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- Nutrition

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- ECE programme development: Playbus, Playgroups, Childminding, Pmchool, Community - based Modal, Expansion In African Areas.

- AdvocacylSocIaI Mobillsarlon/Polley Formulation, Promoting, lobbying and dissemination within the EOE field and wider Educational field.

- Ar9a Study: children In areas 99. Chatsworth - situation unanysfs.

- Resource and Documentation Unit.

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- Trainlng for paraprofesslmal child cue workers

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- Community and Human Rights Issues.

- Social and Community Action Projects: Support for Social and Community  
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- Community Development Projects.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMEN T - COMMUNITY EDUCATION - COMMUNITY  
ACTION!

## The Chatsworth Early Learning Centre

The Chatsworth Early Learning Centre was started as a result of the intervention of community volunteers in the Croftdene. area of Chatsworth. The thrust of the organising process was to organise the community to address its needs. The provision of early childhood education facilities for young children was identified as a crucial need that had to be addressed. Thus came into being the Chatsworth Early Learning Centre in 1980.

### Growth of the Centre

'A 3 bedroomed council house was purchased and Used as offices for the project with funds provided by the Bernard van Leer Foundation from the Hague. The BvLF remains the principal donor of the Centre. ,

The first programme that the CELC organised was the Playbus programme. A bus was procured and transformed into a mobile classroom that could accommodate 20 children. Atrained education motivator provided the educational input to children through educational playsessions. The bus serviced different groups of children on different days for 2 hours per day on a oncetper week basis. This method of education provision was unique in the country and reached out to 250 children per week.

### Toy Library

As an adjunct to the playbus programme the Centre developed a toy and book lending library that also stocked adult education material pertinent to early childhood educatio'n. The purpose of this was to provide educationally stimulating material that could be used by the parents with their children who were lregistered onto the playbus programme.

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## Playgroup Programme

The Playgroup programme was started as a low cost, high quality educational stimulation programme for mothers and their children. Mothers were organised into groups of between 6- 8, who together with their children met once per week for two hours with a trained home visitor from the Centre. Educational play activities were engaged in within the homes of the mothers, who took turns to host the play-sessions. This programme increased the outreach capacity of the Centre and it made use of existing resources within the community. i'

## Parents; the Mainstay of Centre's Activity

The focus of the activity of the Centre has always been directed at parents and the community and geared towards developing self reliance. An offshoot of both the playbus and playgroup programmes was the Parent Volunteer Training Programme. From the contact with the community it was ascertained that parent training was a high priority to address the need to provide early childhood education services to the community. The PVTP helped to replicate home visitors and increase the outreach capacity of the Centre. '

## Provision of Services to the Broader Chatsworth Community

A Preschool Teachers' forum was brought together to address the issue of the competencies of the teachers within the Chatsworth. These teachers were employed by community organisations to teach children between the ages of 5 and 6 within the school readiness programme. These were largely unqualified teachers whose tenure of employment was insecure because of their low skill levels. The PTF addressed the need to improve the skills of these teachers. This was the Centre's first training programme directed at teachers within the ECE field.

## Children

engaging in  
play '  
activities at  
a playgroup  
session.

Teachers at  
PTF

Workshop.

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### Networking in Chatsworth

The Centre began a process of bringing together organisations in Chatsworth to organise mass events of children. Initially pre-school sports and joint concerts were organised that brought together over 500 children. These events served to highlight the position of children in society and also the need for greater community participation in the provision of ECE services.

The Centre was the first organisation in Chatsworth that placed the issue of developing non-racialism at the grassroots level on the community's agenda. To advance the goals of non-racialism the Centre schools from neighbouring African and Coloured communities were invited to participate in both the pre-school sports and joint concert. This allowed for both cultural exchanges among the children and the sharing of educating techniques among the teachers. This networking also laid the basis for training networks to develop. 3.

### Outreach to Outside Chatsworth

Through the process of providing training services to the teachers within Chatsworth, the Centre developed and came to be recognised as a competent training agency. Outside agencies with large functional networks of early childhood education programmes approached the Centre to provide training for their teachers. First amongst these was the Ethembeni Creche in Umlazi, a neighbouring African township, where the Centre was commissioned to train the supervisor and workers at the creche. -- ,.

### National Training Initiatives

The Centre is a participating agency in the Bernard van Leer South African National Network. The National Network comprises of the six BvLF sponsored projects in the country and is aimed at the upgrading of project personnel. As part of its efforts in this regard, many experts from other countries are invited. to present workshops for the staff from the participating agencies.

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#### Training - the Present Thrust of Activities

The current strategy for the maximal utilisation of the resources of the Centre demands that large networks of ECE service deliverers are serviced through training programmes. This ensures the maximum impact on the field and in this regard the Centre has been continually upgrading its training programmes and its personnel.

#### Regional Networking

With the advent of the Independent Development Trust (iDT) . established by the state to disburse R2 billion to address critical needs in the community, a challenge was presented to the ECE movement to develop strategies for ensuring that the ECE movement was also a recipient of part of this finance. Since the iDT was not going to address proposals emanating from individual agencies, it was necessary to pool the collective infrastructure and develop consolidated proposals for several organisations. The Centre was charged with the responsibility of bringing together projects in the entire province of Natal and developing proposals to address the critical shortage of ECE facilities. The Centre established six sub-regions and developed a networking approach so that resources are not duplicated and are optimally utilised.

#### Expansion of Premises

The old council house premises of the project was inadequate with the expansion of the staff and the outreach of the various programmes. An old community built school was secured by the Board of Trustees governing the Centre and refurbished into modern offices with in-house training facilities. This currently serves as a base for project operations and has allowed for further staff expansion. A media and resource centre provide a vital service to the programmes of the Centre as well as to local community organisations. Layout facilities are made available at low cost to organisations and this has further strengthened the relationship of the Centre to the local organisations.

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## The Road Ahead

Of the approximately 2 million children of pre-school going age in the country, only 150 000 are registered onto any ECE programme. With this reality staring the country starkly in the face, the challenge is to develop the capacity that can meaningfully address this challenge. Part of the strategy of meeting this challenge is to replicate the human resources at the disposal of the country and to elicit the material resources to have a significant impact on the ground. The Centre is actively involved in meeting this challenge through its training programmes and its networking efforts in the national ECE movement. It is therefore envisaged that the Centre will move increasingly away from being a primary deliverer of services to one of servicing teachers and members of the community to have first hand service delivery roles. The training component of the Centre's work will therefore enjoy primacy. The work of the project will increasingly focus on areas of greatest deprivation. \_

## Changes in Project Environment

Everybody has come to accept that the people of South Africa are being confronted with serious challenges arising from the political process of renewal and transition. The South Africa we are going into, and that we are being called upon to develop and determine will be radically different from the apartheid society that we were all familiar with.

In so far as these changes will occur, this would act to substantially alter the terrain on which the project is presently functioning. Although the form of the emergent society is difficult to predict because of the political fluidity of South African society and the current negotiations process, it is possible to anticipate the following changes will occur to reshape the social landscape in which the project is operating:

- transformation of the present apartheid government to one representative of all of South Africa that is non-racial, democratic, non-sexist and more responsive to the egalitarian and equitable distribution of resources.

The community on the march for one single, non-racial education ministry.

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the dismantling of separate racial communities and social services (eg. health, welfare, education etc.)

- population pattern changes -there will be an increase in the birth rate of the African and Coloured communities and a decline in the White and Indian communities. I

- Language and Culture: The thrust will be towards the development of a new nation with a common culture and language.

- Re-ordering of national Goals and Priorities: There will be a decreasing emphasis on state security and defence to an increasing emphasis on social security through the improved provision of education, welfare, health services and housing.

v Children's Issues:

it Is envisaged that the underlying ethos that will drive the society will be an emphasis on

- common human values that will bind the populace together
- fundamental human rights for all

"Vukani ngane!" - rise ye children, a brighter future awaits you!

- freedom, equality of opportunity, non-racialism, unity and democracy.

It is therefore anticipated that this will establish socio-political conditions that will give rise to an increasing emphasis and activity amongst a variety of social groups on Children's Rights and issues that are affecting children such as

- children and educational deprivation
- children and political rights a
- children and homelessness
- children and health
- children and detention

Arising from these concerns the project also anticipates the development of wider social advocacy lobbies around the concerns of young children.

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#### Widening Community Demand:

The project further anticipate that as more and more communities awaken to the need to develop more services for young children and as the project's profile in these emerging social movements become more prominent, it will be confronted with a rising demand to meet or service these community needs in one way or the other. Consequently the project will be pressurised to develop a wider geographical and community outreach.

#### Changes in Role of Community Education

##### Development Trust:

It is accepted that there is an inseparable link between early childhood educational development, community education and community development and that the child will have to be related to in the context of a wider set of needs.

It is anticipated that a new set of opportunities will present itself in the new conditions of an emerging non-racial and unitary South Africa.

The Trust has accepted to respond to these new opportunities and consequently its involvement will span the following developmental terrains:-

##### 8. Early Childhood Education

##### b. Community Education

##### 0. Social and Community Development

The Trust has sought alternative sources of funding for the growth of its activities into Community Education and Social Development fields. In this regard the Community Education Development

Institute will constitute the means for intervention in these fields.

Community Education Development Institute.

With the advent of the negotiations process and the moving away from legislated racial discrimination the political and social landscape within the country has radically altered. Whilst this change is in the offing, there are many in the community who feel insecure about their futures within a non-racial and democratic environment. This is particularly true for communities who consider themselves as minorities. -

A substantial part of the work will be to prepare these communities for a non-racial future. In this regard the Institute will network with community organisations to help prepare the ground for a non-racial, democratic and non-sexist future.

The Institute will also undertake training of organisers from the various community based structures to upgrade their organising skills and improve the efficiency with which these organisations articulate with their constituencies. The organisations that will be catered for are youth, women, education, welfare, sporting, civic, aged and health organisations.

##### Chatsworth Early Learning Centre Project:

The growth of the Trust's activities in these new fields is based on the premise that the foundation for its involvement will continue to be the further growth and development of its early childhood education activities through the programme of the Chatsworth Early Learning Centre.

The fundamental goal of the Chatsworth Early Learning Centre will remain unaltered despite the change in the socio-political environment within which the project operates.

Project activities will continue to be centred around the needs and concerns of the young child and pre-school child in particular with the inclusion of children 'in the lower primary years of schooling.

In the main the role of the Centre will continue to be aimed at 'promoting early childhood and adult education.

providing early childhood services for disadvantaged and deprived communities

' developing innovative methods in early childhood education.  
' supporting community initiatives in pre-school/ education.  
' (training teachers, parents and volunteers to provide early learning semicircles.

Focus of Activities:

In pursuance of this role over the next 3 years, the Centre's programme of activities will be focussed in the following specific areas:-

1. Evaluation:

Evaluation of the Centre's programme and the researching of the condition of children in the sites of project action.

2. Models of E.C.E. Services:

Refining the existing models of provision of early childhood services and innovating the development of new forms of provision in the major disadvantaged communities.

3. Training:

The further development of the Centre's Training Programme and courses and the development of culturally relevant and appropriate learning and training materials.

4. Documentation, Resource Development and Networking:

Documentation and Resource Development on information pertaining to children and the development and resourcing of Network activities to disseminate this experience.

5. Policy Development on E.C.E.:

The development of policy outlines on early childhood education and the stimulation of and support for advocacy and social mobilisation and the lobbying for such policy matters.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND  
Booklet Compiled and Printed by:

Community

Education, and

Development Trust

P.O. Box 45221.

Chatsworth,

401 2.

Director:

Roy Padayachie

Telephone Nos.:

(031) - 43 0192 or

401 0014/5/6.

Telefax no.: \_

(031) - 43 9202.

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