



The Gift of Independence

South African Mobility
for the Blind Trust
Annual Review **2024**





Khuzwayo visiting friends on his own.

2.

CONTENTS

4	Message from our Managing Trustee
6	Meet our Team
8	What Have We Done This Past Year?
12	Meet Two People We Trained
17	Monitoring and Evaluation
18	The Gift of Being Seen: Advocacy for Independence
20	Governance
21	Plans for the 2024–25 Financial Year
22	Thank you to our Donors
24	Auditor's Report
27	How to Give the Gift of Equality to a Blind Person

3.



The cool taste of independence: cane in one hand and ice cream in the other.

Message from our Managing Trustee

We all cherish the thrill of receiving gifts, whether it's for a birthday, anniversary, Christmas, or just a spontaneous gesture. The excitement of unwrapping a present is always a delight. Equally exhilarating is the act of preparing a gift, imagining how it will make the recipient feel appreciated and special. Then, handing over the gift, witnessing their anticipation, and sharing in the happiness it brings.

Now, imagine being able to give a gift that could profoundly change someone's life. This is the gift we at South African Mobility for the Blind Trust (SAMBT) specialise in – the gift of independence for people who are blind or partially sighted. Each gift of independence is carefully tailored to meet the unique circumstances and needs of every individual blind person.

Thanks to our dedicated team of seven full-time practitioners, we gave the gift of independence to 346 people in the past financial year. From bustling Soweto to rural Mandini in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Thembaletu township outside George – our practitioners brought independence right into people's homes. They patiently taught them the skills needed to manage on their own with a long cane; no more hanging off a sighted person's arm. They also taught them to do everyday tasks independently. Most often, these blind people never expected to be able to do these things for themselves without sighted help.



This report celebrates the gift of independence, wrapped with dignity and delivered with care.





Rosetta Smile Ndlovu



Irish Muofhe

Meet our Team

Our practitioners remain the heroes of our work as they bring the gift of independence to people who are blind, come rain or shine.

Our Engine Room

Parishna Ramluckan: Managing Trustee
Wendy Sadie: Manager
Jacob Mohlomi: Assistant Manager
Moira Higgerty: Monitoring & Evaluation
Helen Vosloo: Assistant to the Managing Trustee
Louise Bennetts, Wendy Laufs and Natasha Friedman: Finance
Duncan Ericsson: Auditor
Jaqueline Perkes: Human Resources (*pro bono*)
Picturenet: Tech support and e-work maintenance

Practitioners

Irish Muofhe
Kidibone Setlhabi
Joyce Thebeyagae
Thabang Kotsi
Rosetta Smile Ndlovu
Tsholofelo Modikoe
Xoliswa Shozi



Tsholofelo Modikoe



Xoliswa Shozi



Joyce Thebeyagae



Thabang Kotsi



Kidibone Setlhabi



Doing one's own washing is not a chore, but a gift of independence.

What Have We Done This Past Year?

During the 2023–24 financial year, our team of practitioners ran 28 training programmes, training blind people in all nine provinces.

The people we trained varied in age, from a two-year-old toddler in Empangeni to a sprightly 95-year-old in Dundee (both in KZN).

- 65 of our clients were younger than 18,
- 69 were in the age group 19 – 34,
- 161 were between the age of 35 and 64, and
- 59 were older than 65.

As per the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) codes, 98% of our clients are black.

We remain the only organisation that brings the gift of independence to blind people in rural areas country-wide, from the deeply rural Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga and Mogwase in the North West to Mandini in KZN, Khayelitsha in Cape Town and other urban townships. We also trained at five schools for the blind, four of them in rural areas.

As always, ours is not a generic one-size-fits-all gift. Our training is personalised to each blind person's age, needs, existing skills, additional health concerns, physical environment, and family support. Our gift starts with human connection, just like all good gifts do. It starts when our practitioner meets their new potential client for the first time. From there, an assessment follows, and the practitioner starts building a relationship of trust.

Our practitioners often speak of the unmet need of the person who is blind, firstly, just to be seen as

someone worthwhile, as someone “normal”. This is because the blind people we meet often feel lonely, unseen, and ignored.

From the initial meeting between the practitioner and their client, the blind person is heard and valued as someone worthy. As the training progresses, the initial fear of walking alone starts to diminish. We celebrate the ensuing confidence in our clients as they embrace the gift of independence – from being hidden as a blind person to being seen in the streets.

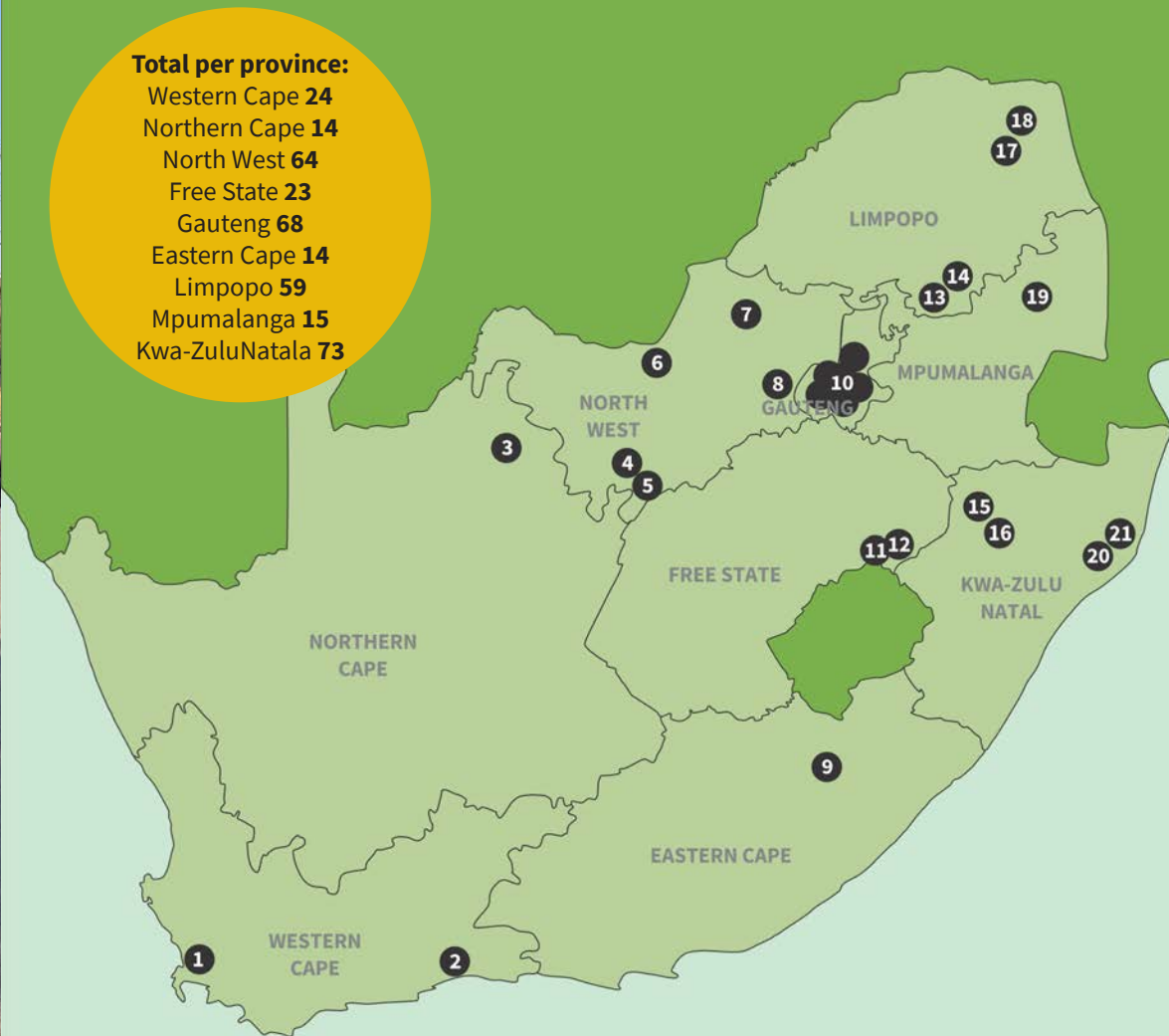
When a blind person is seen out and about on the streets again, just like before they lost their sight, their neighbours and family suddenly notice. As our practitioner, Tsholofelo Modikoe says, “Suddenly, the community takes note of their blind neighbour again, and they are happy to be part of a good story.”

White Cane Rally in rural Northern Cape.



Total per province:

Western Cape 24
 Northern Cape 14
 North West 64
 Free State 23
 Gauteng 68
 Eastern Cape 14
 Limpopo 59
 Mpumalanga 15
 Kwa-ZuluNatala 73



Where we trained:

1. Cape Town and surrounds
2. George
3. Kuruman
4. Taung
5. Christiana School for the Blind
6. Mahikeng
7. Mogwase
8. Potchefstroom
9. Mthatha
10. Gauteng
 - a. Soweto
 - b. Sharpeville
 - c. Prinshof School for the Blind
 - d. Hammanskraal
 - e. Soshanguve
 - f. Ennerdale
11. Phuthaditjhaba
12. Thiboloha School for the Blind
13. Bosele CET College
14. Burgersfort
15. Newcastle
16. Dundee
17. Rivoni & Tshilidzini Schools for the Blind
18. Thohoyandou
19. Bushbuckridge
20. Mandini
21. Empangeni

Meet Two People We Trained

Zithulele

“Life is easy now”.

“My working place is an NGO dealing with people with all kinds of disabilities.

I used to struggle to reach my office, now I am able to open my white cane, change the road, and walk straight to my office. A big difference in my life! Kidi also showed me to use a signature guide, now I can go anywhere for example at the bank, I can sign my name clearly.

I can count my money without asking anyone for advice. With the money gage I can tell how much I got.

Also a liquid gage, I put it on the glass. I always used to put my finger, which is fine if it is for myself, but for someone else, it's not good to use my finger. Now I am proud to pour someone a glass of water or a cup of tea.

And with my talking watch I can tell the time. Previously I would need to take out my smart phone, but I did not feel safe taking it out in town when there were many people around. Another thing, I can now go to the bank's auto teller where I can deposit and I can withdraw money. Kidi changed my life. Life is easy now

You guys must continue doing what you do, you helped me so much! Thank you for what you did!”

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Tungu * attends a rural school for the blind. In addition to being blind, she also has Cerebral Palsy. Moira Higgerty, our Monitoring Consultant, commented on the extraordinary success our practitioner Thabelo had achieved when training Tungu.

When Thabelo started assessing the children assigned to her for training, she noticed a young girl sitting on a chair at reception. This was Tungu. The principal had not listed her for training because he believed she was unable to walk. Tungu needed to be driven from the hostel to her classroom and back each day.

Thabelo, touched by Tungu's plight, asked the school for her file, discussed her case with the school physio, and then made the following proposal to the principal: "Please allow me two to three weeks with Tungu, and then we can assess her case further".

Thabelo's strategy was to meet Tungu at her dormitory before the start of the school day at 7 AM. Thabelo tells of Tungu's curious delight that first morning when Thabelo told her, "You and I, we are going to practise for you to walk on your own".

And so, over the period of the school term, with the gift of patient encouragement from Thabelo, Tungu learnt to walk. At first, following a handrail, she slowly built up confidence and strengthened her muscles. Then, when she was securely trailing along the handrailing, Thabelo and her practised walking in open spaces where there were no supports. In the process, Thabelo found systems with the help of fellow staff members, assistant teachers, the physio, and teachers who all encouraged and supported Tungu to learn to walk on her own.

It still takes Tungu a while to get from her dormitory to the section for children with multiple disabilities, but she can now walk with her friends. Tungu no longer sits alone on a chair waiting for a lift.

Tungu struggled to hold a spoon, which meant she was unable to feed herself. Thanks to Thabelo's patient training, Tungu learnt to hold a spoon and she is able to feed herself now.

Tungu's grandmom is her primary caregiver. When her granny came to fetch her for the holidays, Thabelo asked to meet her. Thabelo wanted to encourage her to allow Tungu to do things on her own. "When you do the dishes, ask her to help you."

The two women could hardly share a word of greeting because Tungu was bursting to tell her granny how she had learnt to walk on her own. "With Tungu, I would say I have achieved a lot," said Thabelo. "Working together as a team, we made a big difference in this child's life."

*not her real name



Pictured from left: client Dunisani, practitioner Rosetta and monitoring consultant Moira during her field visit.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We have spoken about the gift of independence. But what about receiving gifts?

Moira Higgerty's presence at SAMBT is one of our most cherished gifts.

Her gift to us is the depth of her knowledge in the field of Orientation and Mobility training and how she applies this knowledge to her role as a Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant.

Moira provides crucial support to our practitioners. She is in weekly contact with the practitioners and monitors their training through our customised

web-based client data and training platform – e-work. She also assists practitioners with any challenges they may have, for example, when a blind person has additional disabilities, their living situation makes independence difficult, or even when a person who is recently blind struggles to accept their loss of sight.

Moira, together with management, regularly visits our practitioners in the field. In the year under review, we made 22 field trips to our practitioners in the field.

Moira made the majority of them.

The Gift of Being Seen: Advocacy for Independence

Bringing the gift of independence to individual blind people is an integral part of what we do. For Portia, in the rural North West, her husband could return to work after training helped her regain her independence and the ability to care for their two young children. “I feel like a human being again,” she said.

But our work extends beyond the individual. What have we done this past year to advocate for the visibility of blind people and their inclusion into the everyday lives of their families and communities?

We regularly hold events in various forms, from workshops for cashiers at a local supermarket to larger events at a local clinic with government officials in attendance. The topics vary but always include basic sensitisation to blindness as a

disability. We also offer attendees the opportunity to experience some activities with blindfolds on to improve empathy. Sometimes, our events include a long cane rally with local traffic police helping with road safety.

Our goal is for blind people to be acknowledged and respected as integral members of the community. We want the whole neighbourhood to know that their blind neighbour is just like everyone else, the only difference being that their eyes don’t work the same.

Our Managing Trustee held various talks at hospitals, clinics, and government departments. One was for the Department of Higher Education & Training at a national workshop in Bloemfontein, centred around inclusive support for community education and training colleges.



Gcinumuzi is a pastor. He can now get to church on his own.



Governance

Our gift of independence follows the disability rights slogan of “Nothing for us without us”. Five of our board members are blind. This includes Parishna Ramluckan, our Managing Trustee.

We thank our Chairman, Silomo Khumalo, and Deputy Chair, Silindile Makhaye, for their unwavering dedication and commitment to bringing independence and dignity to people who are blind. Our Founder, Ian Hutton’s gift is his continued guidance, wisdom and ever-present sense of humour. Our Treasurer, Avril Halstead’s clarity of advice remains invaluable.

All our board members bring skills relevant to our work and their roles as Trustees. These include Thabisile Levin, Rhulani Baloyi and Nnyana Mokale. Isabella Holden resigned from the board after more than ten years of service. We thank her for her devotion.

The board met five times during the year under review. Quarterly finance meetings were held with our Treasurer and management.

Plans for the 2024–25 Financial Year

Our approach remains one of radical outreach. We still train every blind person from their own home and each blind child from their school classroom and dormitory. We still travel to remote rural areas, townships, colleges and schools for the blind, ensuring we reach as many blind people as possible.

This year, we are looking forward to running 28 training programmes.

More than 350 blind people from all nine provinces will receive the gift of independence.



Ruth exploring her neighbourhood independently.

Thank you to our Donors

To our donors, a heartfelt thank you. Whether you are one of the 40 corporates, trusts or foundations, the National Lotteries Commission, a government department, or our wonderful individual donors both here and in the United States – you have given 354 blind people the gift of independence, wrapped with dignity.

The 354 blind people we trained now have the skills and confidence they need to do things for themselves, their families, and their community – and to do this independently. The skills they learn will last them for the rest of their lives. As Freddy (who was trained by our practitioner Thabelo in 2018) said the other day, “What Thabelo taught me, I will never, ever forget”.

We especially thank the John and Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust for bringing the gift of independence to all the blind people we have trained since our inception in 1998.

We are excited that four government departments brought independence training to their blind citizens this past year.

- Gauteng Department of Health;
- KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health;
- North West Department of Health;
- Western Cape Department of Health.

Thank you also to every one of our donors who has visited us in the field.



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Stanley and Alison Sher

Sun Slots Shared Services

Victor Daitz Foundation



Audited Financial Statements

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

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Note(s)	2024 R	2023 R
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Equipment	3	834 123	831 411
Current Assets			
Inventories	5	321 527	197 421
Accrued income	4	548 666	492 307
Prepayments		11 000	-
Cash and cash equivalents	6	8 000 383	6 944 487
		8 881 576	7 634 215
Total Assets		9 715 699	8 465 626
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust capital	7	100	100
Reserves		3 586 025	2 975 654
Accumulated surplus		3 050 071	2 169 457
		6 636 196	5 145 211
Liabilites			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts payable	9	6 478	11 263
Deferred income	10	3 027 944	3 264 071
Provisions	11	45 081	45 081
		3 079 503	3 320 415
Total Equity and Liabilities		9 715 699	8 465 626

Audited Financial Statements

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

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Note(s)	2024 R	2023 R
Other income	12	6 933 281	5 542 259
Operating expenses		-5 960 469	-4 752 877
Operating surplus		972 812	789 382
Investment revenue	13	518 173	301 286
Prior year correction of deferred income	15	-	30 000
		1 490 985	1 120 668
Other comprehensive income		1 490 985	1 120 668

Audited Financial Statements

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

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Note(s)	2024 R	2023 R
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	18	835 210	1 845 731
Interest income		518 173	301 286
Net cash from operating activities		1 353 383	2 147 017
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of equipment	3	-297 487	-473 412
Total cash movement for the year		1 055 896	1 673 605
Cash at the beginning of the year		6 944 487	5 270 882
Cash at the end of the year		8 000 383	6 944 487

How to Give the Gift of Equality to a Blind Person

- 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; and/or
- Donate to SAMBT.



Learning how to use a talking watch.



South African Mobility for the Blind Trust

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NPO Registration no.: 007-220 NPO

PBO: 18/11/13/1400

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www.sambt.org.za

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To donate:

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FNB

Account Number: 62927387987

Branch Code: 250655

America:

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