



Wake up! Early Education Centre

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

For a young child the key to success in his/her 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. This is a learner-centred approach, based on the work of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) who believed in the potential of each individual child. The children follow a curriculum which aims to develop the senses, learning about colours, shapes, size, volume, texture and so on and which introduces numeracy, literacy and culture, opening up the children's world by teaching about animals, plants, continents, countries, people and other topics of interest. In the classroom the children work their way through all the materials on the shelves at their own pace and in this way the learning needs of every individual child can be addressed. 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 2017**

#### **3.1 Our Community**

The Wake Up! 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 parents and grandparents. 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.

#### **3.2 Our Position**

Since 2010 the centre has built up a good reputation in Otjomuise and has grown from two to four classrooms. During 2017 we accommodated 30 toddlers and 50 pre-schoolers. At the end of 2017 14 children graduated from the centre, leaving well-prepared for primary school / Grade 1. There are 19 toddlers who will move up to the pre-school in 2018.

After their time at Wake up! most of the children go to government schools, where tuition is now free. Due to a lack of places in the 'better' schools, getting a place in Grade 1 in the school of your choice is a challenge. Therefore, our policy is to advise parents to enrol their child in Grade 0 in order to guarantee a place in Grade 1 the following year. However, a clear indication that parents value the quality of education at Wake up! is the fact that parents of 24 out of the 32 children turning 6 in 2018 have opted for their child to remain at Wake up!. They are willing to pay fees and take the challenge to get their child into Grade 1 rather than opting for a free place in Grade 0.

At Wake up! registration for the next year is open throughout the year until the centre is full. By June 2017 the centre was already full for 2018. Since June we have turned away dozens of hopeful parents. If the centre had more classrooms these could easily be filled.

#### **3.3 Positive Developments**

The year 2017 has been a year of consolidation rather than new developments. Looking back at 2017 the following can be noted.

### 3.3.1 Snack Policy

Our snack policy has been continued and positively evaluated. The rationale for providing snacks to all children is that we want to promote healthy eating and to avoid disparity, letting all children enjoy the same food. The main challenge has been finding fresh fruit and snacks at an affordable cost, given the ever-increasing cost of food. A further challenge is that we need parent volunteers to help out to prepare the snacks and they have not always been forthcoming.

### 3.3.2 Yoga Class



Ms. Birgit Nakamhela of Unlimited Fitness has continued to offer free Yoga/Pilates classes for our senior learners and has also given basic training to our teachers. Children benefit from yoga in various ways. Yoga teaches the child to be mindful, encouraging a calmer mental state which helps the child to concentrate and regulate emotions. The controlled movements help children to develop their attention span and

be mentally present in the classroom. We see the benefits in the children and hope that yoga will stay a fixed feature on our weekly calendar.

### 3.3.3 Character Building Programme

A child's personality is formed in the early years. Being exposed to good examples and feeling rewarded for doing the right thing is the key to developing your own moral compass. In 2017 we launched a Character Building Programme, with all staff members being trained by the Adonai Trust in Windhoek the year before. The plan was to focus on one character trait every month: teaching the children about caring for each other, citizenship, fairness, responsibility, being respectful and trustworthy and integrity as an overall quality. By telling stories, teaching songs, setting up special activities in the classroom and having a weekly show on Fridays, involving teachers and children doing role plays and skits we can get these messages across. Although we did not manage to give this programme attention every week, a good start was made in 2017 and we intend to have the programme as part of our standard curriculum, in order 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 skills necessary to become a responsible adult. In a society struggling with violence in the home situation, these skills are highly relevant.





## **5. CAPACITY BUILDING OF STAFF**

From its 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 with an assistant in each classroom. This has been achieved through offering sponsorship to all teaching staff (after a year of employment) 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).

During the year 2017 our three qualified teachers opted to study further with Headstart and obtained an advanced qualification (Level 6). Two assistant teachers have successfully completed the second year of the diploma studies and one has completed the third year, obtaining her diploma. They are all commended for their hard work and pursuing their studies.

## **6. STAFFING**

### **6.1 Teaching Staff**

During 2017 the centre employed 8 (assistant) teachers and 3 afternoon caregivers. During the second term one teaching position was not filled due to lack of finances and this role was fulfilled by the principal. Two new assistant teachers have been appointed for the toddler group and they have proven to be a significant asset to the team.

### **6.2 Management & Administration**

By the end of 2017 we revisited our quest for a successor to our present Principal/Manager, who will be leaving during the course of 2018. We have not been able to find a suitable person who can take on all the required centre management tasks, being responsible for both our educational programme and centre management. Thus the decision was made to split the role into two. We have found a candidate for the job of Centre Manager, who started in October, and whose responsibilities will be in the areas of financial and office administration, daily operations and maintenance, human resource development, PR and fundraising. Out of the present qualified teachers a potential principal and deputy principal have been identified. They will be trained in these roles between January and April and will commence these positions in May 2018. This will be the management team to lead Wake up! into the future. An additional key requirement is that the Board of Trustees governing the centre will also be strengthened in order to be able to provide strong and effective back-up to the management team. At present there are two (ex) parents on the board. From the start of 2018 we will have to actively recruit more

board members from the school community. In addition, we still require a financial adviser who can assist us with financial management.

## **7. VOLUNTEERS**

### **7.1 External volunteers**

The centre welcomes any volunteer who is enthusiastic, energetic and willing to make a clear commitment: gap-year students, seniors, international and local volunteers. 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. In 2017 during the first term we had two young school leavers from Germany, Melissa and Selin, who were happy to do any odd job and made great friends with the teaching staff. In 2018 there will be another two young women helping us out and we look forward to hosting them. We have also had a local volunteer for a while who has been helping with fundraising, baking cookies with parents. As unemployment in Namibia amongst young people is very high, there is a lot of potential to recruit young local volunteers, who can gain some exposure and experience with us in various fields.

### **7.2 Parental Involvement**



Getting school parents involved in the school remains a challenge. A Parent Committee to organise events and do fundraising was established in 2017 but did not become active. The centre approaches (unemployed) mothers to help out with snack time in the mornings, when teachers are very busy, but commitment has been lacking (coming one week but not the next). We did have a small group of fathers who volunteered for a number of Saturdays this year to build a fence on the playground and do some minor repairs, for which they are much applauded.

As the centre simply needs hands to sustain its work and reduce running costs, we have decided to implement a more stringent approach. Parents who are granted a reduction in fees through our means-testing process will be required to commit a certain number of hours to one of our projects or activities: assisting at snack time,

baking/packing biscuits, working in the garden, doing maintenance jobs. The centre manager will record these hours and will ensure that parents keep to their (written) agreement.

## 8. PROJECTS

### 5.1 Vegetable Garden

In 2017 we were able to make a fresh start with our vegetable garden. After two years of terrible drought, it started to rain properly in March and 2017 had an average rainy season until May. As a result our vegetable garden has been doing well and is now protected from birds and insects by a shade-net structure. During lunch time we have been eating our own school-grown spinach, beetroot and tomatoes. At the end of this year we replanted some spinach and are eagerly awaiting the rain to start properly as the tanks are empty.



### 5.3 Stormwater channel

In October 2016 WML Consulting Engineers did measurements and calculations for a stormwater channel, a development necessary to further develop our erf and channel the rain (and flood) water when it comes. Their proposal was approved by the City of Windhoek and at the end of this year was realised when a) a third quotation was received for a far lesser sum and b) our partners in The Netherlands found a new sponsor willing to finance this project straight away. The project was completed in less than three weeks by Guangxi International Construction Engineering Namibia CC and thanks to Hans Mulder, our house architect, who supervised the project. A small side channel and further levelling of the playground was added to the project, to gain maximum benefit of the channel. The construction company expressed the wish to donate two shade trees, which were promptly bought and planted! We appreciate their work and hope to work with them again.

## 9. SPONSORS

We would like to thank the following sponsors of this year for their 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 fundraisers at schools and events and donations by private individuals, who show a continuous support of our cause.

**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.

**The Lions Club Stormarn from Germany together with the Lions Club Windhoek Alte Feste** for donating a shade-port for our playground. We thank them for their partnership and ongoing support of our Centre.

**The Windhoek International School** who did a fundraiser and selected Wake up! as the beneficiary of their proceeds of N\$16,000. This money is earmarked for maintenance jobs and playground development.

**An unspecified fund from The Netherlands** donated €15,000 for the stormwater channel and further building projects to be identified.



**WML Consulting Engineers** for the measurements and calculations done for the stormwater channel.

**The Indonesian Embassy in Namibia** who paid us a visit in November and donated stationery, food items and paint.

**Hans Mulder, our 'house architect'**, for his continuous advice in all matters regarding maintenance and construction, his willingness to solicit support from other players in the industry and his supervision this year of the construction of the channel.

**Private Sponsors in Windhoek**, who through their monthly donation sponsor the place of child.

**Ms. A. Schmuki** who since 2013 has been donating 1000 Swiss Francs each year in support of the centre.

## **10. FINANCIAL REPORT**

An interim Financial Report for 2017 is attached as Annex 1.

The year 2017 has been a difficult financial year due to the fact that a) one of our major donors who had been donating N\$10,000 a month towards our operational costs pulled out unexpectedly in January 2017 and was not replaced and b) our budget does not cover an inflation in cost of about 6% per year. During 2017 expenditure exceeded income by N\$96,787.39. However, due to a surplus in the bank in January 2017 of N\$80,674.10 our deficit by the end of December is limited to N\$16,113.29, which must now be covered by other (earmarked) funds.

At present the centre is sustaining 66.1.9% of its costs through school fees, rental of school facilities, undertaking of catering activities and local fundraising. Another



24.7% is covered by donations from outside Namibia. This leaves us with a deficit of roughly 10% of our expenditures.

To start covering the gap, we increased the baking and selling of crunchies (our popular biscuits) during the last term, which has good potential to bring in cash. For the year 2018 school fees will be raised from N\$700 to N\$800 per month and afternoon fees from N\$200 to N\$250 per month.

As in previous years we do not have a lack of sponsors helping us to realise specific projects (see 9), but we do lack money to sustain our operational running costs. More effort is required to a) raise substantial and sustainable funds to run the school and b) to reduce our bills. For example, if we are able to solicit more food donations, our monthly food bill will reduce. Wake up! should therefore aim to more actively tap into the social responsibility programmes of local companies in support of their local communities. We will encourage the new management team to explore all options during the first half of this year.

During the period January 2013 – December 2017, expenditures for training of staff have been covered by the Schoevers Fund from The Netherlands.

## **11. CHALLENGES FOR 2018**

Most challenges mentioned in the 2016 Annual Report have remained.

### **11.1 Retaining trained staff / paying decent salaries**

By the end of 2017 our three qualified teachers have all obtained an advanced qualification (Level 6). All three have applied with the government for a teaching post and may leave us at any time, as a government salary and contract conditions are much better than we can offer. Ironically, we could not retain the teacher who obtained her diploma in 2017, as we cannot afford to employ two diploma holders in one classroom. In order to retain experienced and qualified teachers we need to be able to boost and invest in those teachers who are willing to stay for a moderate salary and who have the right attitude and mindset to invest their energy in their community and their school.

At present there is no surplus in the budget available for any substantial raise of salaries. By the end of 2017 we made a difficult decision and made two caregivers of the afternoon redundant, in order to use their salaries to raise the salaries of teaching staff in 2018. The teachers will thus have to take over the afternoon duties and take turns working until 17h00. This is however a shift in working hours, not an addition to their hours.

## 11.2 Building a Caretaker Unit

This project is long overdue. We would like to build a small unit for the caretaker to live in, as the caravan where he stays was always meant as temporary housing and has no water or electricity. We are hopeful to find a sponsor in 2018 to realise this project.

## 11.3 Strategic Planning

A visit by our partners / sponsors from The Netherlands, the Stichting Wake up! Windhoek in October this year reiterated the need for a strategic plan: a long-term vision for the centre and an action plan on how to steer the centre into a financially healthy future. This goes hand-in-hand with the need for a pro-active board capable to take on the challenge. At present our board of trustees is too small and lacks financial and business expertise. Despite two strategic planning sessions in the past where many ideas were raised, there has not been a plan of action based on sound financial and business principles. Unless we run the school like a business, it will not survive financially. Therefore in 2018 two activities will have to take priority: finding suitable board members to fill much needed portfolios and working with teachers & parents to become actively involved in running their school.

## 11.4 Fundraising

The board and parents will need to work together to do substantial fundraising. With the appointment of a centre manager there will be more scope for the further exploitation of the centre's resources (rental of facilities, increase of catering activities).

Furthermore, the centre manager can be part of the Parent Committee and steer them into action. Baking has proven to be a profitable activity and will be continued and expanded.



*Fun Day 2017*



## CONCLUSION

The year 2017 has been one of consolidation. The school is thriving and is full to capacity. Intake for 2018 was already finalised in June, due to further lack of places. The key task of 2018 will be to establish a new management team and strengthen the board, in order to guarantee the educational standard of the centre and find solutions to financial challenges.

