



The Next Step

South African Mobility for the Blind Trust

Annual Review **2023**



Tshepiso is learning coin identification from our practitioner Joyce Thebeyagae.



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Bongani on his way back home from the tuckshop: shopping in one hand and long cane in the other.

The Next Step: Message from our Managing Trustee

Every step that we take in our lives is something to be celebrated and a reason to feel joyful.

But, what happens when you wake up one day and discover that you can't see? Suddenly, taking that next step is so much harder as you adapt to a new way of living.

It is a privilege for us to share how independence training ensures that our clients who are blind or partially sighted are able to confidently take their next steps. Whether it is for the little grade R boy at a rural boarding school who is learning to dress himself and get to the toilet in time or a young person getting a paid learnership or a grandmother being able to take care of her grandchildren again, it is about finding joy and courage in the next step, and the step after that and the step after that...

Parishna Ramluckan
Managing Trustee



A Story About Steps

We regularly train blind or partially sighted children how to do things for themselves. The first school quarter of every year is a crucial time for independence training, as the new little Grade R's and Grade 1's arrive in this big strange new place called boarding school. Our practitioner Kidibone Setlhabi worked at a rural school for the blind in North West province this year. Here is her account of five of the little children's growing confidence through achieving independence.

All five children are in Grade R or Grade 1. Kidibone taught them to not only climb steps on their own, but to learn to trust themselves. Initially, the children felt scared and unsure, wanting to sit on every next step they climbed. You can just imagine how unsafe it is to have little bodies sitting on steps at a school where the learners can't see!

"I took them one by one during those first lessons,

taking them by the hand, one little hand on the railing and one little hand holding mine. In their minds, they climbed a step and sat down, as if a step is for sitting on". It took some convincing and a lot of patience from Kidi to keep the children on their feet, step by step.

Towards the end of the programme, all five children could walk up a full set of stairs on their own, with Kidi following behind. And in the process, they would try and hear where Kidi was, asking her, 'Mam Kidi, you don't have to stand close by; go and wait for us at the bottom'. That which was initially intimidating and scary became a game of confidence for them. "They knew that they were safe because they were aware of the dangers. They found joy on the stairs, going up and down on their own, and with such confidence".

These five children found freedom in their next step.

The Steps we Took This Last Year

We ran **21** training programmes, on average **12** weeks in duration.

We assessed **317** people.

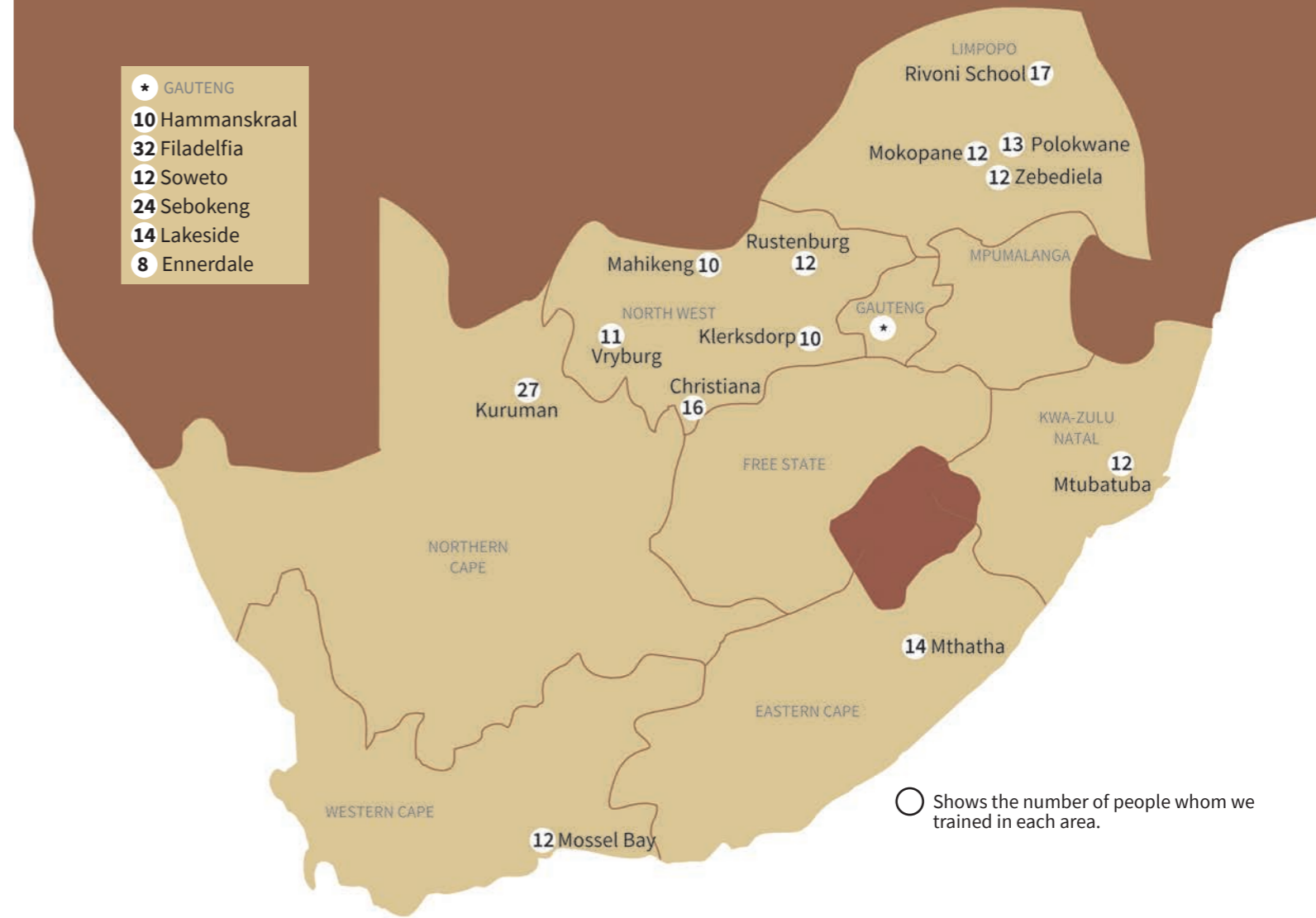
M&E Consultant and Management undertook **21** field trips.

We trained **278** people in seven provinces:

- **53** under 18's
- **43** aged 19 – 34
- **135** aged 35 – 64
- **47** older than 65
- **126** females
- **152** males
- **99,6%** black as per the B-BBEE codes

We trained in a range of areas from the semi-urban Hammanskraal in Gauteng to the very rural Ga-Masha in Limpopo.

Four of the training programmes were at schools, one at a TVET college, and the other sixteen programmes were community-based.



Meet Some of the People who Took Their First Steps

This is **Jan Motapo**. Since our practitioner, Thabelo Muofhe, trained him, he is able to move around on his own, go to the tuck shop, make himself a meal, heat leftovers in the microwave, and so much more!

This story is about his wife, Mrs. Motapo, who works as a secretary at the local disability organisation in Mokopane. Thabelo tells of how eager Mrs Motapo was for her husband to gain his independence. And instead of over-protecting him, she allowed him to learn what he needed to learn.

Says Thabelo, “Mrs Motapo went from fulltime wife, doing everything for her husband, to playing a greater role at their disability group. She is so relieved that her husband is able to help himself to a meal, visit friends, get around.”

When the training programme ended, she asked Thabelo whether she herself, could teach someone else who is blind how to be guided by a sighted person. Thabelo agreed and also gave her copies of our booklet which shows how to safely walk with a person who is blind, including how the blind person holds onto the elbow of the sighted person.



Nthabiseng is a mother of two and lives with her extended family. Moira, our monitoring consultant remarks how hard our practitioner, Thabang Kotsi, had worked to build up Nthabiseng’s confidence. Initially, Nthabiseng was scared to do anything on her own. Nthabiseng wasn’t even aware of her own fear. But she continued to say things like “what if I fall, what if...”

Slowly Nthabiseng’s confidence grew and eventually she even walked to the shop on her own for the first time. The shopkeeper gave her a handful of sweets, saying “Today you did well, you came here all by yourself”. Thabang had been walking some distance behind her. When Thabang asked her how she felt, Nthabiseng was glowing,

“This feels so, so good. You know, I did not believe you, and here I am, I got myself to the shop on my own”.



Meet **Thembi**, a young mother of two children. With her baby strapped to her back, she now goes to the tuckshop on her own and says that her 8-year-old daughter is free to be a child again.

Our practitioner, Tsholofelo Modikoe, gave her a talking watch and showed her how to tell the time. Previously, she would have asked her daughter to turn on the TV and read the time in the corner of the screen out loud. This seemingly small achievement has made a significant difference to Thembi's life and brought a sense of well-being.

Steps Taken Towards Awareness and Advocacy

Too often our blind clients retreat into isolation, avoiding comments such as “but you are not really blind, just pretending” or “haibo, you are blind so how do you think you can be a fieldworker” or situations where they are ignored by their own family, living in a forever state of darkness, unaware of day or night, completely isolated and alone, unable to take a next step independently.

To address this, during the year under review our practitioners held various events to create awareness around blindness as a disability.



An awareness workshop in Alexandra Township.



Youth Day Long Cane Rally and Awareness Event in Polokwane.
Opposite page: Long Cane Rally in Mahikeng.

These events included:

- sensitisation
- long cane rallies
- workshops
- talks by our Managing Trustee
- awareness on the benefit of independence training
- advocacy: the rights and abilities of blind people.

Awareness creation events enlighten people when interacting with a blind person. Our events included the protocols when offering help to a person who is blind and understanding that people who are blind are just as “normal” as anybody else.

We know that awareness campaigns bring greater acceptance and inclusion of blind people into their community life. This is why we have increased our work in this area.

Here is Lulu Mabogola's testimony that she shared at an event that our practitioner, Kidibone, held for her clients in Mahikeng. This event was in partnership with the North West Department of Health, assisted by the North West Provincial Council on Aids in the Office of the Premier, Mahikeng Local Traffic Department and the Mahikeng Local Municipality.

Lulu, told of being well orientated inside her house prior to Kidi's arrival, but of being fearful to go out, and in the process becoming house bound. She told the audience, how, thanks to Kidi's training she learnt how to orientate herself in her own yard by using her remaining senses. And then through long cane training, how to get around safely on her own.

These days Lulu now is able to get herself from her

front door to the gate and then visit friends and family down the road. In addition, Lulu, taught herself how to go further than just the first routes that Kidi taught her.

Lulu said how she is once again in charge of her own finances. She knows what change she is given after going shopping because she learnt how to know the value of bank notes and coins.

In addition Kidibone showed Lulu how to use her cell phone. Being connected to the outside world is important for our well-being.

Everyone in the room was touched by Lulu's testimony of independence and inclusion, thanks to her gaining her independence.



What is the Demand for Independence Training in South Africa?

With over 1 million blind people in South Africa, and only 50 practitioners qualified to train them, there is a vast need for assistance for blind people to take the next step on their own.

Do the calculation: one fulltime practitioner trains approximately 50 people a year. With 50 fulltime practitioners currently employed in the field, it is clear that the numbers do not add up.

We need to qualify significantly more practitioners, and, importantly, find paid employment for them if we are to meet the huge unmet need for independence training in South Africa.

The Steps we Took in Growing Our Team

We have been working towards increasing our team of practitioners for many years.

Thanks to a grant from Absa, specifically for the employment of two new practitioners, we were able to finally grow our team to a total of six practitioners. Welcome Tsholofelo Modikoe and Rosetta Smile Ndlovu.

We also appointed Jacob Mohlomi as assistant manager.



Back row from left: Lethabo Malatji, Rosetta Smile Ndlovu, Tsholofelo Modikoe, Jacob Mohlomi, Parishna Ramluckan, Thabang Kotsi, Kidibone Setlhabi, Moira Higgerty. **Front row from left:** Joyce Thebeyagae, Wendy Sadie, Helen Vosloo, Thabelo Muofhe.

Engine:

Parishna Ramluckan, Managing Trustee
Wendy Sadie, Manager
Jacob Mohlomi, Assistant Manager
Helen Vosloo, Asst to the Managing Trustee

Practitioners:

Thabelo Muofhe
Kidibone Setlhabi
Thabang Kotsi
Joyce Thebeyagae
Tsholofelo Modikoe
Rosetta Smile Ndlovu

Monitoring & Evaluation:

Moira Higgerty
Lethabo Malatji (in training)

Finance:

Louise Bennets and Natasha Friedman
Duncan Ericsson, auditors

HR:

Jaqueline Perkes (*pro bono*)
Wendy Laufs

Tech Support:

Picturenet

Our team of practitioners remain the heroes of our work. They are the ones working far from home, running training programmes, allowing people who are blind to step into their independence, the same people who would have no other means of accessing independence training.



SAMBT practitioners from left: Joyce Thebeyagae, Tsholofelo Modikoe, Kidibone Setlhaba, Rosetta Smile Ndlovu, Thabelo Muofhe and Thabang Kotsi.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Having worked in the field of visual impairment for the past 49 years, Moira Higgerty brings a wealth of experience in independence training for the blind. Moira has taught people with visual impairment both in South Africa and in the UK, and has extensive knowledge in personnel preparation in the UK and as the retired head of the College of Orientation and Mobility. She is a valuable asset to the team.

Moira's responsibilities include monitoring and supervising the training of our practitioners, as well as playing a pivotal role in drawing up our training schedule for the year. She maintains weekly contact with each practitioner, discussing any issues they may have with their clients or clients' families. In addition, Moira is responsible for developing continuous professional development opportunities for the team. She and

the management team also conduct field visits to ensure that practitioners are delivering high-quality services. During the year under review, we conducted 21 field trips.

Because M&E is integral to our work, and Moira has voiced her intention to retire, we employed Lethabo Malatji, a qualified occupational therapist with experience in supervision.

Lethabo has started a fast-tracked specialist programme in Orientation and Mobility Training at The College of Orientation and Mobility.

"As an OT in South Africa, our work tends to be based at a hospital, school or private practice. I have always loved doing community work. It is SAMBT's outreach approach that attracted me in the first place".

An External Evaluation

The Western Cape Department of Health performed an independent evaluation of our training in the Garden Route district. Here, quoted from their report:

"Evident that the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and the application thereof has impacted positively on the lives of these blind and partially sighted people. Based on the findings and conclusions, it can be stated that the SAMBT training over a very short period made a life-changing impact on the select blind and partially sighted people in Mossel Bay, their families and surrounding communities. It even saved the life of one person".

The following direct quotations from our clients were included in the evaluation:

- "for nine years I sat and done nothing - now I am able to do things for myself - I can focus better".
- "It changed my life so much."
- "I am human again."



Governance

We thank our chairman, Silomo Khumalo, for his leadership and support, and Avril Halstead, our Treasurer for her hands-on support and wisdom.

There were no changes in the governance structures and three meetings took place in the year under review.

Quarterly finance meetings were held with our Managing Trustee Parishna Ramluckan, management and Treasurer.

Thank you to our Trustees who bring such relevant skills to our work:

Ian Hutton
Thabisile Levin
Isabella Holder
Rhulani Baloyi
Nnyana Mokale
Silindile Makhay



20.

Our Plans for the Year 2023-24

We follow a radical outreach approach. With that we mean the following: we take independence training to the homes of blind people, particularly those living off the beaten track, those living in semi urban and especially rural areas. Independence starts from the home of the blind person. For many of our rural clients, the first step of training is being able to get to the outside toilet unaided.

Having increased our team of practitioners, we will be running 30 training programmes this coming year. These will be community based programmes, school programmes and training young people at university or colleges where there are no Orientation and Mobility Practitioners.

We will be running training programmes in all nine provinces.



Taking the first independent steps outside the yard.

21.

Thank you to our Donors

To our donors who made it possible for us to not only keep walking, but to take a brave new step in growing our team: a heartfelt thank you.

It is thanks to you that the five little children at a rural school for the blind are able to confidently climb steps. It is thanks to you than Jan, Nthabiseng, Thembi and Lulu are confidently taking their own next independent steps. It is thanks to you that 278 blind and partially sighted people are taking their next independent steps.

Whether a corporate, a trust or foundation, the National Lotteries Commission, or our wonderful individual donors in South Africa and the USA, we thank you! To the six brand new corporate and trust donors who came on board this past year, thank you!

We are also excited that the North West Province Department of Health, the Western Cape Department of Health and the Gauteng Department of Health partnered with us.

Lastly, we especially thank the John and Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust who has been with us since inception in 1998.

Thanks to all of you , we were able to meet our budget and start the new year on a strong footing.

We bear witness to the impact that independence training has, on blind people living in remote areas, of blind people learning how to take the next step – whether it is to fetch water from the communal tap, reach the outside toilet, go to the tuck shop or the clinic, visit friends or access further education and opportunities.



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Stanley and Alison Sher
Solomon Ruben & Ann Winer Educational & Benefit Trust
The Donaldson Trust
Victor Daitz Foundation
Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness CD:
Rural Health Services in partnership with Garden Route
District Office and Hartenbos Care for the Aged



Audited Financial Statements

SOUTH AFRICAN MOBILITY FOR THE BLIND TRUST TRUST NUMBER IT 10593/97

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 R	2022 R
Assets			
Non-Current Assets Equipment	3	831 411	592 419
Current Assets Inventories	5	197 421	128 948
Accrued income	4	492 307	227 470
Cash and cash equivalents	6	6 944 487	5 270 878
Total Assets		7 634 215	5 627 296
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust capital	7	100	100
Reserves		2 975 654	2 675 257
Accumulated surplus		2 139 457	1 349 186
		5 115 211	4 024 543
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities Accounts payable	9	11 263	42 619
Deferred income	10	3 294 071	2 117 775
Provisions	11	45 081	34 778
		3 350 415	2 195 172
Total Equity and Liabilities		8 465 626	6 219 715

Audited Financial Statements

SOUTH AFRICAN MOBILITY FOR THE BLIND TRUST TRUST NUMBER IT 10593/97

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 R	2022 R
Other income	12	5 542 259	4 511 826
Operating expenses		(4 752 877)	(4 048 322)
Operating surplus		789 382	463 504
Investment revenue		301 286	119 895
Surplus for the year		1 090 668	583 399
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		1 090 668	583 399

Audited Financial Statements

SOUTH AFRICAN MOBILITY FOR THE BLIND TRUST

TRUST NUMBER IT 10593/97

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 R	2022 R
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	15	1 845 735	1 491 815
Interest income		301 286	119 895
Net cash from operating activities		2 147 021	1 611 710
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of equipment	3	(473 412)	(451 102)
Total cash movement for the year		1 673 609	1 160 608
Cash at the beginning of the year		5 270 878	4 110 270
Total cash at end of the year	6	6 944 487	5 270 878

Small Steps you can Take, to Help a Blind Person Feel More Included

- Include a blind person in your circle of friends
- Introduce yourself to a blind person in your area and refer them to SAMBT for independence training
- Offer your help and support to a blind person in your area
- Talk to the blind person in the taxi or bus next to you
- Offer a lift to the shops or to bring back something from the shops
- Ask if you can help with any tasks requiring sight
- Donate to SAMBT

Our practitioner Rosetta Smile Ndlovu, at the start of Jongitemba's lesson. With his long cane clasped between his knees, he is checking the time on his talking watch.





South African Mobility for the Blind Trust

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Trust registration no.: IT10593/97

NPO Registration no.: 007-220 NPO

PBO: 18/11/13/1400

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