

September 2018

# Focus on iThemba

## *Project Bright - a year later*

Focus on iThemba (RF) NPC is an accredited non-profit, public benefit (18A) organisation - a place of Hope  
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NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION NO: 035-958-NPO  
PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATION (PBO) NO. 930003051



## FOCUS ON ITHEMBA ECD PILLAR

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is everyone's business. Focus on iThemba currently works alongside ten Pre-Schools in the Valley of 1000 Hills and Molweni areas.

- The model aims to upgrade existing Pre-Schools to become legal and sustainable businesses.
- The children receive quality ECD care enabling them to thrive at later Foundation Phase Schooling.
- The Principals and teachers receive support, training and mentorship.

The model is holistic in nature with its core strength being our ECD Monitor. She spreads her time across the various schools and at our iThemba offices. Her role is vital as she provides support and motivation and ensures that the training is being implemented correctly.

The ten Pre-Schools we are currently in partnership with are: Embo Child Educare Centre; Swelihle Crèche; Sizakancane Crèche; Siyajabula Crèche; Entokozweni Crèche; S'thandokuhle Crèche; Smiley Kids Day-Care; Mba'lenhle Pre-School; Leth'usizo Pre-School; and **Siyabaphephisa Pre-School (Project Bright)**.

We partner with excellent, respected organisations to achieve our goals:

ECD TEACHER TRAINING - NELRU

MANAGEMENT TRAINING - Ikhono Business Solutions

NUTRITION - Joint Aid Management (JAM)

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT - GROW with EduCare Centres and The Unlimited Child

### BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE COURSES THE PROJECT BRIGHT TEACHERS HAVE BENEFITED FROM:

Orientation Course:	Zethembiso Langa
Basic Educare Course:	Nompumelelo Thwala
Business Management Course:	Bright Zondi & Thulisile Sithole
First Aid Level 1 Course:	Bright Zondi, Thulisile Sithole, Londiwe Buthelezi & Nobelungu Zondi
Baby/Toddlers Story Telling Course:	Thabilise Mdluli
NQF Level 4:	Bright Zondi, Thulisile Sithole (current) & Londiwe Buthelezi (current)





## A REASON TO SMILE

The space in which NPOs operate is challenging as there are often no easy solutions. If there were simple paths to follow there wouldn't be such an immense need. The facts remain that the first 6 years of a child's life are the most crucial in terms of brain development. Thousands of children in the communities on our doorstep are sadly missing future opportunities due to insufficient Early Childhood Development.

Project Bright is a case study to be celebrated and a story that brings smiles. As there were many factors involved and such incredible positive change, it is a project where there are learnings and wisdom worth sharing. Here we have collaboration and positive growth, combined with incredible benefits for the Principal, teachers, children and the community. We are grateful to everyone involved in this ECD project as their seeds of investment continue to blossom. This is the Project Bright story.

## THE NEED AND THE CATALYST

*"This has been my wildest dream. It's beyond my expectation, my heart's desire and ambition has been fulfilled. Thank God for this miracle, good things come to those who wait. The quote from Mandela 'It seems impossible until it's done' is so true to me right now."* Bright Zondi, businesswoman and owner.

Focus on iThemba and Siyabaphephisa Pre-School, meaning 'we are keeping children safe' in isiZulu, have been in partnership since 2014 as one of Focus on iThemba's eight Pre-Schools. Principal Bright Zondi's original Pre-School had been operating in temporary facilities in Molweni (near to Waterfall) which were far from ideal. The structure was unstable, dark, had broken windows, no outdoor play area and was not conducive for young children to thrive.

The catalyst for this structural upgrade began through a meeting with Focus on iThemba and Container World in 2016. Container World offered recycled shipping containers to be utilized as learning spaces and the momentum grew from there.

Communication and transparency were key in the project. The team worked hand-in-hand with community leaders, the municipality, neighbours and parents to ensure smooth project management. The key donors in the project were instrumental with regards to networking and spreading the word. Focus on iThemba connected with additional donors and assisted with the project management.

Through months of hard work and partnering with an incredible 14 donors and partners, Bright's dream came to fruition with the opening of a one-of-a-kind learning space on 31 July 2017.



PARTNERS AND GROWTH

Designed by Lead Architects, it is a unique cheerful welcoming space utilizing four brightly painted recycled shipping containers for classrooms, one for storage, one for a kitchen, and a bathroom. It also included an astroturf play area. The school caters for babies and children up to 5 years.

The project reached completion thanks to the generosity of; Container World, Belgotex floors, Trades@Work, GROW with EduCare, Dezzo Roofing, DAVGO Steel Construction, Northside Electrical, Nation Changers, Ed Weekly (Geotech Engineer), Cretemix, JOJO Tanks, FABRI TRIM, John Clarkson (Land Surveyor) and Lead Architects. In addition many members of the community donated their time, expertise and donations-in-kind towards the project.

The construction of the school was part of a training programme for Trades@Work and the apprentices received certificates for skills acquired. Integral to the school is a theme of sustainability and entrepreneurship; water saving through JOJO tanks and the garden are two examples. Sandile Mnotho planted a vegetable garden which will be utilized for lunches and the excess sold to the community.

The remarkable transformation in Bright's business is reflected in the figures below. Due to the Focus on iThemba team facilitating the project and adding value to Bright's business, the significant improvements in the school's facility and offering has led to her being able to increase her school fees which dramatically effects the bottom line of her business.

2017:	
No of children:	28 (including babies)
Salaries of teachers:	Below teacher average
Cook:	Below teacher average
No of teachers (excl. Bright)	2 teachers and 1 cook
Salary of Bright:	Far below Principal average
Monthly School fees:	R150

2018:	
No of children:	50 (including babies)
Salaries of teachers:	increased by 80%
Cook:	increased by 50%
No of teachers (excl. Bright)	5 (all trained and 1 cook)
Salary of Bright:	Increased by 300%
Monthly School fees:	R350
Sustainable income (seeding tunnel):	R1500
Monthly income	350% increase





## PHASE 2 AND LEARNINGS

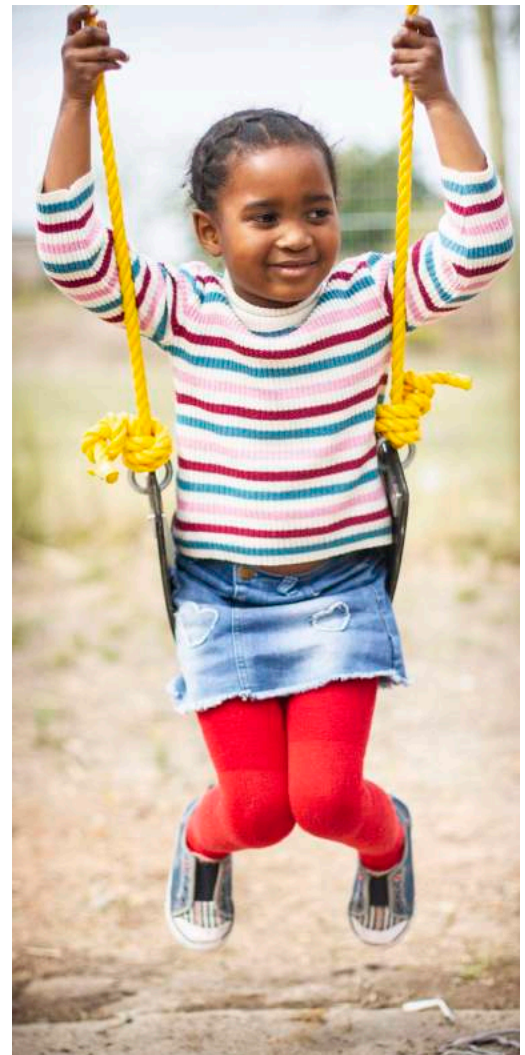
Phase 2 of the Pre-School improvements commenced in April 2018. These improvements have included: installing gutters, fencing for the playground expansion and the erection of a jungle-gym, the Jo-Jo tank connection and fixing a few general snags. The final phase is installing an additional classroom which is planned for November 2018.

Through further funding from Belgotex, Agri-Innovation is driving a sustainable garden project with six community members who are learning skills in the seedling tunnel and veggie gardens. These community members will receive an accredited qualification.

Looking back on the Project Bright story the team has a few learnings to highlight:

- Include additional budget for Project Management
- Budget for unexpected costs
- Two 6m merged containers are more effective for classrooms than one
- Bathrooms and kitchen need Rhino Line flooring
- Shaded areas over play areas should be considered

Focus on iThemba is encouraging Bright to budget for future improvements and maintenance going forward to ensure sustainability.



### PARENT:

"We are so proud of this centre. Firstly security is very tight and we value that. We are so happy about the jungle gym as well as the garden. We love that in front of the classrooms there is an open space whereby we can develop skills and talents. There are so many things we can say about this centre - we are proud of it."



## AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIGHT

**1. What have been the most noticeable changes for you in your new space/school?**  
Increased enrolment of children.

**2. How do your boys and girls feel about their new school?**  
They are so happy and love their new space.

**3. Have you noticed increased motivation amongst your teachers?**  
Yes my teachers are more confident in the classroom, they are also applying new techniques of teaching without me telling them what to do.

**4. What areas in the school do the children enjoy the most?**  
The new jungle gym, play area and the classrooms.

**5. What are your aspirations for your school in the next 3 years?**  
To see my school growing and I would like to see my children fluent in English.

**6. How has your curriculum changed?**  
It is clearer, it encourages creativity and boosted self-esteem for my teachers.

**7. What has Focus on iThemba's role been in the process over the last 3 years?**  
Focus on iThemba has played a significant role in everything that has happened at my new school. I received support and encouragement through difficult times and good times - they were my rock.

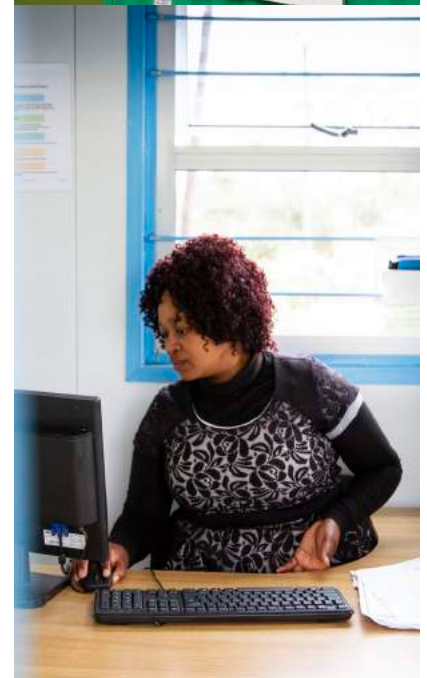
**8. Explain your previous school in comparison to what your school looks like now.**  
At my previous school there was no building, no conducive learning environment and no open space for children to play freely.

**9. What are your thoughts on GROW?**  
They help you achieve your goals and the best education ever.

**10. What would you say to potential donors considering investing in a project like this?**  
If you want to save South Africa then start investing in young children because they are the true future of our country.

**11. What has the project meant to you as a person?**  
It opened my eyes as a black woman that I/we are capable of bringing the best to the children in our community. I am inspired by this project.

Together  
we are  
Stronger







# Project Bright

## 10 REASONS TO SMILE

1

50 children have an incredible learning space and are absorbing excellent ECD

2

1 Principal and 5 teachers have received life-changing teacher training

3

1 Principal, 5 teachers and 1 cook and their families are more empowered with higher disposable incomes

4

12 workers gained valuable building skills through the construction

5

14 donors and partners had the opportunity to invest in a life-changing project

6

Bright has inspired many women in her community

7

Each year more children will benefit

8

A ripple effect allows these children a better chance of success in their future schooling

9

The school is a beautiful splash of bright colour and a beacon of hope in the community

10

Focus on iThemba now has the opportunity to facilitate further change through Project Joy



## PARTNER FEEDBACK

Container World's investment in infrastructure for Early Childhood Development centres is driven by our understanding that good ECD programmes have the highest returns of all investment in education and human capital (Illifa Labantwana 2014).

We are convinced that investing in early learning carries a multiplier effect that has the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The first 1000 days of a child's life is a time of rapid growth and development that sets her developmental trajectories for the rest of her life, impacting the way that the child responds to formal schooling and the work environment.

Our hope, when investing in Project Bright with Focus on iThemba, was twofold - firstly, that a joyful, safe and secure teaching environment, combined with hygienic ablution and kitchen facilities and stimulating play areas, would all contribute to the holistic growth of the children attending Bright's ECD; and secondly, that Bright would be able to manage the school as a successful micro-enterprise, thus ensuring financial security for herself and her teaching staff, as well as to have a larger impact on the community around the ECD.

We have been so blessed through this investment, as we have seen our hopes become a reality!

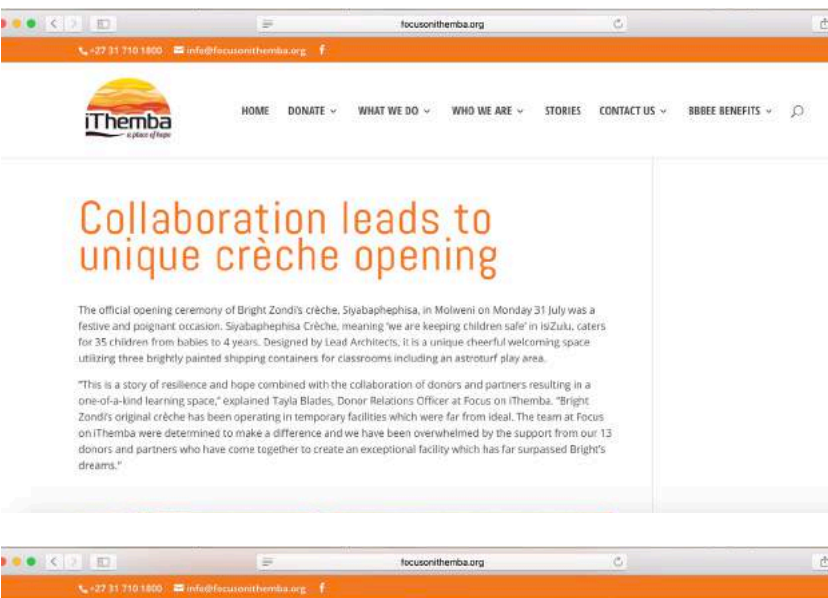
**TERRI CLAPPERTON**

**Corporate Social Responsibility & Investment Manager  
ContainerWorld (Pty) Ltd**





PRESS, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA





# #Gallery





# #Gallery





## PROJECT JOY: ENTOKOZWENI PRE-SCHOOL



Entokozweni Pre-School was established ten years ago in 2008. Entokozweni means 'Abundant Joy' in isiZulu however the facilities are currently far from ideal. The current structure, which is an existing church building, is cramped, dark and has poor ventilation. A major disadvantage is that the teachers need to pack up the school every Friday and set up again on Monday so the church can function over the weekends. In addition there is no outdoor play equipment which is necessary and vital for young children to develop their gross motor skills. There are currently four teachers, including Mrs Bonisiwe Gwala the Principal, and 46 children who attend the school ranging from babies to 4 years.



The plan is to **mirror the successful Project Bright model** by using recycled shipping containers for three classrooms for each age group (2: 6m x 5m) and one for an office and kitchen space (1: 6 x 2.4m) thereby ensuring an educational environment where over 50 children are given the opportunity to shine. Improvements will include new classroom educational kits, kitchen facilities, a sustainable vegetable garden, outdoor play equipment and improved access to the school. **To date Focus on iThemba has fundraised for 90% of the required target, to invest in this very worthwhile project please be in contact.**



## Talk to us:

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