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The Almond Tree Progress Report March 2022 – May 2022

The slow and steady restoration, after the effects of Covid-19, has been visible this quarter. The admission of children has started to flow again, as well as events and community engagement. Sadly, the reality of how many children we have had to turn away, is astounding. Making clear that the need for care and protection of vulnerable children in South Africa is indeed still a pressing issue that requires urgent attention.

Thank YOU for your investment in our projects and our people!

This is what your contributions have made possible through this quarter:

	Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Cluster Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Capacity for beneficiaries	40	30	25
Number of beneficiaries	35	23	22
Beneficiaries with special needs	4	1	0
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	25	9	16
Number of volunteers	1	1	1
Children Reunified	0	0	0
Children Adopted	1	0	0
Children Fostered	0	0	1

Care and Protection of Vulnerable Children

TAT Tree House CYCC (Ages 0-3)	The operation of the baby home has been good with very few challenges. We are grateful to have received everything we needed to provide an excellent service to our babies.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortage of vehicles has been a challenge with getting our babies to therapy, Drs appointments and hospital appointments.
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff continued with the next insert of Trauma Competency Training, and it was very helpful for understanding and dealing with babies that struggle with the effects of trauma



<p>TAT Delmas CYCC (Ages 0-3)</p>	<p>It was a remarkably busy 3 months, we received 4 babies in the space of one week. All the babies were under 6 months which stretched our newborn room, and having the other babies graduate to the toddler room was a bit challenging. The babies are doing well, and the care mothers are doing an excellent job helping the babies reach their milestones.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social system is slow in processing cases, there is a long waiting list of babies that need placement. • Administration office space is needed for the social worker and management to work from. For now, the social worker operates from the clinic, which is not ideal. • Our vehicle had to be written off after being involved in a third-party accident, leaving us with one vehicle to service the centre, which has been a challenge.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We received a donation of Tommee Tippee bottles which was very welcome. • A project director has been appointed to assist the centre manager with administration.



We are grateful to have been able to purchase warm winter clothing for all the children.

TAT Forever Cluster Homes

Stories from the Cluster Mothers:



"As for this winter I am so grateful about the donation of blankets for every child in the house. It's a big success which I'm appreciating very much. We received it in time. All of them they have got enough blankets for this winter." - [Mama Grace](#)

The children enjoyed a fun Easter egg hunt, they were very happy! - [Mama Lucia](#)



All the mothers were spoiled with love at the school Mother's Day celebration - [Mama Lucia](#)

Little Ms M fell very sick and spent a few days in ICU, thankfully she has fully recovered - [Mama Zama](#)



TAT Cluster F (Ages 4-13)

The children in the Cluster homes are developing well. Staff training is a continuous need as our care mothers grow in the experience of their work. As the children continue to enter into their teenage years, we are constantly learning how to manage their emotions and growing needs.

Head Office held a lovely staff lunch for all the staff, this was a great time of bonding and celebrating the work we do together.

Challenges

- Heating in the cluster homes is a challenge, the winter season came early and the mothers have had to manage the effects of the colder weather.

Successes

- The appointment of the Activity Coordinator has been an enormous success. Creating fun activities for the mothers to engage in with the children over weekends. Her assistance and support have been very helpful.
- The swimming lessons have been a great success, the children are becoming more confident and improving their skill.
- The children enjoyed the family day, although some children who did not receive any visitors felt sad.



Family Reunification Day was held in April. It was an opportunity for the children's family to visit them, spend the day with them, share a meal and engage with their care mothers building relationships to support the children's restoration process.

Birthday Parties are such a joyful time for the children. They receive gifts, clothing and toys and a lovely party with sweets and treats for all to enjoy. This has created such a fun environment for the children to feel special and loved.



Education

	Nurture Nest Pre-school/Little Robins Nest	Children of Promise School
Capacity for beneficiaries	56	75
Number of beneficiaries	42	30
Beneficiaries with special needs	3	1
Staff (incl. Management/Social)	6	8
Number of volunteers	1	3

Nurture Nest ECD Centre	<p>The children have been attending tennis lessons and their swimming program, which they passionately engage in on a weekly basis. Baker-Baker has returned on a Friday and the children get to consolidate their learning through creative opportunities to bake.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No permanent teaching assistant. Our teaching assistant Kedibone has qualified as an ECD teacher and has transferred to the Little Robin's playgroup as a full-time teacher. • The increase in babies taken into the Treehouse has resulted in four helpers decreasing to two. • Finding a reliable, SACE certified and ECD qualified relief teacher to assist on training days has been a challenge. • Children would benefit from a Speech Therapist
Successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers are all in training, learning daily and personal growth is evident. • We implemented a 'perceptual program' during physical education, which the Grade RRs attend, the children are gaining many skills through this program while having great fun.



Success Stories: The Nurture Nest preschool celebrated 'Reading Appreciation Week' in April and the children attended a puppet show and were exposed to daily guests reading different books to them. The focus was on language development and exposure to different languages such as English, isiZulu, Afrikaans, Sesotho, and Xhosa.



<p>Children of Promise Independent School – Grade R Grade 1/2</p>	<p>The Children of Promise School has been busy with 'Reading Appreciation Week' and Mother's Day Celebration. Our children who attend Occupational Therapy sessions are making good progress. The children enjoy attending music lessons, where they have been learning the school song, our National Anthem, and other songs. They are given opportunities to express their emotions and feelings during their Drama and Art lessons.</p>
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching the 'Covid generation' who came from other schools and were pushed through to higher grades without learning to read and write. • Limited sporting opportunities, this will develop in the future as numbers increase. • SA SAMS, late release of patch from Term 1, carried over a big amount of administration to Term 2.
<p>Successes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful enrichment lessons presented for Grade 2 learners, they are starting to read and write. • Celebration Days have been a great success. • The 'perceptual program' for physical education lessons is going well. • First Additional Language isiZulu lessons are going well, and the children enjoy participating through songs, poems, stories, and lessons. • Weekly Assembly's with music teacher, Nadine Green, brings the school together through song.



We celebrated the Unveiling of our Bell Tower to honour our benefactor, Mrs Jeanette Stuart.

The Bell Tower is a very special icon for the school as every child who graduates will ring the bell to celebrate their great academic achievement.

The Grade 1 children used clay to create models of themselves





The children loved 'Reading Appreciation Week' – they were exposed to different guests reading stories in different languages.

Social Services

	The Tree House Nursery CYCC	TAT Village Homes CYCC	Delmas CYCC
Beneficiaries received from March 2022 – May 2022	7	10	4
Number of children turned away	13	15 (4-18 years)	8
Reasons for placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandonment, abuse, drug abuse, poverty, transfer to permanent residential homes. 		
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are turning away an alarming number of children who need placement in a place of care and protection. Social services are slow to act and delay the re-unification and adoption process without valid reasons. Service delivery is challenging without vehicles for the social workers to use to get to court and panel meetings. The social department has dated laptops and the poor performance of their tools does slow down their work productivity. The demand for care and protection services in Delmas is very high, more than we are able to accommodate in the home. There is a need to send the children on fun outings which will expose them to the world outside of The Almond Tree village. Outings are beneficial for their social development. Budget is not always available for this. 		

Successes

- Many children were admitted over this quarter.
- We attended a helpful course on Children's Sexual Education – this course was beneficial to our work and understanding the challenges we face with raising teenagers and youths.
- We are grateful for the donation of food parcels for our reintegration program. The children were sent to their holiday families with an abundance of food supplies. We hope that this will continue in the future as it is such a blessing to the families who take the children over the holiday periods.



Success Story:

Child D was placed at TAT in October 2020 after he was removed from his mentally unstable mother. After multiple attempts of having both the mother and the child repatriated to Mozambique, we successfully handed them over to Mozambique Social Services in March 2022.

Social Enterprise Projects – Sewing Seeds

Our dressmaker has been a great help on the Village, not only as a sewing instructor, but also a tailor and seamstress who has been an inspiration to the mothers and staff.



The Craft Corner has been a busy space this quarter, with several craft days that were held and quite well supported by our local community. The team have worked together with various local crafters and artists to provide a fun morning for supporters to enjoy. Workshops held this quarter: Water-colour, Rock painting and Acrylic painting. Donated hand-made teddy bears were raffled off for Mother's Day in May, which went well. We are encouraged that our support base and volunteer interest is increasing steadily.

A word from our CEO and Founder – Charmaine McQueen



The happy smiles and innocent laughter of little children makes the work that we do a **JOY and a PRIVILEGE**. Every quarter I am amazed by the support we receive from our community and **YOU** our valued supporters and champions! These little smiles are a testament to the investment that has been put into their lives, which is priceless!

THANK YOU!
For believing in
The Almond Tree



We are Children of Promise, and WE are Worth It!
THANK YOU for supporting us!

Special Note: All information, whether personal or otherwise concerning the children in the care of The Almond Tree or the general operations of The Almond Tree must be considered privileged and confidential – Thank you for keeping our confidence.

The Almond Tree is held together by a strong and loving community. We would not be able to provide the service we do to our beneficiaries if it were not for the love and support received from you.

Every cent YOU have donated has helped to create a loving home for vulnerable children who have a bright future ahead of them.

THANK YOU!