

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Engine Room for Collective Power



THE EQUALITY
COLLECTIVE



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Participants in our annual Human Rights Workshop in July 2023, after a 67-minute beach clean-up to mark Nelson Mandela Day.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT US

The Equality Collective is an activist, community-embedded law organisation based in Nqileni village in Mbhashe Local Municipality in the deep rural Eastern Cape. We build and network power in support of advocacy campaigns for greater socio-economic equity based on extensive research and expert analysis.

OUR MISSION

We are innovative in the advancement of access to justice, build the capacity and infrastructure for collective participation and action, and share research and learning to create a more just and caring society.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to have thriving communities collectively participating in a just and caring society.

OUR WORK

Our work centres our communities and their lived struggles. We prioritise the needs of marginalised communities, especially women and children.

We are working to achieve improved access to socio-economic rights; enhanced responsive governance and accountability; and a stronger, more active citizenry. This work is based on three pillars.

1. **Collective Action and Public Participation:** Strengthened collective action and enhanced knowledge and awareness are advanced through supporting democratic role-players; building, supporting, and coordinating collective participation and action; and coordinating advocacy campaigns.
2. **Access to Justice:** Access to justice is advanced by networking power, providing basic legal services, and providing training and support.
3. **Research and Learning:** Evidence-informed action is advanced through research; service delivery monitoring; and producing community data for advocacy.

Under these pillars of work, we run two big campaigns—Real Reform for Early Childhood Development (Real Reform for ECD) and Amanzi Kumntu Wonke—in which we act as a dynamo in the coalitions that drive the campaigns’ work. We do this by providing secretariat, research, and monitoring support. Our role is to ensure that the coalition remains capacitated, resourced, focused, and committed to carrying out the mandate of the movement or campaign.

In other words, the Equality Collective is a powerful backbone organisation that works in a ‘collective’ across all its campaigns.

We are the engine room for collective power.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The rights enshrined in our Constitution have provided millions with hope for a more equal country based on dignity and freedom, but the rural context in which the Equality Collective works reinforces a perception that constitutional rights are ‘paper rights’ (i.e. worth no more than the paper they are written on). Rural areas in South Africa have been historically neglected by the government, private, and civil society sectors alike and remain far from centres of power with no direct access to a fabric of organisational support. Very few organisations that work to ensure access to and fulfilment of socio-economic rights extend their scope of work to South Africa’s deep rural areas. The Equality Collective was founded, in 2020, to address this gap and to work with rural communities to build power through collective participation and action.



Real Reformers singing at the Right to Nutrition campaign launch in Finetown, Johannesburg, in November 2023.

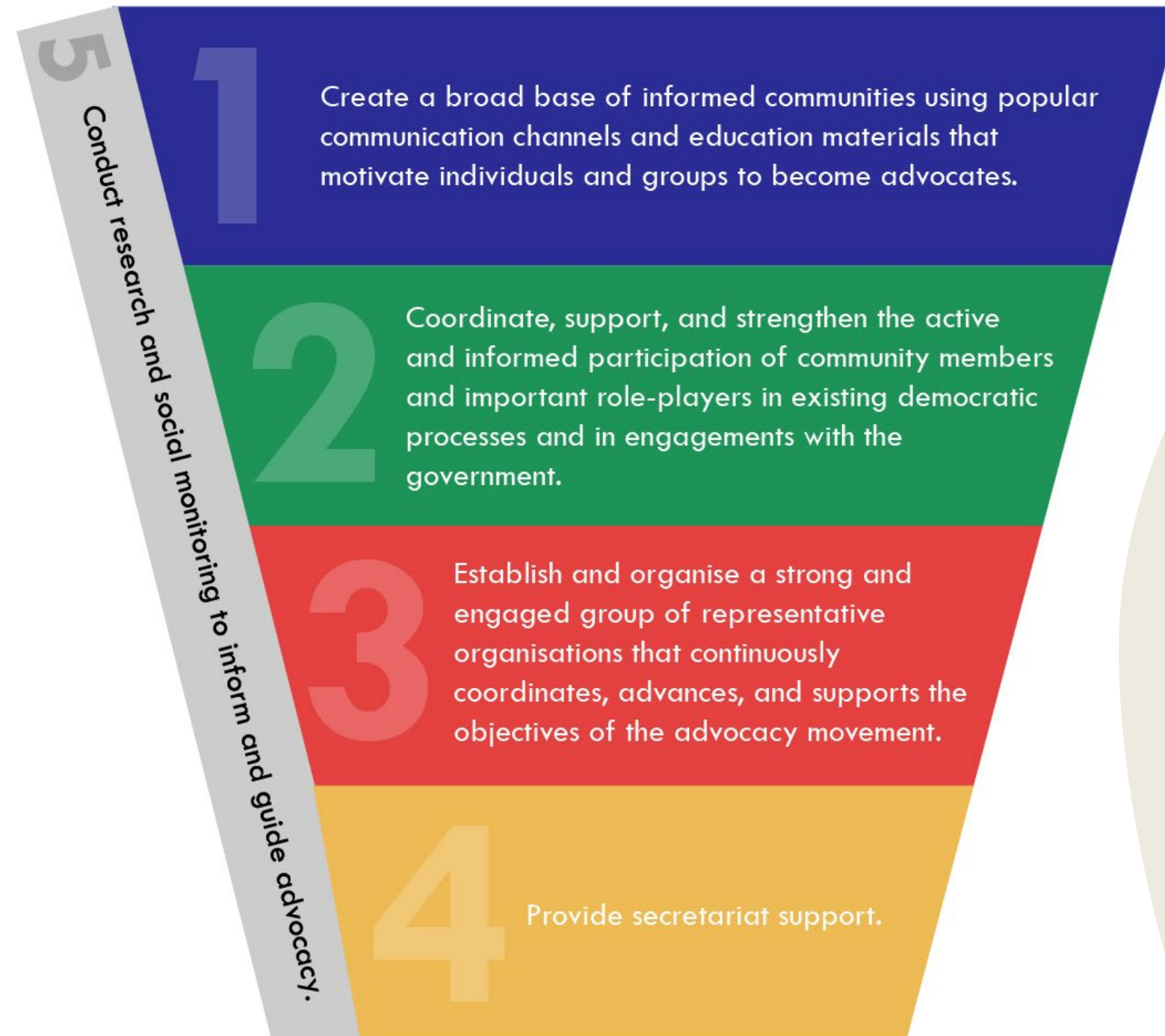


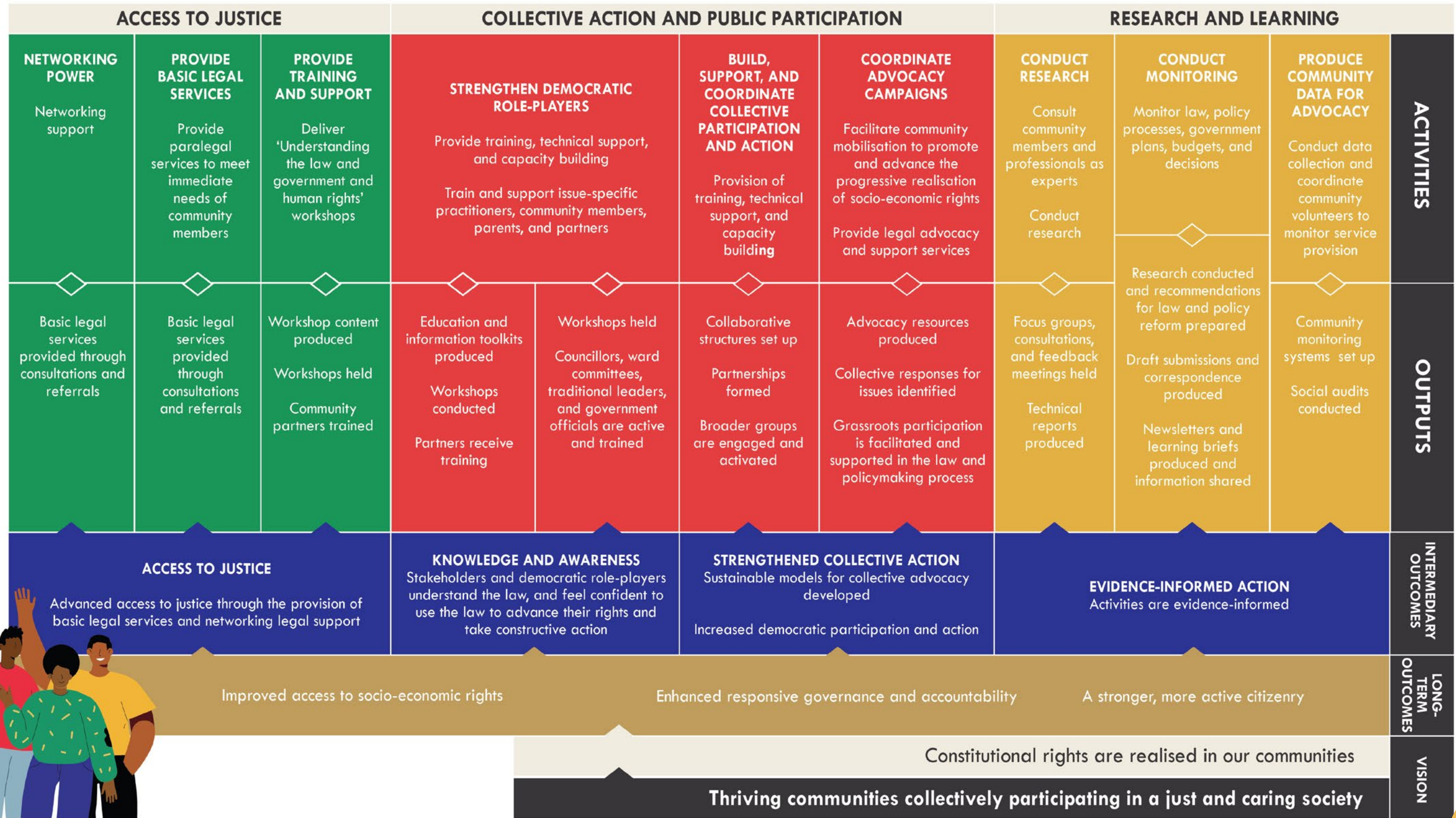
OUR ADVOCACY MODEL

EXPLANATION

1. Collective advocacy starts with awareness campaigns that have a broad focus while also targeting specific important role-players. As awareness of rights grows, some individuals and groups will be motivated to take action.
2. Individuals and groups who want to become advocates are trained, coordinated, and supported to take collective action and to use the democratic processes available to them.
3. The collective advocacy movement is steered and directed by a strong and engaged group of representative organisations that actively engages to coordinate, advance, and support the objectives and activities of the movement.
4. Secretariat support is provided to ensure the collective advocacy movement remains organised, focused, and on track. Currently, the Equality Collective fulfills this role in all its projects.
5. Research and social monitoring ensures evidence-informed awareness campaigns, advocacy actions, and legislative proposals.

The Equality Collective Model for Collective Advocacy Towards a Just and Caring Society





OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Equality Collective’s Board is comprised of a diverse group of dedicated individuals committed to advancing social justice and equality. The Board members bring a wealth of experience from various fields, including human rights, education, law, and community activism. They work collaboratively to guide the strategic direction of the organisation, ensuring that its mission to promote collective power and equality is achieved.

In 2023, we said goodbye to our Chairperson, Khaya Tyatya, due to personal circumstances. Khaya was on our Board for four years and his contribution was pivotal in shaping what the Equality Collective is today.

Under his leadership, we successfully navigated numerous strategic decisions, further defining the Equality Collective’s pillars of work, values, and vision.

[Find out more about our Board](#)



KHAYA TYATYA
CHAIRPERSON (2021—2023)



YANA VAN LEEVE
INTERIM CHAIRPERSON



MEGAN BRYER
SECRETARY



TESS PEACOCK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AND FOUNDER



REJANE WOODROFFE
TREASURER



LUNGA SIYO
BOARD MEMBER



**HOMBAKAZI MERCY
NQANDEKA**
ADVISORY MEMBER



OUR TEAM

The Equality Collective’s team is a dynamic group of individuals dedicated to promoting social justice and equality. Each team member brings a unique set of skills and experiences, contributing to the organisation’s mission through advocacy, education, and community engagement. The team’s collaborative approach emphasises coalition-building and collective power, embodying the core values of the Equality Collective.

[Find out more about our team](#)



TESS PEACOCK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AND FOUNDER



ZOË POSTMAN
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



TSHEPO MANTJE
RIGHT TO ECD COORDINATOR



NOLUVO MANDUKWINI
RIGHT TO WATER COORDINATOR



TINOTENDA MURINGANI
INTERN RESEARCHER



BABALWA SIDELO
ADMIN INTERN



OUR PARTNERS



Dower
DCAP

SOL PLAATJE
EDUCATIONAL
PROJECT



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

As we approach our fifth year, the Equality Collective is truly flourishing. This past year the organisation outgrew the Bulungula Incubator's premises, moving to a new hilltop office in Nqileni village. Creating this space was a labour of love, with each team member pitching in with dedication that has become synonymous with the Equality Collective. In building an organisation that is both resilient and sustainable, we have sought to strengthen our operational foundations by adopting a Handbook of Staff Policies reflective of our ethos. In this way, we are working to ensure continuity in the impactful work of the organisation.

Furthering access to justice in 2023, the Equality Collective continued to provide weekly walk-in paralegal services, reaching over 200 beneficiaries. We conducted workshops not only to improve community members' awareness of rights and responsibilities but also to support their participation in democratic processes. For the first time, two workshops on the annual municipal planning and budgeting processes were held in the region. These workshops fed into our community submission on Amathole's annual Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

Meanwhile, our work on the right to water made impressive progress. Our volunteer Water Ambassadors continue to help us generate quality data and analysis on the Mncwasa Water Scheme. We secured a major win in 2023, with the start of refurbishment work on the scheme. This has yielded tangible improvements. Whereas the year started with the whole scheme without water for nearly four months, December 2023 was the first month, since data collection started, that all 32 scheme reservoirs received water for an extended period. As we strive for even greater gains, we will sustain pressure for more funds to be allocated for the refurbishment while further strengthening data collection.

Our groundbreaking work on ECD is spearheaded through the Real Reform for ECD movement. In 2023, we mobilised ECD practitioners to make IDP submissions to their municipalities; launched our Right to Nutrition campaign; co-developed an ECD manifesto for the 2024 elections; and continued to advocate for the adoption of evidence-informed reforms in the redrafted Children's Amendment Bill, Regulations, and Norms and Standards. Amid

great excitement, First Lady Dr Tshepo Motsepe delivered the keynote at the Right to Nutrition launch, attended by a combined total of over 200 practitioners, community partners, and stakeholders, online and in person. The campaign calls on the government to provide nutritional support to all early learning programmes regardless of their registration status.

A big thank you is owed to each and all who have joined and supported our journey this past year; not least to our Executive Director, Tess Peacock, who through consistent and tremendous hard work has built a thriving organisation based on the principles of autonomy, accountability, love, excellence, collaboration, and substantive equality.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2024, the Equality Collective will collaborate in a multi-partner project, Sophakama, co-funded by the European Union and Viva con Agua South Africa. The project aims to build civic agency and strengthen social accountability in rural municipalities in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Mpumalanga, and

North West, with a core emphasis on water service delivery. We will focus on the Eastern Cape and expand our work to new areas in the Amathole region, based on our experience and lessons learnt in Mbhashe.

We will continue to work to further access to justice in our communities while building and sustaining the momentum of our ECD campaigns. In particular, Real Reform for ECD will push for the tabling of the redrafted Children's Amendment Bill in Parliament as soon as possible after the general elections and assist municipalities to effectively champion ECD as a local government priority.

It is with great pleasure that we continue to serve on the Board of the Equality Collective and to see its strategy and mission come to life.

The Equality Collective Board



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EMBRACING OUR VALUES IN ACTION

As we reflect on the past year at the Equality Collective, it's evident that our journey has been guided by a steadfast commitment to our core values. In 2023, we embarked on a mission to deepen our impact and expand our team, all while staying true to the essence of who we are.

One of our major achievements was securing multi-year grants from the Raith Foundation and the European Union (the latter in collaboration with Afesis, Governance and Livelihoods Agenda, and Rural Democracy Trust). This funding marks a significant step towards achieving our objectives and sustaining our mission. With this newfound support, we are poised to bring additional capacity on board in 2024, enabling us to further our mission and reach even more communities in need.

However, beyond the numbers and milestones lies a deeper story of growth and transformation. Throughout the year, we prioritised strengthening the culture of our organisation, culminating in the finalisation of our comprehensive Handbook of Staff Policies. At its heart lies a profound commitment to our values—the very essence of the Equality Collective.

LOVE

We strive to create a nurturing environment where love permeates every interaction. From showing kindness and respect to fostering passion and ownership, we embrace a culture of care in everything we do.

AUTONOMY

Recognising the inherent value of every team member, we champion autonomy and empowerment. By fostering a flatter structure and encouraging co-creation, we empower individuals to bring their unique ideas and creativity to their roles fostering a strong sense of ownership and responsibility.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We recognise that we won't always get things right and that we need to be able to have the hard conversations when necessary. Accountability means being able to address issues constructively, with love, care, and respect. We are committed to building both horizontal and vertical accountability mechanisms.

COLLABORATION

As our name suggests, collaboration is central to our work. We build coalitions and foster

participatory communications to ensure that collective action is at the core of our efforts. Collaboration is woven into the DNA of our organisation, guiding how we work internally and with our partners.

EXCELLENCE

We are continually pushing ourselves to grow and deliver work we are proud of. While we strive for excellence, we also hold space for mistakes and growth, recognising that these are integral to our journey.

SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY

In a community with over 90% unemployment, we are acutely aware of the importance of substantive equality. This value guides our interactions with the community and informs our internal practices. We are committed to equitable principles and ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued within our organisation. Through biannual culture surveys, we continuously assess and address any harmful practices to create an inclusive and supportive environment.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering support and dedication of our staff, Board members, partners, and community members. Thank you to the staff for walking this journey so intentionally in developing our organisational culture. Thank you to our Board, who have continued to support our work and for the support you continue to give me personally. Thank you to our partners, supporters, and community members for your continued support and dedication to our mission.

A special thanks to Kudrat Virk, who stepped in as Acting Director from December 2022 to March 2023 while I took a sabbatical. I had a wonderful adventure and rest while she showed tremendous leadership and courage to move to Nqileni village and help work on a social justice start-up. Her support has been so instrumental that she has continued her partnership with us as an Associate Director since then.

We sadly bid farewell to our Chairperson last year, Khaya Tyatya, after he suffered a personal tragedy. I conclude by paying a special tribute to him and the work he did for the Equality Collective as we close out the Annual Report for 2023. Thank you, Khaya.

As we move forward, we remain intentional about our journey and are committed to growing our work within the fabric of these values. Together, we can build thriving communities and a just, caring society.

Thank you for your continued support and stay in touch. We welcome your feedback.

With gratitude,

Tess Peacock
Executive Director



2023 HIGHLIGHTS



ACTIVE CITIZENRY

- We hosted two workshops on the annual Integrated Development Plan review processes in our region, bringing together 28 community members in total.
- We hosted an interactive webinar to take Amathole District Municipality (ADM) coalition members through the process of preparing and making an IDP submission.
- We have a team of 32 trained and active Water Ambassadors who are voluntarily monitoring water reliability and reporting incidents across 40 villages every day.
- Real Reform for ECD hosted six IDP workshops in six municipalities, with participants making submissions of their own to their respective municipalities after the workshops.
- Real Reform for ECD hosted a meeting with ECD practitioners, local councillors, and the IDP manager in uPongolo Local Municipality (KZN), bringing them together to facilitate an exchange of ideas and encourage collaboration on ECD initiatives.
- We attended ECD-focused community meetings in Tsekane (Ekurhuleni) and Orange Farm (Johannesburg), hosted by the Gauteng Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education, aimed at bringing together ECD stakeholders to support advocacy efforts in the two municipalities.



PARTNERSHIPS

- We made an IDP submission to ADM, in partnership with the Mncwasa Advisory Committee consisting of the Equality Collective, Viva con Agua, Community Development Workers, traditional leaders, and three ward councillors.
- We hosted our first gender-based violence (GBV) workshop series in partnership with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.
- We provide backbone secretariat support to 11 other Steering Committee member partners of the Real Reform for ECD movement, which is supported by over 200 organisations.
- We coordinated the research teams that developed the three papers that informed Real Reform for ECD's Right to Nutrition campaign. The research teams included multiple organisations including the DG Murray Trust, Do More Foundation, Equal Education Law Centre, Ilifa Labantwana, and Legal Resources Centre.
- We co-hosted a weekly Friday Frank Conversation series showcasing SAJHR papers on early childhood development, in partnership with the South African Journal on Human Rights, Centre for Child Law, Centre for Law and Society, and Ilifa Labantwana.
- Real Reform for ECD signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Breede Valley Municipality to work together in good faith to ensure an enabling policy and regulatory environment in the municipality for the provision and expansion of ECD services



PEOPLE

- Through our walk-in paralegal services and outreach days, we reached over 200 beneficiaries.
- We reached over 600 ECD practitioners in our Real Reform for ECD workshops.
- We attended 11 community meetings, reaching 18 villages, in which we informed communities about water issues and their rights and responsibilities while encouraging their participation in the Amanzi Kumntu Wonke campaign.





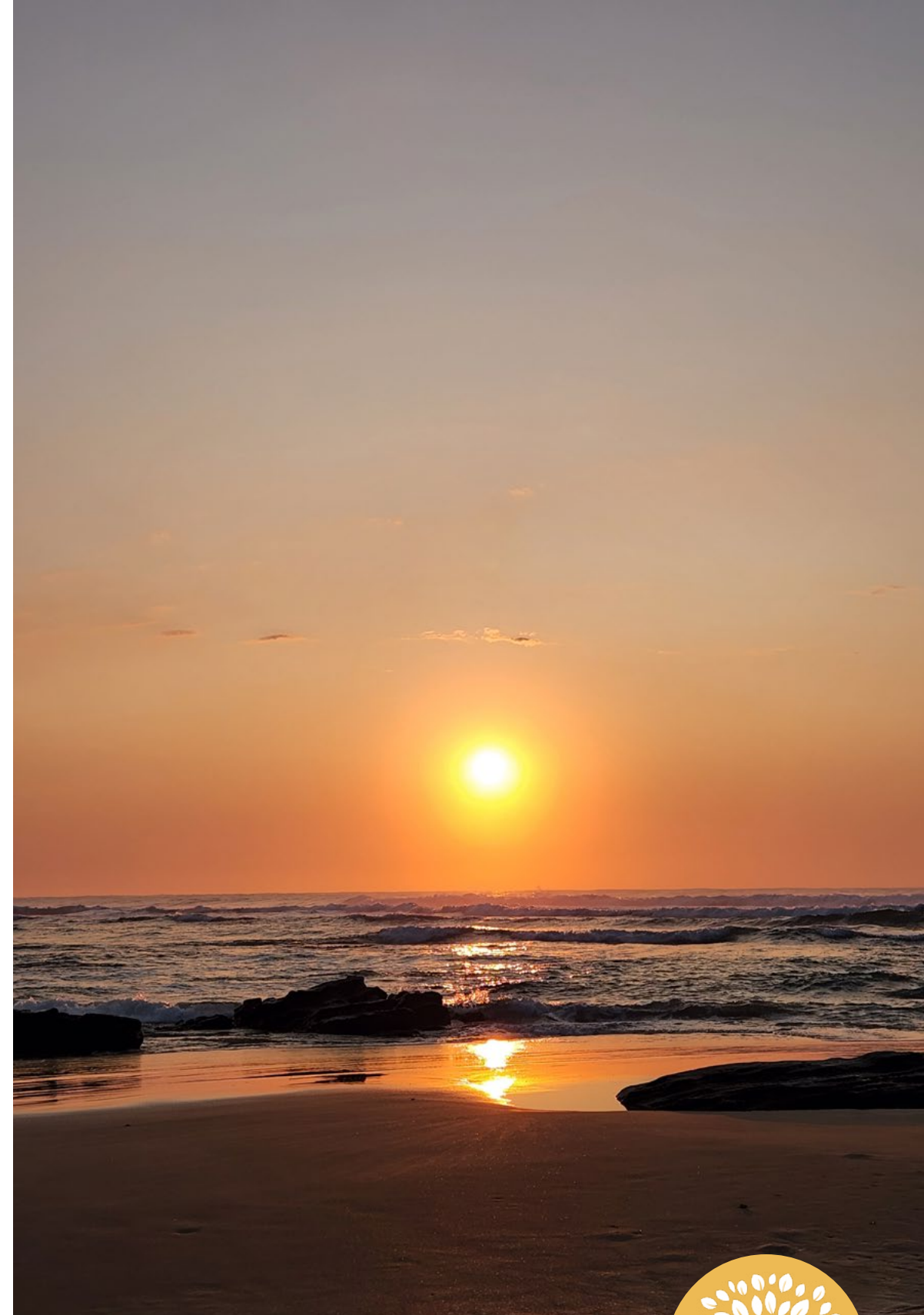
CAMPAIGNS

- Real Reform for ECD: Right to Nutrition campaign was launched with about 200 people in attendance and online. The Department of Basic Education was also in attendance and the First Lady, Dr Tshepo Motsepe, was the keynote address.
- Amanzi Kumntu Wonke: ADM appointed engineering consultants to refurbish the Mncwasa Water Scheme, with R6.5 million allocated for the first year from its Water Services Infrastructure Grant.
- Amanzi Kumntu Wonke: We leveraged R35.5 million over a four-year period (2023–2027) for the Mncwasa Water Scheme's refurbishment.
- Amanzi Kumntu Wonke: ADM rescinded the reappointment of a chief financial officer with pending corruption charges.



MEDIA AND COMMS

- We released two media statements on ADM's reappointment of a CFO with pending corruption charges.
- We published an [op-ed](#) in the Daily Maverick on the Auditor-General's report in relation to ADM.
- The Right to Nutrition campaign appeared in over [40 media appearances](#) including Cape Talk, Newzroom Afrika, SABC, and GroundUp News.
- Real Reform for ECD produced a three-part Right to Nutrition [op-ed series](#) in the Daily Maverick.
- Real Reform for ECD released four media statements relating to the national budget allocation for ECD, the [2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study \(PIRLS\)](#) report and the role of ECD in reading for meaning, and our Right to Nutrition campaign.



MILESTONES



Moved into our own office building



Implemented a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system



Increased funding by 40%



Approved the organisation's Handbook of Staff Policies



Fostered an organisational culture where our values are truly practised, according to our staff anonymous survey

OFFICE MOVE

Moving into our new office building was an unforgettable moment for us. For the past three years, the [Bulungula Incubator](#) generously opened their office space to us as we worked towards establishing the organisation in our community. In August 2023, we moved into our own offices at the Lemongrass Building in Nqileni—signifying our growth and independence.

In our traditional context, it is customary to inform the traditional leadership (iBhodi) of your intention to occupy a new piece of land and explain what you will be doing for the community. Our team met with iBhodi who congratulated us on our organisation's growth and welcomed us onto the land. This was an important step in deepening our relationship with our traditional leaders and embedding ourselves in the existing structures of our community.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Internally, we developed a rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system across all of our streams of work that will allow us to track our impact in relation to our objectives. The M&E system is being fully operationalised across all our portfolios in 2024.

FUNDRAISING

We grew our funding by over 40% from R2,989,131 in 2022 to R4,372,194 in 2023 and by the end of 2023, we successfully secured three new funders, of which two committed to multi-year grants going into 2024.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

We workshopped, strengthened, and adopted a comprehensive set of general policies and procedures in consultation with our staff.



The Equality Collective team working on our new offices which we officially moved into in August 2023.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE



Seeing that we are an embedded organisation, we have to be responsive to the needs of our community in ways that we can. Our gender-based violence workshops were a huge highlight for me because it was clear to us that there was a need and want from the community for this to be addressed and we responded. We are not GBV experts but we were able to work in partnership with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation to provide our community with the support they needed.

—Zoë Postman, Head of Communications



ACCESS TO JUSTICE HIGHLIGHTS

23

Opened 23 cases through our walk-in clinic and paralegal outreach services.

200

Hosted six paralegal outreach days in three wards in Mbhashe, reaching about 200 community members.

100

Hosted our first workshop series on gender-based violence, reaching over 100 people in the three wards.

20

Trained 20 community members on human rights at our annual human rights workshop.

21

Trained 21 students from Bulungula College on human rights.

The Equality Collective sees itself as part of the bridge that connects our rural community with legal and social support. Our communities are far away from the cities where police stations, courtrooms, lawyers, and so forth are based. We strive to meet the immediate legal needs of our communities through our weekly paralegal clinic and our paralegal outreach days and by networking legal support for cases.

In conjunction with meeting the immediate needs of our community, we also workshop the law, human rights, the role of the government, and active citizenry with our community to ensure that they are capacitated to participate in democratic processes—even without the Equality Collective.

A major highlight for us, in 2023, was hosting our first gender-based violence workshop series, in partnership with the [Centre for Applied Legal Studies](#) and [Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation](#), in three wards in our region. Despite its prevalence in our communities, this was the first time GBV was specifically addressed in this way. We look forward to continuing this impactful work in 2024 as we work towards a just and caring community, especially for women and children.



We held gender-based violence workshops in partnership with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies and Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.



COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION AND ACTION

Children from Learn n Play Day Centre in Orange Farm were our special guest performers at our Right to Nutrition campaign launch in November 2023.





“ In Breede Valley, Real Reform for ECD’s success can be attributed to the active engagement of ECD forums and a responsive local government. Over the past three years, the Integrated Development Plan of Breede Valley has increasingly incorporated ECD priorities. This progress is a testament to the persistent advocacy efforts of the ECD community and the constructive collaboration with municipal officials. ”

—Tshepo Mantje, Right to ECD Coordinator

A Real Reformer participating in the panel discussion held at the Right to Nutrition campaign launch in November 2023.

REAL REFORM FOR ECD HIGHLIGHTS



Launched the Right to Nutrition campaign with a combined total of over 200 people in attendance online and in person.



Produced the Right to Nutrition three-part [podcast series](#), reaching over 300 listeners.



IDP submissions were made in six municipalities by ECD practitioners on ECD-related issues in their communities.

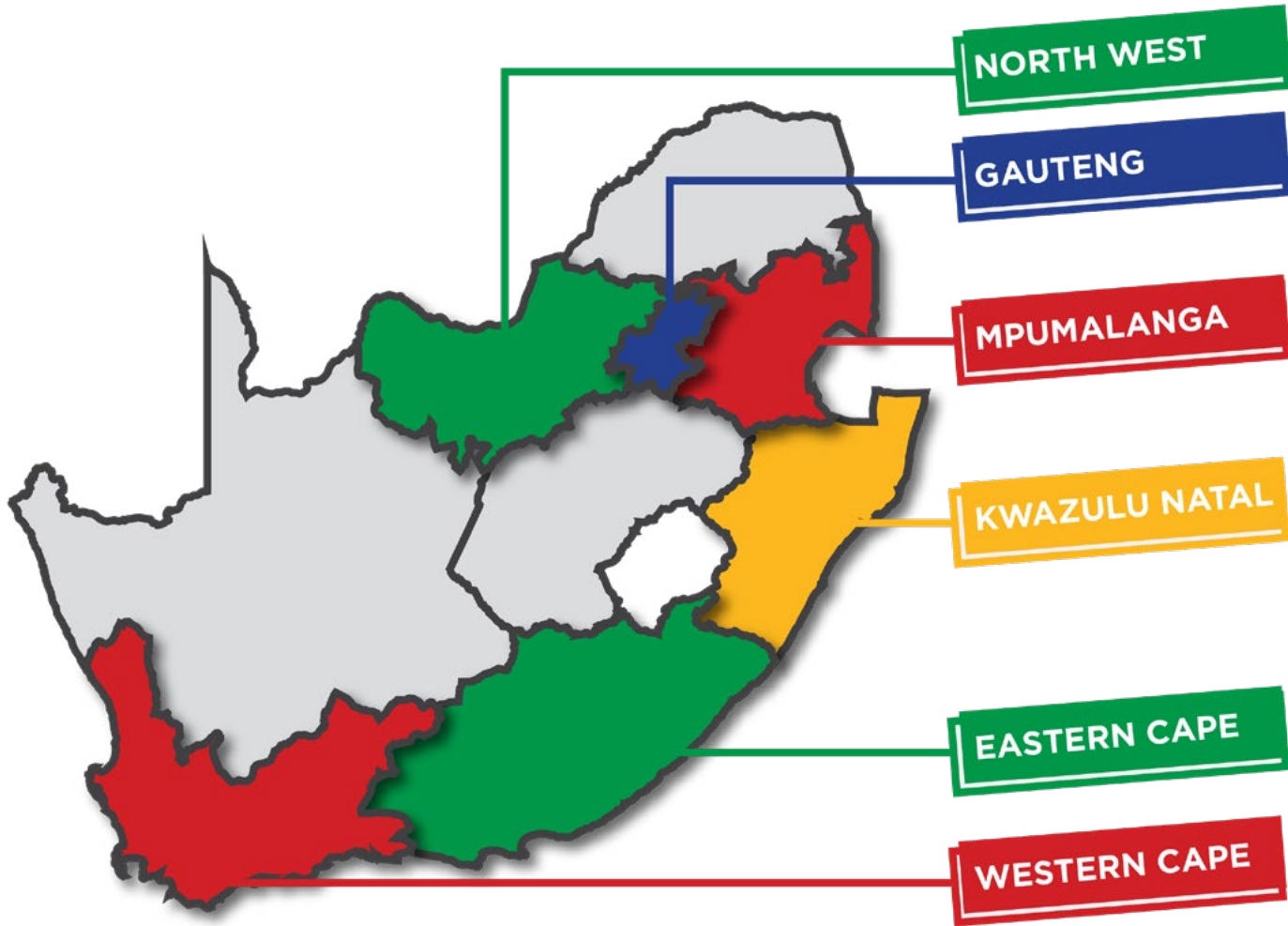


Facilitated the development of the ECD Manifesto by the ECD sector, ahead of the 2024 general elections, which has since garnered the support of over 5,800 people, 170 organisations, and three political parties (Democratic Alliance, Rise Mzansi, and ActionSA).




[Real Reform for ECD](#) is a national movement driven by a coalition of 11 other early childhood development (ECD) organisations and individuals that form its Steering Committee, which the Equality Collective coordinates and capacitates to execute the work of the movement. We are supported by over 200 organisations and have a network of over 600 ECD practitioners across the country.

REAL REFORM FOR ECD’S PARTNERSHIP FOOTPRINT



REAL REFORM FOR ECD CURRENTLY HAS FOUR ACTIVE CAMPAIGNS CALLING FOR REFORM IN THE ECD SECTOR:

**MAKE THE BILL BETTER**


Aim: Evidence-informed reforms are adopted in the Children’s Amendment Bill (2023) (previously known as the Second Children’s Amendment Bill or SCAB).

**MAKE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORK FOR ECD**

Aim: Local government creates safe and vibrant care and learning spaces for young children by prioritising, planning, and budgeting appropriately for ECD and removing municipal barriers to registration and expansion of ECD services.

**RIGHT TO NUTRITION**

Aim: Nutritional support is provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to all early learning programmes regardless of their registration status.

**RIGHT TO ECD**

Aim: The right to holistic ECD is legally recognised.

Ahead of the 2024 general elections, the Steering Committee decided to facilitate the development of a People’s Manifesto for Early Childhood Development (ECD Manifesto) by the ECD sector as a strategic advocacy campaign. This decision was taken in anticipation of different political party manifestos that would be released ahead of the general elections.





MAKE THE BILL BETTER

Real Reform for ECD sprouted, in 2020, from the collective resistance of thousands of ECD practitioners and stakeholders, who said no to a Children's Amendment Bill that did not meet the needs of the ECD sector. We demanded that the Bill be revised to include the following:



REFORM 1

A one-stop registration for ECD providers



REFORM 2

Access to a per child subsidy for all children who need it



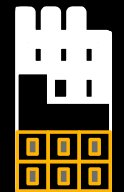
REFORM 3

Simpler, adequate health, safety, and programme standards



REFORM 4

Support to meet registration requirements



REFORM 4

Infrastructure support and development for ECD providers

We considered the halt in tabling the Bill before Parliament a victory for us and, between 2020 and 2022, Ilifa Labantwana, SmartStart South Africa, Equality Collective, and Equal Education Law Centre sat on the DBE's Technical Task Team that worked on a revised Bill. However, three years since the original Bill was withdrawn, the revised Bill has not found its way to Parliament. In June 2023, we sent a letter to the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, requesting an update on and prioritisation of the Bill. We further updated our stakeholders on the status of the Bill, with a call to be ready for a relaunch of the campaign. Now, the prioritisation of the Bill is one of the main demands in our ECD Manifesto and we intend to make sure that this Bill is tabled before Parliament in 2024 and passed in 2025.



RIGHT TO NUTRITION

In November 2023, Real Reform for ECD launched its biggest campaign of the year in Gauteng—the [Right to Nutrition campaign](#)—with a combined total of over 200 ECD practitioners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and partners in attendance online and in person. The campaign aimed to influence the DBE's planned nutrition pilot through [our research reports and recommendations](#), to highlight the importance of early nutrition in a young child's life, and to address the lack of access to nutrition by the poorest, most vulnerable young children.

The Right to Nutrition campaign was cited in over [40 media publications](#), including an [op-ed series](#) in the Daily Maverick covering the three research papers that informed the campaign. We also produced a [three-part podcast series](#) that interviewed the researchers of the papers and ECD practitioners who face the challenge of providing nutritious meals with very little resources every day.

The Equality Collective played a leading role in planning and executing this campaign through our coordination function as the Secretariat of Real Reform for ECD, as well as our advocacy expertise—further reinforcing our role as a dynamo in our coalitions.



A combined total of over 200 people online and in person, most of whom were ECD practitioners, attended the Right to Nutrition launch on 20 November 2023 in Finetown, Johannesburg.





Tshepo Mantje, Real Reform for ECD's Campaign Coordinator, workshopping the Sisonke ECD forum on making submissions to the municipality's IDP in March 2022.



MAKE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORK FOR ECD

Every year between February and April, Real Reform for ECD runs its Integrated Development Plan campaign, which aims to capacitate and support ECD practitioners to make submissions to their municipality's IDP. This is to ensure that ECD services are included in the municipality's IDP and are sufficiently budgeted for. This IDP campaign has grown from strength to strength every year as we continue to expand and activate our network of over 600 ECD practitioners through our critical community partners and ECD forums.

In 2023, we conducted workshops with six ECD forums in six municipalities who all made submissions to their respective municipality IDPs. These workshops were held in partnership with the [Do More Foundation](#), [Ubunye Foundation](#), [Ilifa Labantwana](#), Sisonke ECD Forum, and New Ithembalabantwana ECD Forum. [SmartStart](#), a member of the Real Reform for ECD Steering Committee, also made 300 IDP submissions across 14 municipalities through its network of ECD practitioners, significantly amplifying our collective impact.



RIGHT TO ECD

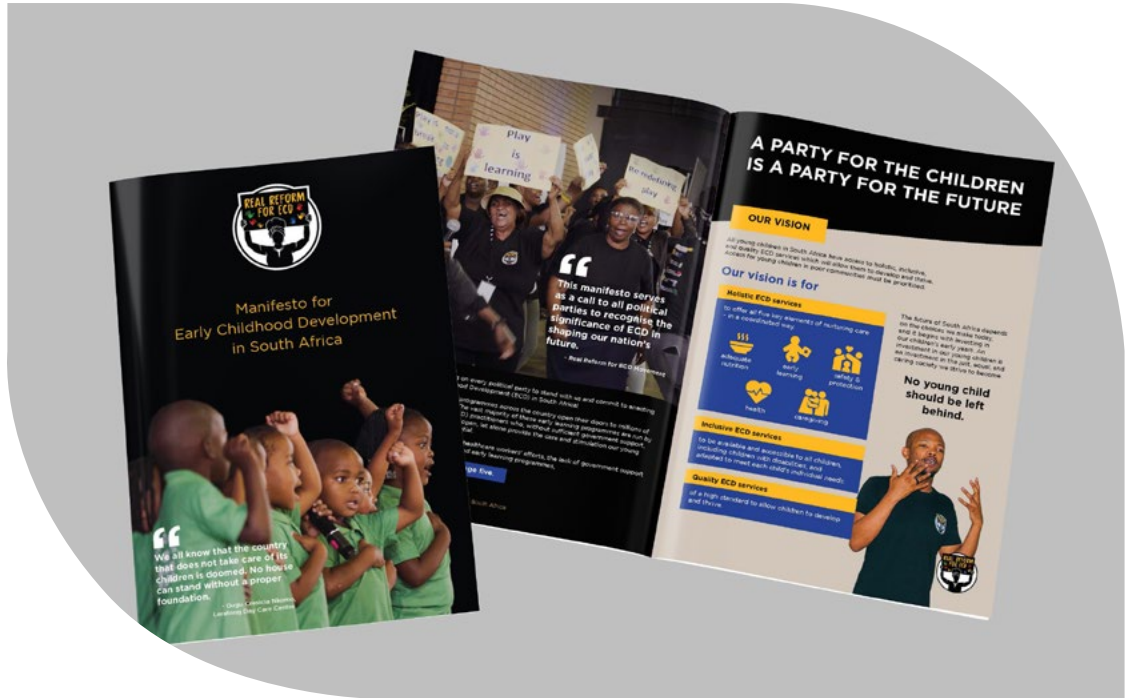
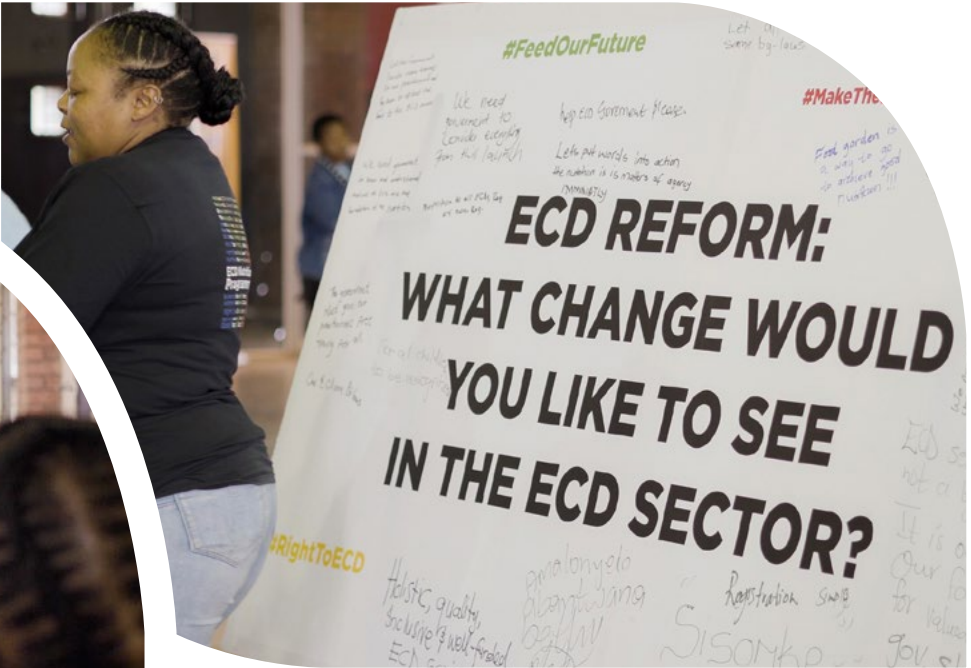
We previously commissioned Oxford Pro Bono Publico, based at the University of Oxford's Faculty of Law, to produce a two-part comparative research series on the right to ECD in comparative international and African jurisdictions and African human rights instruments. The aim of this research is to understand how other legal systems deal with ECD; why a particular approach has been adopted; and how it compares with South Africa's legal system. Part A and B of this research can be read [here](#) or under the resources section [here](#).



ECD MANIFESTO

In the latter half of 2023, in extensive consultation with ECD practitioners, NGOs, and stakeholders, the ECD sector, facilitated by Real Reform for ECD, drafted an [ECD Manifesto](#) detailing the critical issues that the incoming political leadership in 2024 should prioritise for ECD. This manifesto covers a range of key elements centred around the [nurturing care framework](#), which includes good health, adequate nutrition, opportunities for early learning, safe learning spaces, and responsive caregiving, as well as systemic solutions that will support the implementation of the recommendations made in the ECD Manifesto.

The aim was to get 10,000 signatures on the Manifesto by the time the 2024 general elections happened, to remind our incoming political leadership that **‘a party for the children is a party for the future’**.



Real Reform for ECD Steering Committee members consulting ECD practitioners at the Right to Nutrition launch on what should be included in the ECD Manifesto.







“What excites me the most is to see the water distribution change, to see ADM consider our scheme. This makes me excited because it shows that the work of Equality Collective is visible, and our presence is making a difference. And I am proud of the Water Ambassadors, because without them the work would never have been successful,”


—Noluvo Mandukwini Right to Water Coordinator


The Equality Collective hosted an 'Amanzi Kumntu Wonke: Collective Action for Water Justice' workshop at the National Arts Festival in Makhanda in June 2023.


AMANZI KUMNTU WONKE HIGHLIGHTS


- 

Leveraged R35.5 million over a four-year period (2023–2027) for the Mncwasa Water Scheme’s refurbishment.
- 

ADM signed a three-year contract with engineering consultants, Mariswe, for the refurbishment of the Mncwasa Water Scheme, with R6.5 million allocated for the first year from its Water Services Infrastructure Grant.
- 

Saw overall improvement in water availability in our villages, with December 2023 being the first month since we started collecting data in 2022 that all reservoirs received water for a period, including one reservoir that had never received water before.
- 

Sent daily, weekly, and monthly water reports to ADM who has expressed that these reports are useful in identifying issues with the scheme.
- 

ADM rescinded the appointment of its chief financial officer who had corruption charges pending against him following our media advocacy and letter to the MEC in which we called for ADM Council to withdraw his appointment.
- 

Aired a five-part educational radio show on the right to water, local government, and the Mncwasa Water Scheme, among other topics, which community members have said has helped them to better understand why they have inconsistent water and what they can do about it.



AMANZI KUMNTU WONKE TIMELINE

March-April 2021

- Community survey conducted
- Technical report submitted to ADM

March-July 2022

Pilot community monitoring system set up, covering 7–10 Mncwasa reservoir supply areas

August 2022

- Community monitoring system extended to cover all 32 Mncwasa reservoirs
- 100% data completeness achieved

R8 million allocated for the refurbishment of Mncwasa

August 2022 - present

Daily, weekly, and monthly reports sent to ADM

February-May 2023

No water is available across the scheme for 113 days

May 2023

- ADM and Mariswe sign three-year contract
- R6.5 million allocated in year one

September 2023

Mncwasa Command Reservoir has water every day of the month for the first time in nearly a year

ADM and Mariswe submit technical report to provincial water department.

Mariswe implements intervention to improve water reliability in the East section



Our Amanzi Kumntu Wonke campaign demonstrates collective participation and action through an innovative community monitoring system for our regional rural water scheme, the Mncwasa Water Scheme.

The scheme was built by Amathole District Municipality in 2010 and became operational in 2015. It was initially a beacon of hope for about 33,000 people who had no access to reliable and consistent water up until that point. Almost 10 years later, the scheme has not been sufficiently maintained and is thus unable to live up to its promise of ensuring consistent water flows to our taps. To address this issue, the Equality Collective works with 32 Water Ambassadors who monitor the 32 reservoirs along the Mncwasa Water Scheme, collecting data on water availability at the reservoir level on a daily basis. The Equality Collective then collates this data into daily, weekly, and monthly reports, which we share on our community radio station and WhatsApp groups, and with ADM.

In both Real Reform for ECD and Amanzi Kumntu Wonke, participating in municipalities' democratic processes, such as the annual IDP review processes, and working constructively with municipalities is a crucial part of our work. Municipalities are the sphere of government responsible for the provision and regulation of basic services, including water and ECD services, and they have a legal obligation to consult their communities on service delivery priorities.

We spend a substantial amount of time and resources on workshopping how communities can meaningfully engage with the annual IDP consultation process and ensure that their service delivery concerns, whether they be related to water or ECD, are included in the IDP and budgeted for by the municipality.

In addition to our IDP workshops in our Right to ECD work (see page 18), for the first time, we held two workshops on the annual IDP review processes in ADM, bringing together 28 community members in total. We also attended three Mbhashe IDP meetings with community members to raise the pressing issues in our community such as bad roads and a bridge that was washed away, amongst others.



Left: The bridge joining Nqileni and Manzamnyama villages that was washed away in a storm in December 2022.

Above: Mbhashe Local Municipality's IDP meetings attended by the Equality Collective and community members.



RESEARCH AND LEARNING

“

Our research and learning focus area took up several projects this year. A highlight was the opportunity to present before the South African Human Rights Commission regarding the impact of poor road infrastructure. Our submission raised some of the most pressing issues within our rural context; particularly how poor roads have a direct correlation to the standard of life in rural communities,


—Tinotenda Muringani Intern Researcher

”


Real Reform for ECD's Steering Committee conceptualising the Right to Nutrition campaign at the in-person workshop in June 2023.



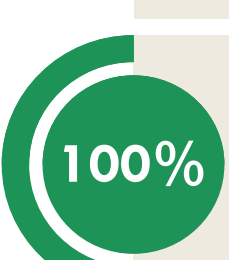
RESEARCH AND LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS




As Real Reform for ECD, facilitated and launched three Right to Nutrition research papers that formed the basis of the Right to Nutrition campaign launched in November 2023.




On behalf of Real Reform for ECD, commissioned a two-part comparative research study from Oxford Pro Bono Publico on the right to ECD in comparative international and African jurisdictions and African human rights instruments.



Achieved 100% data completeness with Water Ambassadors sending us data every day on water availability and infrastructure damage to the Mncwasa Water Scheme, allowing for accurate and credible reporting.



Produced 11 water reports using the data collected by our Water Ambassadors.



The Equality Collective's Director, Tess Peacock, published a paper in the SAJHR about the role of local government in advancing ECD.


Our model of constructive advocacy means research and learning is a key component of our advocacy and our organisation. We believe impactful advocacy includes social monitoring and well-researched solutions. This approach was demonstrated in Real Reform for ECD's Right to Nutrition campaign, for which we set up three research task teams to produce research into

1. the [right to nutrition](#) and the state's duties to fulfil this right;
2. what constitutes [adequate nutrition](#); and
3. the various [implementation models](#) to expand access to nutrition for young children at early learning programmes and the costs associated with these implementation models.

We consulted widely with the ECD sector, including ECD practitioners, researchers, nutritionists, NGOs in the ECD sector, and the DBE, among others, further demonstrating our commitment to constructive advocacy and collective power. We produced a [synthesis report](#) of the research and used this as a basis for our campaign's recommendations to the DBE.

Right: Our six recommendations based on the research for the Right to Nutrition campaign.

OUR NUTRITION REFORMS



REFORM 1

Create an ECD nutrition programme

- ➔ Expand the R17 ECD subsidy to reach all eligible children attending registered early learning programmes.
- ➔ Use provincial procurement and delivery to provide nutritious food/meals to all eligible children attending unregistered early learning programmes, at a cost of R6.80 per child per day.

This will cost an additional **R1.65 billion** a year.

R2.8 BILLION


cost of the R17 ECD subsidy in 2021/22

R9.3 BILLION

amount allocated to the NSNP in 2023/24

R62 BILLION


estimated cost of stunting a year



REFORM 2


Test provincial procurement and delivery to unregistered early learning programmes

- ➔ In select provinces, test whether existing NSNP service providers can also deliver nutritious food/meals to nearby unregistered early learning programmes.
- ➔ In select provinces, where the NSNP uses direct transfers, pilot contracting new service providers or strategic implementing partners to procure and deliver nutritious food/meals to nearby unregistered early learning programmes.




REFORM 3

Roll out training on the Department of Health's Nutrition Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Programmes




REFORM 4

Collect data on children's growth indicators and attendance rates for evidence-based interventions



REFORM 5

Activate effective coordination and oversight mechanisms at the national, provincial, and municipal levels



REFORM 6

Develop an ECD nutrition policy and make the provision of nutrition support a legal requirement

The DBE must implement these reforms while also simplifying the registration process and supporting programmes to get registered.



Another example of our constructive advocacy approach is Real Reform for ECD's Right to ECD campaign. As mentioned earlier, we are currently in the research phase, in which we commissioned Oxford Pro Bono Publico to produce a two-part comparative research series on the right to ECD in comparative international and African jurisdictions.

Together with the South African Journal on Human Rights, Centre for Child Law, Centre for Law and Society, and Ilifa Labantwana, we co-hosted a [LinkedIn webinar series](#) called Friday Frank Conversations on issues related to acknowledging and advancing the Right to ECD. Each one of these partners brought a different lens to the conversation around establishing the right to ECD, which ensured that our webinars were relevant to the ECD sector broadly.

Our daily, weekly, and monthly water reports on the performance of the Mncwasa Water Scheme are an example of how we use our research as a springboard for our collective advocacy. These reports are produced using the data collected by our 32 Water Ambassadors across 40 villages on a daily basis. We share these reports with our community and with ADM on a WhatsApp group and on Bulungula Community Radio, and based on what the report says, our communities will often engage with ADM officials about the performance of the scheme.



Research task teams on the Right to Nutrition research papers gathered in Cape Town in June 2023 to consolidate the research that would inform the Right to Nutrition campaign.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2023

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Bank and Cash	R2,603,842
Total Assets	R2,603,842

EQUITY AND LIABILITIES

Equity

Accumulated Fund	R400,579
Sustainability Fund	R304,489

Current Liabilities

Grant Receipts in Advance	R1,824,751
Trade and Other Payables	R74,023

Total Equity and Liabilities **R2,603,842**

Income Statement for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

Income	R4,372,194
Less: Operating Expenses	R3,963,412
Net Surplus	R408,782



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WAYS TO SUPPORT US

DIRECT DEBIT

Bank: First National Bank (FNB)

Account name: Equality Collective

Account number: 62850173528

Branch: 210621

SWIFT code: FIRNZAJJ

Reference: Your name

PAYFAST



SNAPSCAN



THE EQUALITY COLLECTIVE

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