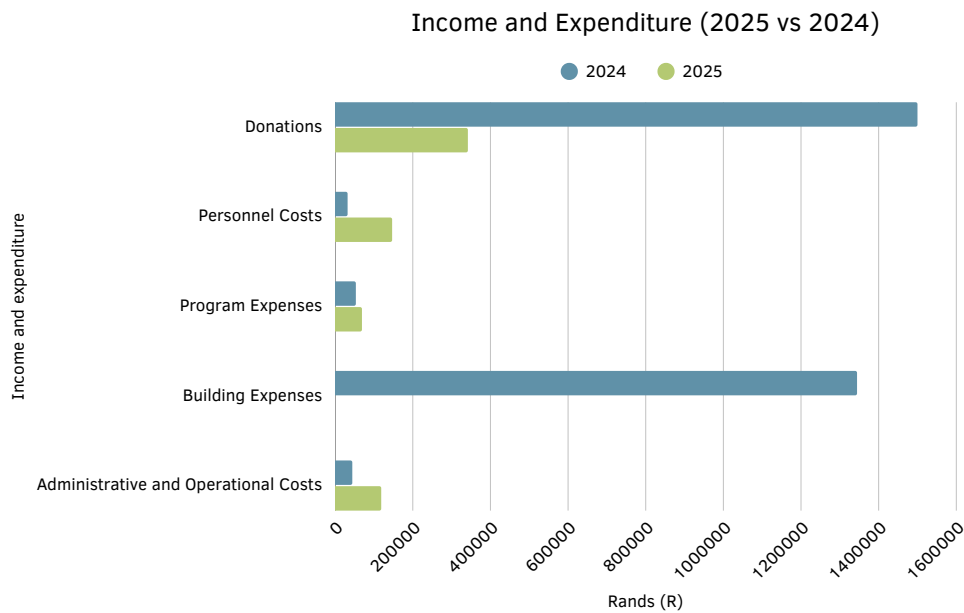
## Enhancing Career Orientation

Responding to ECDoE's call for more structured career guidance, VET will extend its Career Awareness Programme to include learners from Grade 8 onwards. Planned interventions include subject choice support, vocational pathway exploration, and stronger links to TVET and university representatives, building on the momentum of the 2024 campaign.

### Promoting School Health and Safety

VET will also deepen its work in health and psychosocial support by continuing to coordinate mobile clinic access at the Tsojana Resource Centre and strengthening GBV awareness campaigns in collaboration with traditional leaders. These efforts speak to the Department’s concern with learner well-being, absenteeism, and broader safety challenges in schools.

### Finanacial Summary



In 2025, total donations amounted to R341,900, all of which supported ongoing program operations. This contrasts with 2024, where donations totalled R1,500,000. This was because of R1,355,000 once-off contribution from the Ntsaluba Family for the construction of the Tsojana Resource Centre. Excluding that project-specific funding in 2024, core operational support increased in 2025.

Personnel costs in 2025 rose to R146,800, compared to R32,080 in 2024. This increase reflects the employment of a Centre Coordinator to manage the newly opened Tsojana Resource centre facility. Program expenses also grew year-on-year, from R53,339 in 2024 to R69,054 in 2025, indicating expanded program delivery and community engagement.

Administrative and operational costs increased significantly from R44,197 in 2024 to R118,691 in 2025. The growth is mainly attributed to branding efforts in the early part of the year and necessary repairs undertaken later, all linked to the organization’s evolving operational footprint.

Overall, 2025 marked a shift away from infrastructure expenditure toward program activation and service continuity. The financial profile reflects an organization that has transitioned from building to delivery, efficiently, responsively, and with solid donor alignment. This shift mirrors the province’s own emphasis on integrated, localised service hubs that enable multi-sector collaboration — a model increasingly recognised as necessary to overcome fragmentation in rural development (Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2024, p. 5).

During the past financial year, the Trust successfully registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). This status now enables the Trust to issue Section 18A certificates to donors in recognition of qualifying contributions made.

# Donors, Partners, and Stakeholders

The work of Vulindlela Educational Trust is rooted in collaboration. Every programme, campaign, and milestone achieved in 2024/25 has been the product of shared commitment, from those who fund our work, to those who walk beside us in delivery, to the communities who welcome and sustain our presence. We extend our sincere appreciation to the donors and sponsors whose financial support made this year's work possible. In particular, we acknowledge the generosity of SN Leisure Investments, Aurelian Capital, and the Ntsaluba Family, whose continued investment in rural development has ensured that programmes remained stable, responsive, and community driven.

To our public sector partners, we express deep gratitude for their collaboration and trust. The Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, and Department of Home Affairs have each contributed to the success of integrated programming, whether through joint outreach, programme alignment, or shared use of the Tsojana Resource Centre. The support of the South African Police Service (SAPS) has also been critical in engaging on issues of safety and gender-based violence.

We are especially grateful to Traditional Leadership, most notably Chief Sizwe Zulu, whose guidance and endorsement have been instrumental in securing community legitimacy and access. The relationship with traditional authorities continues to form a critical foundation for the Trust's rural development model. To the community of Tsojana, its elders, caregivers, educators, and young people, we offer our deepest thanks. Your trust, feedback, and participation give this work its meaning. We also recognise the ongoing encouragement of the Friends of the Trust, whose behind-the-scenes support continues to strengthen the reach and resilience of our work.

Together, these individuals and institutions form the ecosystem that makes local change possible. Vulindlela Educational Trust remains committed to deepening these partnerships and building new ones as we look to the year ahead.





**Vulindlela Educational Trust**  
Educate a child and provide lifetime empowerment



## FOR MORE INFORMATION



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