



Wake up! Early Education Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

For any young child the key to success in their future school career is Early Childhood Education. A child who has learned to concentrate and focus on a task, who has acquired basic numeracy and literacy skills and who has learned the social skills to function in a school environment, is ready to learn and is likely to do well in school.

The Wake up! Early Education Centre in Otjomuise, Windhoek, Namibia, was established in 2010 with the aim to provide early education to children aged 2 – 6 in an area of Windhoek where such amenities are not extensively available. The Wake up! Centre is governed by the Penduka Daycare Centre Trust and registered with the Municipality of Windhoek as a formal daycare centre. As such it has received a full fitness certificate as proof of compliance with all applicable standards and regulations as stated in the Early Childhood Development Policy adopted in 2008 by the City of Windhoek. The centre is also registered with the Ministry of Education as a private school offering pre-primary education to 5/6 year olds and with the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare as an institution offering child care services for the age group 2-5.

Through the establishment of a centre with adequate facilities, trained staff and a range of appropriate learning materials, the trust intends to set a standard for pre-school education in the area and become a model pre-school and training centre, reaching out to parents, early childhood educators and other community members in promoting early childhood education.

## **2. MONTESSORI EDUCATION**

Wake up! follows a Montessori approach to teaching, which is a learner-centred approach, based on the work of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who believed in the potential of each individual child. In the classrooms the children learn through hands-on experience, discovering things for themselves. They can choose their own work from a range of activities and materials. In this way the centre can cater for the learning needs of every individual child. Children aged 2-3 and children aged 4-6 work together in one classroom where they learn from observing and assisting one another.

## **3. THE CENTRE IN 2016**

Since 2010 the centre has built up a good reputation in Otjomuise, grown from two to four classrooms and during 2016 has accommodated 27 toddlers and 50 pre-

schoolers. At the end of 2016 the centre graduated 19 children. These children are leaving well-prepared for primary school / Grade 1. There are 20 toddlers who will move up to the pre-school in 2017.

The centre caters for children from the immediate vicinity of the school as well as for children from the informal settlements nearby. The parents and guardians of the children at the centre form a diverse community: teachers, business people, cleaners, taxi drivers, employed and unemployed, couples and single (grand)mothers.



The only criterion for admission to the centre is that the child lives in Otjomuise or an adjacent suburb and is between 2 and 6 years of age. About a third of the children at the centre are considered vulnerable as they are living with grandparents, single parents, parents without a job or with poorly paid work. Acknowledging this vulnerability, the centre provides snacks and a cooked lunch for all

children.

### **3.1 POSTIVE DEVELOPMENTS**

Looking back on 2016 the following positive developments can be noted.

#### **Snack Policy**

As the content of childrens' lunchboxes and bottles was always very diverse, ranging from nothing at all, to packets of biscuits and crisps only, to bread and fruit (the preferred choice), at the end of 2015 the staff team decided on a new snack policy, whereby the school provides snacks for all children. This has proven to be demanding but successful and well-received by the parents. The rationale for providing snacks is that we would like to promote healthy eating at school and avoid disparity, letting all children enjoy the same food. Furthermore, many children have bad teeth. A policy of healthy snacks and brushing teeth after snack-time brings home the right message. To prepare snacks we call on parents to volunteer at school a few hours a week, whereas our eldest group of learners is doing the dishes. The challenge in providing snacks is finding fresh fruit and snacks at an affordable cost, as inflation of the price of food in Namibia has been about 10% over the past year.



## **New Equipment**



Thanks to our regular donors we have been able to buy some new gym equipment from South Africa, very much enjoyed by the children, as we need to educate body and mind. Now the children have the opportunity to do somersaults and work on their balance and jumps. Furthermore, we have received a first consignment of learning materials from Walvis Bay where a Montessori supplier has opened a shop.

Previously buying from South Africa was the only option, adding time and money for transport.

## **Yoga Pilates Class**

During the last term of the year our 5/6 year olds have been offered free Yoga/Pilates classes for kids by Birgit Nakamhela of Unlimited Fitness. Children in Otjomuise do not have opportunities for after-school activities which are so readily offered in other parts of town, such as swimming, dance, music and art classes. Getting somebody in to expose children to something new like this at school is a lovely and valuable experience for them, which will be continued in 2017.



## **3.2 STAFFING**

During 2016 the centre has employed 11 permanent and two temporary staff members, most of them living in the informal part (shanties) of the suburb of Otjomuise. The reason for the temporary staff members is that since January two newly qualified teachers have resigned and joined the government as pre-primary teachers from one day to the next. We have found temporary replacements and the vacancies will be filled in 2017.

## **Management & Administration**

At the end of 2015 the centre advertised for an Administration Manager, to take on administration related tasks in the office. An apparently suitable candidate was selected out of 80 applicants but, due to insurmountable differences, she left the centre after two months.

Since then the board has decided on a different strategy. Part of the administration related tasks can be outsourced to a part-time bookkeeper, and part can be

delegated. What the centre needs is a vice-principal to share all management tasks and to be groomed by the present principal in order to take over the reins of the centre. The preferred profile for a vice-principal is a trained Montessori teacher with experience and management qualities. During the transition phase both principal and vice-principal will be part-time managers and teachers, sharing two jobs and having clearly defined responsibilities.

### **Interns**

The centre was lucky to host an intern in October who was doing a course in office administration at the Okakarara Vocational Training Centre (Eastern Namibia). She proved to be a great asset to the school office. If we can pursue having regular interns, management can be relieved from basic office administration tasks. There is no money available for paid office administrative support in the budget at present.

### **3.3 VOLUNTEERS**

The centre welcomes any volunteer who is enthusiastic, energetic and willing to make a clear commitment. We can always use extra hands, energy and creative ideas in the classroom or the afternoon care. Furthermore, we have various projects which need extra manpower (such as development of the playground and vegetable garden).

We have partnered with a South African organisation called Claim Victory Tours who recruit volunteers mainly in Germany. This organisation takes care of all the admin and has started to offer us candidates on a regular basis. The whole of last term we had a graduate in early childhood education who assisted us in the toddler group, where she was a great asset. For the first term of 2017 there will be two German school leavers who are starting their gap year with us.

Also we had two senior volunteers (60+) helping out with any practical task at hand, who were much loved and appreciated by everyone.



### **3.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Getting school parents involved in the school remains a challenge, but small steps were taken. A Parent Committee to organise the yearly Fun Day was short-lived, but a substantial sum was raised to buy materials for the centre. To foster commitment, we approach unemployed mothers to help out with snack time in the mornings, when teachers are very busy. We envisage for 2017 a more direct approach to encourage parent support. At present there are two (ex) parents on the board of trustees governing the centre.



## **4. CAPACITY BUILDING OF STAFF**

### **4.1 In-Service Teacher Training**

During 2016 the centre has employed 11 permanent and two temporary staff members.

From the start in 2010 the centre has been a training ground for aspiring teachers. In 2010 only the principal had a teaching diploma. At present there is a fully qualified teacher in each classroom. This has been achieved through offering sponsorship to all teaching staff (after a probation period) to follow the three year in-service Foundation Montessori Teaching Course, Pre-Primary Level. This course is offered by Headstart Montessori Training College in Walvis Bay, Namibia and leads to a Teaching Diploma, accredited at Level 5 with the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA).

The first teacher qualified in 2013, then one in 2014 and one in 2015. In January 2016 three of our pre-school teachers obtained their teaching diploma and one obtained an advanced qualification (Level 6) from the same College. Two of our assistant teachers have started the course in 2016 and have successfully completed the first year.



In Annex I of this report student teachers reflect on their achievements.

## **4.2 English Language Training**

At Wake up! we teach the children in English, the official language of Namibia. The children who come to Wake up! have many different home languages but need to be able to learn in English as most of them will be taught in English at primary school. Our teachers also have many different home languages and speak English at different levels of proficiency.

We have realised that good pronunciation of English is crucial when teaching small children, as children learn to speak by listening to their teachers and need to hear the right sounds. This year we were able to hire a consultant who is a drama teacher and voice coach. She gave our teachers tailor-made pronunciation training.

## **4.3 Character Building**

Eight teaching staff participated in a one-day workshop on Character Building, presented by the Adonai Trust. This programme offers a curriculum on character building, talking with children about character traits such as caring for each other, citizenship, fairness, responsibility, being respectful and trustworthy, and integrity as an overall quality. The intention is to discuss these traits with the children over the course of one year and we will start talking about 'care' in February 2017. Although character building is woven into our Montessori curriculum, as teachers we would like to make it more prominent in the classroom, to better deal with issues surrounding lack of self-discipline and respect among learners. Our learners are at an age where the foundation is built for all the social graces necessary to become a responsible adult. In a society struggling with violence in the home situation, one can never do enough.

# **5. PROJECTS**

## **5.1 Vegetable Garden**

During 2016 the vegetable garden did not get off the ground again for two reasons. A start was made building a shade structure in March, but the first poles set in cement were then stolen overnight and the remaining poles were stolen from the erf the next week. This left us quite disheartened. Then the rainwater tanks were empty earlier than expected (a child left the tap open) and 2016 had hardly any rain. In Windhoek it is prohibited to grow vegetables with tap water. However in December a kind volunteer erected the shade structure again and we are hopeful that the tanks will fill up soon, allowing us to make a fresh start in 2017.

## 5.2 Reading Centre

Something that has been in the pipeline for a while is setting up a Reading Centre: transforming one of our containers into a place where lower primary children can come for reading support, with a focus on the children that will leave us for Grade 1. This is a project sponsored by ASML Foundation from The Netherlands.

So far the container has been renovated and gated in to upgrade security. A senior volunteer has been found to steer the project. With the help of local volunteers who will spend some hours during the afternoons helping kids with reading we should get this project finally off the ground in 2017.

## 5.3 Stormwater channel

In October WML Consulting Engineers did measurements and calculations for the stormwater channel, a development necessary to further develop the erf and channel the rain (and flood) water when it comes. Their proposal has been approved by the City of Windhoek and so far two quotations for a 3m wide / 60m long concrete open channel have been received at a value of close to N\$200,000 / €13793. We hope to raise the money in 2017 in order to realise this project.

In conjunction with a stormwater channel we would like to build a small unit for the caretaker to live in, as the caravan where he stays was always meant as a temporary solution.

## 6. SPONSORS

We would like to thank our main sponsors for their continuous support:

**Stichting Wake up! Windhoek in the Netherlands**, which has been supporting the centre financially from its inception in 2010. Their monthly contribution is raised through clever fundraisers at schools and events and donations by private individuals.

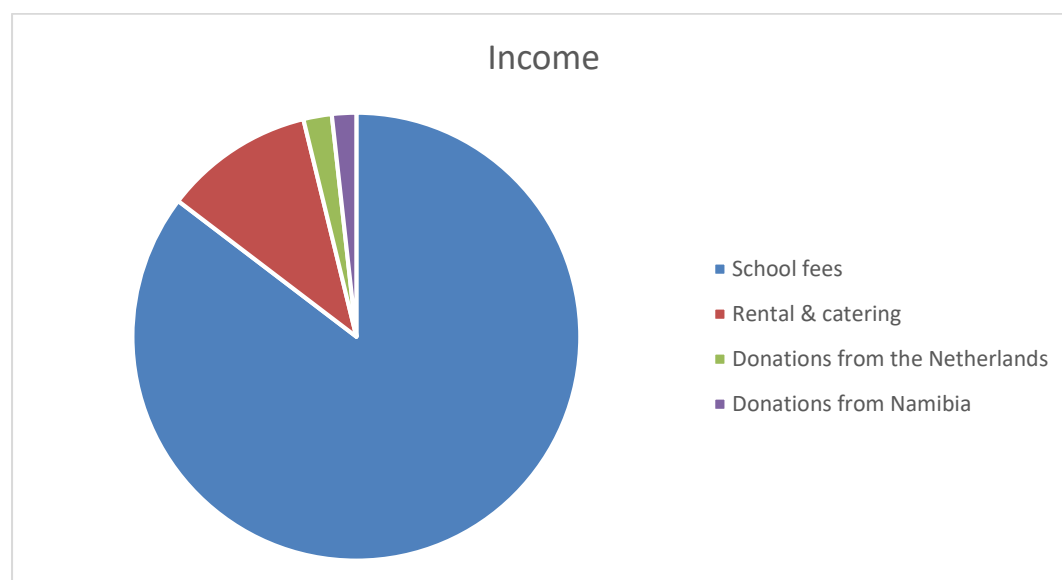
**KMA Architects, a local company** who has committed to a donation of N\$10,000 per month for two years from October 2015, taking on a social responsibility to invest in education.

**The Schoevers Foundation** for sponsoring the studies of our teachers, with the aim to improve our standard of education in order to give our learners the best.



## 7. FINANCIAL REPORT

A detailed financial overview for 2016 is attached as Annex II.



Incoming school fees have covered 58.3% of total expenditures (excluding expenses for staff training which are covered by a separate fund). At the end of 2016 3.6% of school fees were outstanding. Further utilisation of the centre (rental and catering) has covered another 7.4 % of expenditure. At present the centre is thus sustaining 65.7% of its costs.

The centre has two major donors who fill the gap: Stichting Wake up Windhoek in The Netherlands donating €1000 per month and KMA Architects donating N\$10,000 per month. In addition, there have been a few incidental donations, with total income from donations covering 43.2% of expenditures.

At the end of 2016 there is a surplus of N\$ 65,024.77.

### Training Fund

During the period January 2013 – December 2016, expenditures for training of staff have been covered by the Schoevers Fund from The Netherlands, see separate report in Annex III.

## 8. CHALLENGES FOR 2017

**Retaining trained staff / paying decent salaries**

During 2016 two qualified teachers with 2-3 years of Montessori teaching experience at Wake up! left us to take up a government job. The main reason our teachers leave is financial: government pays a salary about three times more than Wake up! plus benefits (housing allowance, health insurance). As soon as teachers have obtained an advanced qualification (Level 6) they are candidates for a government post. In 2017 three more of our teachers will do the Level 6 course (and may leave in 2018).

Conclusion: unless Wake up! starts paying decent salaries, it will be a training ground/stepping stone for greener pastures. The lack of satisfaction with present salaries is every year more noticeable, simply because our salaries do not cover even the most basic necessities such as rent, electricity, water, food, clothing and schooling of children. Inflation is close to 10%. Though matching government salaries and benefits will not be attainable, salaries must be raised if we want to be able to retain our teachers. The recent search for a vice-principal / principal-to-be is hampered by the inability to pay a decent salary. At present there is no surplus for any substantial raise of salaries.

## **Fundraising**

Substantial fundraising needs to be undertaken and new avenues explored, such as further exploitation of the centre's resources (catering, rental). Parents need to help raise funds and source provisions. School fees may need to be reassessed but must stay in line with the local communities' capacity to pay. Foreign funding is likely to phase out in the coming year or so and local funds will need to be identified in order to fill the gap.

## **Strategic Planning**

There is a lack of strategic planning at the board level. Despite two strategic planning sessions in the past and many ideas raised, there has not been a plan of action. What is required in 2017 is a firm plan of action or otherwise tough decisions will follow as to how the centre will be able to operate in the future. This requires a proactive board which can steer the centre into a financially healthy future.

## **Security Issues**

There have been ongoing security issues, especially at the perimeter fence of the school erf (people cutting the fence at night or jumping over). An application with the municipality to close off a narrow footpath parallel to the erf has so far not received a response. Electrifying the fence or building a wall around the school would improve security but are costly options.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The year 2016 has been one of consolidation. The school has been thriving and is full to capacity. Intake for 2017 was finalised in November and advertisement is all through word of mouth. At the end-of-year-concert parents stood up to express their satisfaction with the development of their children. They see quick changes happening in a child's ability to do things for him/herself, in gaining vocabulary and social skills. More and more parents realise the importance of early education and would like to enrol their child in a good school.

The key task of 2017 will be to find solutions to financial challenges.

## ANNEX I.

This is what the teachers had to say to our donor and Board of Trustees.

**Ms Thalita Ndengu** started her studies in 2011 and qualified early 2016 (she took some breaks as she had two babies during this period).

*"Hello there! I am 36 years old and I have been working at Wake up! from 2010 till present. I appreciate the opportunity I have had to study tremendously. I am very happy to have a diploma now. Thank you so much!"*



**Ms Sophia Cloete** started with Wake up! in April 2012 and received her diploma early 2015. During 2015 she studied for the advanced qualification. She left Wake up! in 2016.

*"The course at Headstart has added a lot to my knowledge and skills with regards to the teaching of small children. I now feel very well equipped to expand my horizon. In 2015 I realised it was time for me to move on. This year I have left Wake up! and got the opportunity to start up a pre-primary class for a government school in Windhoek, where I can apply what I have learned and experienced in a broader context. Thank you for helping me to get there. "*

**Ms Emma Emvula** started with Wake up! in 2014 when the centre expanded from two to four classrooms. The centre sponsored her second and third year studies.

*"I just like to say that I have much appreciated your help, as I am a qualified teacher now. I chose Montessori, because I like the method of teaching and the Montessori environment. It is fun to teach as it requires a lot of energy and you are always active in the classroom".*



Ms Genoviva David started with Wake up! in 2014 when the centre expanded from two to four classrooms. The centre sponsored her second and third year studies and she is now a qualified teacher.

*"I am from Namibia from a rural town called Khorixas. I am grateful for the opportunity you gave me by paying for my studies during the past two years. I have a passion for teaching children, to see them become*

*a valuable member of society one day. I enjoy teaching children because they give me a sense of peace and make me feel worthy, contributing to their development. I also enjoy them as children have a great sense of humour! Thank you once again and may you be blessed beyond what you have blessed me with."*

Ms Elizabeth Toolu started with Wake up! in 2014 when the centre expanded from two to four classrooms. The centre sponsored her second and third year studies and she is now a qualified teacher. She left Wake up! mid-2016.

*"I come from the Oshana Region in the Northern part of Namibia and I am Oshivambo speaking. In the future I would like to open my Montessori school in the North. Montessori education inspired me because it teaches the child to do things for him/herself and makes them eager learners. I like young children and teaching pre-schoolers is my passion. I would like to make a difference in the life of a child. I have really appreciated your support!"*





Ms Loide Shilongo started with Wake up! in 2014. She started working with the toddlers and this year became assistant teacher in the pre-school classrooms. She is now a first year student.

*"Teaching children is my career and I am really proud of it! I have chosen to study at the Montessori College as Maria Montessori's method of teaching prepares children for life. I love to share what I learn with the pre-schoolers in my classroom."*

Ms Jolandi Seibes started with Wake up! during the year 2014 and works as assistant in the toddler classrooms.

*"Since childhood it was my greatest desire to become a teacher one day. After many years of regretting that I did not study after school and could not find a better job, I was lucky to find the Wake up! Centre and be offered a job as an assistant teacher. Today I feel privileged because of your sponsorship. Now a mature learner you have made my dream come true. I heartily appreciate what you are doing for me as it is life-changing. Thank you very much!"*

