

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white ribbed top and a grey fuzzy cardigan, is sitting and reading a book to two young children. She is wearing a clear face shield and a name tag that says 'Qapela'. The children, seen from behind, are wearing school uniforms and face masks. The book is open to a page with a cartoon illustration of a fox and the text '“Anything.”' and 'by Linda Charlie'. The background shows a classroom setting with a wooden shelf, a green storage bin, and a window with colorful decorations.

# The LifeMatters Foundation

**ANNUAL REPORT 2021**



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## PURPOSE

The LifeMatters Foundation believes that every life matters and deserves our help to build strong foundations to discover their worth and to reach their full potential.

## MISSION

Our mission is to provide holistic support in the form of academic and life skills intervention, so that all children are intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually equipped to reach their full potential and become active citizens.

## VALUES

We believe:

- That God has a plan and a purpose for each person's life
- That hope drives purpose
- That it is our responsibility to advocate for children's rights
- That active citizenship transforms communities
- That all people deserve respect
- That diversity should be celebrated
- That equity is the first step towards restoration
- That integrity and honesty are the foundation of all relationships



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*As I reflect on 2021 I am mindful that in some sense, it was a lot more challenging than 2020.*

The hope was that schooling would return to some sort of normality but this did not happen. All our schools were forced to continue with a rotational timetable, providing only half of the required teaching hours to an already disadvantaged student population.

On the other hand, I was amazed at the resilience and ingenuity that our staff, interns and volunteers displayed during the year to make learning accessible and fun for the children, as well as caring for our educators. This was displayed through lending libraries, take-home numeracy and literacy resources, trauma-sensitive counselling for educators and learners as well as grief counselling and staff wellness programmes. Our staff have gone above and beyond to make sure that we are able to provide the best possible interventions and care to our learners and educators. All this whilst still running our regular academic programmes and counselling interventions.

There were some sad moments. We had to say goodbye to our dear centre manager, Sandra van Wyk, who lost her battle with cancer. Sandra was a loving and nurturing presence at Westlake Primary and her legacy will live on in the lives of the learners she cared for. Our extraordinary Academic Portfolio Manager, Sharleen Haupt, moved to one of our partner organisations, Shine. Sharleen worked for LMF for 10 years and was instrumental in developing our numeracy programme. Her commitment to excellence in everything she does meant that our academic portfolio flourished under her leadership. We were sad to see her go.

On the upside, we were fortunate to gain some fantastic new

staff members. Kirsty Nortje took over the running of the Literacy Programme, and Nix Bowley, our Numeracy Centre Manager at Capricorn, took on the leadership of the Numeracy Programme. We also gained a fantastic new counsellor, Siphesande Mfaku, at Lourier Primary and Sullivan Primary.

Our donors have yet again been faithful and generous and we are so blessed by their continued support of the work we do.

I am often asked why we bother, why we even try when the problem is just so big. When we look at the magnitude of the work ahead of us, it is easy to become despondent, critical or even hopeless, but I want to leave you with this well-known quote from Theodore Roosevelt:

“ *It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.* ”

Alnerié Turck



# 2021 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

*The ongoing disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic to all aspects of society has continued through 2021 and the impacts on education will continue to be felt for many years to come.*

With our beneficiary schools running on the basis of restricted attendance, the ability of students to learn and teachers to teach has been severely hampered. This has played through into the work of The LifeMatters Foundation, requiring us to be creative and adapt our programmes and ways of delivery to provide the best possible support we can in the circumstances. Consequently, we have been able to continue to positively impact the lives of those we serve despite these uncertain and challenging times.

As a Board we are grateful for the hard work and dedication of the leadership team, staff and those who give of themselves to deliver our contribution to these school communities and wish to honour them for this. However, none of this would have been possible without the continued support of our donors who have supported us through these uncertain times and enabled the organisation to remain financially sound. To our donor community we say a very special thank you. As we close 2021 and move into 2022, we continue to thank God for the work of LMF and for His continued faithfulness to us.

Peter Withey  
Chairman of the Board







# LIFESKILLS PORTFOLIO



# COUNSELLING

## What a busy year it has been for our counsellors.

The issues that we saw an increase of since the start of the pandemic in 2020, only continued to amplify in 2021. In order for the counsellors to fully support and assist their clients, we as an organisation made sure that the counsellors themselves were fully supported throughout the year. This was done through continued individual as well as group supervision sessions which are essential for the counsellor's well-being and their professional growth overall.

At the beginning of the year we received approval for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points from the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP) for our counsellors' supervision group. This is a huge benefit for our counsellors as they need CPD points to stay registered with various professional bodies.

One of the bigger issues the counsellors had to deal with throughout the year, was the substance abuse of their clients in all grades. We were able to have a workshop at the beginning of the year that helped provide the counsellors with skills on how to deal with this particular issue inside the counselling space. At Westlake Primary School, in collaboration with Hope House, a substance abuse group was started for children ages 12 and older. This was so helpful as it dealt with the prevalent issue of substance abuse on a larger scale and it allowed Tsidi, the counsellor at Westlake Primary School, to focus on the younger children from ages 8 to 11, who had started abusing substances.



Our counsellors had overwhelming caseloads with issues ranging from suicide ideation to physical abuse and neglect. In one week alone, some of the counsellors received up to 7 emergency cases, which meant that sometimes they were not able to meet with their regular clients. These emergency cases were a direct result of the increase in abuse within homes since the start of the pandemic. It was also tough for the counsellors to deal with the emergency cases due to the learners not attending school every day (rotational school system due to Covid-19) and therefore teachers and general staff, including the counsellor at the school, not being able to spot the abuse

as quickly as in the past before the pandemic.

Through our internal counselling training that took place at the beginning of the year, we were able to equip and empower our counselling team to manage their caseloads. Continued check-ins and supervision throughout the year, assisted the counsellors in not burning out, as well as the counsellors learning to prioritise cases. We would not have been able to provide the holistic support that The LifeMatters Foundation strives for without the fabulous work of our counsellors in their respective schools.



# WORKSHOPS

This year saw us do more workshops within the schools with staff and learners (separately) since the start of the pandemic.

We hosted our Trauma-Sensitive Workshop at iThemba Primary School, Steenberg Primary School, Lourier Primary School and Capricorn Primary School with the teachers and general staff. Later in the year, partly due to not being able to host our annual Grade 7 camps and partly due to many learners experiencing similar issues, we were able to adapt our Trauma-Sensitive Workshop that is usually geared at staff, to suit the learners. We then hosted this workshop with the Grade 6s and 7s at Steenberg Primary School. We found that this workshop was necessary because many of the learners had suffered similar traumas that were amplified because of the pandemic, and many of these learners were going to slip through the counselling crack because the counsellors were hard at work with hefty caseloads already. In the case of running this workshop with the Grade 6 learners, these learners had experienced the loss of one of their peers in the latter part of the year and desperately needed intervention that worked best in a group setting. The Grade 6s at Steenberg Primary were also the same group of learners that had experienced the loss of one of their beloved teachers at the beginning of the year, thus having added trauma on top of everything they were already experiencing on a personal level.

This year we also created new workshops that dealt with needs that were identified throughout the year. As an example, we created a Staff Wellness Workshop that was run at iThemba Primary School to not only boost morale amongst the staff, but to check in with the educators and general staff during these very uncertain times.

We also created a Teacher Support Group due to the teachers at a number of our partner schools expressing the need for a safe and supportive space for them, as they did not feel supported and felt overwhelmed with the pressure they were receiving from the Department of Education and their increased workload.

We also created another staff workshop called the Positive Self-Image Workshop for the staff at Lourier Primary School, which we plan to offer to other schools as well. This workshop came from the principal at Lourier Primary noticing that the staff were not confident in themselves and their abilities, and needed some assistance in creating a more cohesive team. This workshop was full of activities based around teamwork, affirmations (of oneself and others) and aided in boosting the staff members' overall self-image and self-esteem. The staff and The LifeMatters Foundation team had a blast creating and partaking in this workshop and it was a great way to end the year for both the staff and The LifeMatters Foundation team. We were able to conduct this workshop at a shelter for the homeless and it ended up being interactive and very effective.







## TEENAGE AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

**We conducted several Teenage Awareness Programmes throughout the year.**

Our first programme was at Oakley House High School and focused on sex education with the Grade 7 and alternative stream learners. We also had programmes at Sweet Valley Primary School, Westcott Primary School and Western Province Preparatory School. These programmes were tailored to each school population and addressed the issues identified by the teachers and school counsellor, as well as topics that the learners themselves wanted to address which we found out through the pre-programme survey. We realized, while conducting the programmes, that Sex Education is so necessary as the learners are now being exposed to sex and pornography at much younger ages. Unfortunately it is still an area lacking in education and children are often embarrassed to talk about it to their parents. Many of them were turning to each other and to google for information they really should be getting from older and wiser sources.

One thing to note about all the staff and learners that we have interacted with is their resilience. Their resilience carried them through a pandemic with constant unknowns such as the uncertainty of school closures and experiencing the loss of loved ones at the same time. They have been remarkable!







# ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO



# LITERACY REPORT

With the hard lockdown and early pandemic mayhem of 2020 behind us, we began 2021 with a sense of excitement as we were able to enter the schools in early February and begin our programmes, but it was certainly not 'business as usual'.

By far the most significant challenge for the Literacy Programme was the rotational timetabling introduced at all our beneficiary schools to ensure social distancing and COVID-19 protocol compliance. This meant that our access to learners was limited, as they were only coming to school on average two to three days a week. Our centre managers had to work within these new rotational timetables to try and see each learner twice a week, as we had done in the past. Being cognisant of the amount of teaching time that had been lost in 2020, and the pressure that teachers were under to make up for that lost time, a number of our centres ran shorter sessions (between 30 and 45 minutes) to ensure that when children were at school they were getting much-needed intervention, but at the same time not missing out too much class time.

A highlight in Term 1 was the official opening of our new Literacy Centre at Constantia Primary. The centre was erected during 2020 but was not fully operational due to the pandemic-related school closures and disruptions, so we welcomed the first learners as the school year opened for 2021 and had the official opening on 20 April 2021.

With our centre at Constantia Primary up and running, we had a total of 6 Literacy Centres operational in 2021. We also introduced a pilot project at Capricorn Primary with the aim of implementing a programme where we would reach

a higher volume of learners, but with a slightly less time-intensive intervention. The aim is that we might eventually be able to draw comparisons between this 'lighter touch' but broader reach intervention, and the more traditional model that reaches comparatively fewer learners but with a more intensive intervention. As such, we moved away from running the Shine Literacy Hour Programme (with 4 elements; around 45 minutes) to doing shorter sessions (around 15 minutes) using just one element of the Literacy Hour Programme: paired reading. This new format allowed us to reach significantly more learners than we would with the conventional Shine Literacy Hour, with every Grade 2 and 3 learner receiving at least one, and often two, one-on-one reading sessions per week. We are excited to see this programme continue in 2022 where we are hoping for easier access to learners when rotational timetabling is no longer.

At the beginning of Term 1, we were so grateful to begin with the Shine Literacy Programme in most of our other schools. At Westlake Primary we continued with broader academic support than we had been doing in Term 4 of 2020 to support the teachers in catching learners up. We were saddened by the loss of one of our longest standing, respected and loved centre managers, Sandra Van Wyk, towards the end of the second term. Her love and passion for children will be a legacy that we know will serve the learners at Westlake for many years to come.







By Term 2 we were back to normal programming across the board and have had a wonderful year with learners in our six centres. Across the five centres running the Shine Literacy Hour, we saw 386 learners and did over 7000 hours of intervention. At Capricorn Primary we did over 3000 paired reading sessions.

We have continued to work very closely with our partner organisation, Shine Literacy, and have worked with them this year to promote their flagship programme of Creating a Culture of Reading, at home and at school for learners all across South Africa. We have engaged with the Shine Community of Practice to work towards making each of our beneficiary schools places where reading, literacy and learning is valued and appreciated school-wide, rather than just in our programmes. To this end, we distributed termly resource packs from Shine to each Grade 2 and 3 learner across our six schools. These packs consisted of pencils, a Little Issue Magazine, and a Book Dash book. We also worked with Shine and Wordworks to distribute TIME (Together in My Education) Packs to every Grade 1 learner at each of our beneficiary schools. These packs supported at-home learning for when learners were not at school and were very well received.

We have also continued to run lending libraries as none of the Foundation Phase Learners at any of our beneficiary schools have access to the main school library (they go from Grade 4). A highlight for this year was the launch of the Westlake Primary Grade 1 lending library. Across four of our centres running libraries for Foundation Phase (Grade R – 3), we had 540 learners who had access to books. At Steenberg Primary we had a further 50 learners in Grade 4 and 5 partake in our lending library. Steenberg Primary did not have a functional library until Term 3 of 2021 when we were privileged to attend the opening of The Reynold-Rookledge Library. We are excited to see how this library supports and encourages a culture of reading within the school.

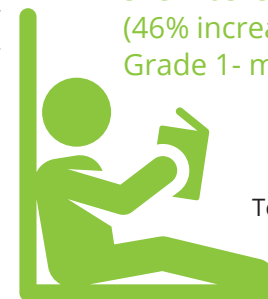
Also, within the ambit of Creating a Culture of Reading we were able to enjoy some of the fun elements of school life that Covid-19 robbed us of in 2020. These included celebrating a number of important days in the literacy calendar, for example, World Read Aloud Day, International Literacy Day and International Library Day. What a joy to see the learners on our programmes enjoying the fun and celebrations of these days.

It has been a challenging year with regard to Monitoring and Evaluation. On the macro level, our programming went ahead but on the school level, small changes to programming made comparisons tricky, these differences are simply a result of the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and the education system's reaction to it.

However, as the principal at Sullivan Primary reminded us - any improvement in a learner's performance is a 'win in his books'. Not only have we seen learners' steady improvement in literacy performance through our WELA (Wordworks Early Learning Assessment) results, but we have seen children grow in confidence and enjoyment of reading.

“ Glenda progressed beautifully in the literacy programme. In the beginning, she could only read slowly, word for word. Her sight word knowledge and fluency improved significantly throughout the year. By the end of the year it was delightful to see how much she was enjoying reading by herself (46% increase in WELA score from end Grade 1- mid Grade 2).

”



Testimonial for learners from volunteer Belinda at Westlake.



“ Emmanuel worked enthusiastically during the literacy hour. He enjoyed the sessions and made lovely progress with his reading. At the beginning of the year, his reading was very stilted, but his fluency and sight word memory improved nicely. He developed a love for stories during our sessions (37% increase in WELA score from end Grade 1- mid Grade 2).

”



Testimonial for learners from volunteer Belinda at Westlake.



These impressive results would not have been possible without the hard work of our dedicated Centre Managers, and the team of interns and volunteers who worked with them. Due to COVID-19, our volunteer numbers were predictably low, but with the roll-out of the much-anticipated vaccines, we have seen a slow return of volunteers to our centres. We are hoping to see even more returning in 2022, we know that the options for flexible working hours and work-from-home options will mean that volunteering is now more accessible for working people as well. We are so grateful for each and every volunteer who has worked with us this year. They have been committed, flexible and accommodating within the rotational time-tabling challenges, as well as the waves of Covid-19 that we went through during the past year.

Looking back at this year we are so grateful to all our Centre Managers, interns and volunteers, as well as all the educators and principals at our beneficiary schools who have worked together to support, encourage and love each and every learner who walked through our Literacy Centers' doors. We are looking forward to 2022 with much excitement and anticipation.





# NUMERACY REPORT

## The year 2021 was another difficult year in the educational sphere in South Africa.

Rotational attendance, sporadic school closures and days off for specific grades, have been devastating for more than 80% of South African schools. All of The LifeMatters Foundation (LMF) beneficiary schools continued on a rotational timetable, whereby each child only attended school 50% of the time. In an education paper, "The Impact of COVID-19 in Education - more than a year of Disruption" written by D Shepherd and N Mohohlwane, the authors explain that they have used the data from all five waves of the NIDS-CRAM survey to estimate that from March 2020 to June 2021 (the time of writing) "as much as a full year of learning has been potentially lost by the majority of learners since March 2020." It is in the light of this tragedy, that we feel as though our numeracy intervention is needed now more than ever!

Even though our centre managers and volunteers adapted very well to different school schedules, we found that in three of our five beneficiary schools, juggling learners in different groups who arrived on different days every alternate week was rather challenging! Despite this hurdle of inconsistency, we are very proud that we still managed to provide as much Grade 2 academic support as we did, with 1435 hours of numeracy intervention in 2021!

We did a survey at one of our schools in order to see if we were making a difference in numeracy in the learners on our programmes and are excited to report that we did! There was a wonderful increase in average performance on the LMF Numeracy Assessment after two terms by 39%, compared to a control group of similar ability learners, who are not on our

programme, who increased their performance by only 14%. These encouraging results keep us motivated and give us hope.

This year we developed a numeracy pack for the learners on our programme so that they could continue with their numeracy learning at home, through games and activities. This practical bundle of resources was developed because most of our learners don't have access to "online education" or data. We are so grateful for all the help and donations that we received from kind-hearted people in our community as well as our volunteers and interns, in the development of these packs.

The Steenberg Numeracy Centre received a much needed lick of paint, thanks to Rawson Developers employees and about twenty Rondebosch Boys doing their community service. Our other centres were also brightened up with posters and we added more resources to make learning more accessible and fun.

We always strive to keep improving our programmes at The LifeMatters Foundation. We have decided to experiment with a take-home numeracy games library, where learners can take out new games and activities each week. We spent a lot of time in the fourth term putting the library together with games that teach the concepts we'll be focusing on in term 1 of 2022. We trust that the implementation will be a success!

We love seeing our learners arrive with joy at their numeracy classrooms and grow in confidence as they arrive each week to meet with the volunteers with whom they build relationships. It makes serving a joy and a reward!





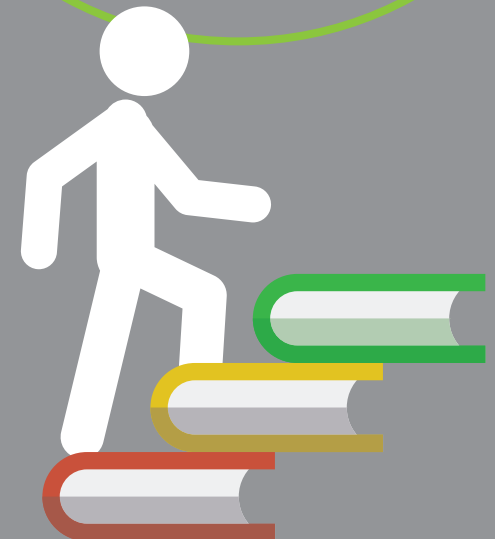


## TWO OF OUR GOOD NEWS STORIES:

In 6 months, Priscilla went from obtaining 34% on our LMF Numeracy Assessment to 82.5% and Kiara from 39% to 92.5%!

“One teacher approached me and said that she was doubting herself for thinking of repeating a learner in her class because he had made such a dramatic improvement in numeracy thanks to our LifeMatters intervention!”

- Numeracy Centre Manager





# iMATTER INTERNSHIP REPORT 2021

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) for Quarter 1 (Q1) of 2021 the official unemployment rate sits at 32.6%.

More concerning, for the youth of the country, the official unemployment rate for those in the 15—34 age group was a staggering 46.3%. (Stats SA Media Release June 2021). It is clear that unemployment, disengagement with the labour market and inaccessibility to further education and work experience is a growing problem in the communities we serve. Opportunities for young school-leavers to gain work experience and other skills pre or post further education and training are limited but essential as a stepping stone to full time employment. We were so happy to partner with Action Volunteers Africa (AVA) again in 2021 to work with the 4th cohort of interns on the iMatter Internship Programme.

The 2021 cohort was our largest yet, with 16 interns joining us in March 2021. After receiving programme specific training from LMF, the interns worked Monday to Thursday in LMF Literacy and Numeracy Centres in our 6 beneficiary schools, overseen by a LMF Centre Manager. Here they gained valuable experience in a variety of fields including administration, life skills, classroom assistance and Foundation Phase literacy and numeracy. On Fridays they alternated between LMF Numeracy Centres and AVA. AVA not only assisted in recruiting the interns, but provided the interns with constant support and training in soft-skills such as communication, time-management, professionalism and teamwork. They also provided basic computer skills, CV

writing, interview skills and other valuable tools to give the interns the best possible chance of future employment.

Whilst we are so grateful for our committed volunteer base, the voluntary nature of the relationship means that impact is limited to volunteer hours which can be unpredictable. This was even more evident in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the start of 2021 many of our older volunteers were initially hesitant to return prior to the vaccine roll-out. It was in these early months of the year we really noticed the impact the interns had on our programme delivery. They were able to provide LMF's Centre Managers with much needed consistent 'full time' support, thus significantly increasing the reach and impact of our programmes during this past year.

We would like to thank this enthusiastic group of young adults who were hardworking, committed and provided an injection of passion to our centres this year. We wish them well on their future endeavours.

“ I've been able to work with some amazing people and children. AVA and The LifeMatters Foundation have given me great life lessons and advice on my career choices, as well as self-discovery. ”

Testimonial from our intern Colleen.





# FINANCE REPORT

Michelle Davidson

## WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM:

The income for January to December 2021 of R2 737 090 was, not unexpectedly, 11% lower than 2020. Fundraising income decreased by 68% largely due to not being able to host the annual fundraiser and other in person fundraising events. Fee income increased by 39% as we were able to host more workshops and teenage awareness programmes to our forprofit beneficiaries when lockdown levels allowed. Donations from individuals, companies and others passionate about the work of LMF continue to be the foundation stone of the organisation's income, making up 91% of the total income. R1 024 806 was received in 2021 for activities in 2022.

## WHERE THE MONEY WENT:

Organisational spending decreased by 2% overall to R2 736 434. Marketing, Management and Operational costs remained similar to 2021, the Internship programme and Project Costs increased by 2% and 1% respectively. Despite the challenges of school closures, the team were able to continue providing input to the children through book and supply packs, lending libraries and online workshops. The interns provided additional support to the programme when it was not possible for volunteers to participate.



## FUTURE

The budget for 2022 is a 22% increase on the 2021 budget. Personnel costs will increase by an inflationary amount; however, the Academic Portfolio and LifeSkills Portfolio will increase by 2% and 69% respectively. 2022 will see 6 Counsellors compared to 2021's 4. The budget is cautiously optimistic about the activities that will be possible in the 2022 year. It is expected that spending will be below budget during the course of the year. Broadening the fundraising efforts continues to be a focus as household incomes are affected by the economic decline in the country.



### REVENUE:

**R2,737,090**

Grants	0%	
Donations - Corporates/Others	92%	R2,499,881
Donations in kind	3%	R92,100
Fundraising events	1%	R34,995
Fees	4%	R97,444
Interest received	0%	R12,670



### EXPENDITURE:

**R2,736,434**

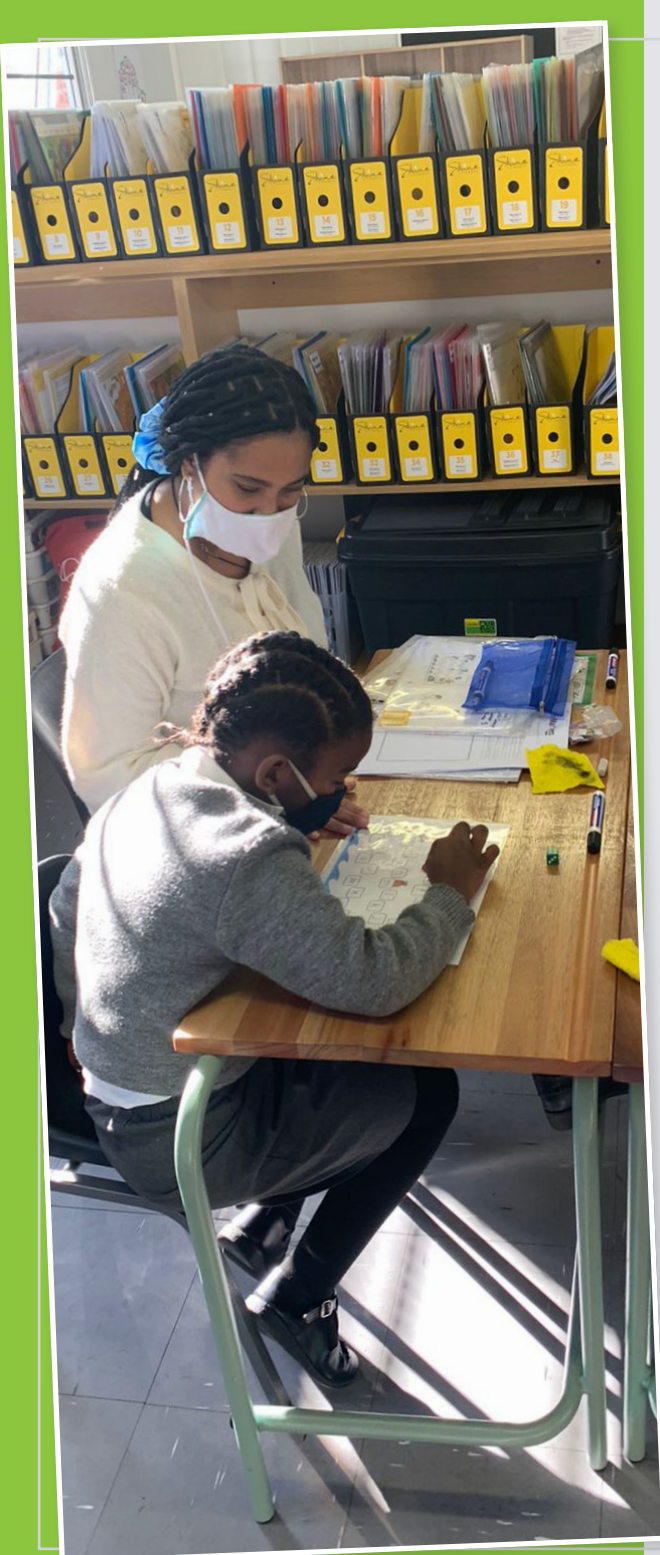
Marketing, PR & Fundraising	6%	R152,244
Management & Admin	6%	R167,663
Capital & Operation costs	10%	R273,626
Internship Programme	7%	R226,080
Project Costs	71%	R1,916,821



### SURPLUS:

**R656**





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### Banking details

**The LifeMatters Foundation • Bank: Standard Bank • Branch: Blue Route • Branch Code: 025609 • Account Number: 072032405**

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