

Partnership to enrich play-based learning, delivers play boxes to ECDs

In a collaborative effort to enhance educational opportunities, the Do More Foundation (established by RCL Foods) together with Care for Education and additional business and non-profit partners, are delivering 1,800 Duplo Play Boxes to 682 Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres throughout South Africa. These resources will support play-based learning for 33,492 young children.



Source: Supplied

Importance of ECD

The early years (birth to 5 years) of a child's life are a critical time for acquiring concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Play is a key component of this, facilitating children in developing core socio-emotional, physical, creative and cognitive skills. Duplo Play Boxes are a valuable tool to enable learning through play during free play or under the guidance of a trained ECD practitioner.

The 682 ECD centres selected to receive the Duplo Play Boxes are already part of programmes run by the Do More Foundation to support unregistered centres that are not eligible for subsidy by the Department of Education (DBE).

Each ECD centre will be allocated between one and three play boxes that contain a variety of bricks and elements figures, animals, vehicles, and base plates. The diverse piece types and sizes cater to children from two years and older, enabling them to engage with the Play Boxes as they progress and develop during their formative years.



Source: Supplied

Duplo project manager at the Do More Foundation, Lungile Thabethe says: "This project attempts to deliver a rainbow of hope to the young children of South Africa by unlocking a playful way of meaningful learning."

By bringing together multiple partners, the foundation has been able to meet the significant scalability and impact required by Care for Education. During April, two consignments with a combined total of 900 Duplo Play Boxes were shipped from Billund Harbour, Denmark to Durban Harbour, and delivery to communities in six provinces is currently underway.

A total of 1,800 play boxes will eventually be distributed to ECD centres in Hammarsdale and Phongola (KZN), Molteneo and Sterkstroom (EC), Worcester (WC), Nkomazi and Bushbuckridge (MP), Randfontein (GP), and Rustenburg (NW). Approximately 33,492 young children will have their early learning experience enriched by the DUPLO Play Boxes in the ECD centre they attend.

The impact of the play boxes donation is consolidated and elevated with 422 ECD practitioners being extensively trained in play-based learning. This upskilling is crucial for ECD centres to become quality early learning environments that provide children with daily opportunities for socio-emotional, physical, creative and cognitive development.

Challenges in play accessibility

Findings from the [ECD Census 2021 Report](#) indicate that little time is allocated for free play, and materials and equipment that lend themselves to these activities are not very common in ECD centres, particularly unregistered centres.

Around 50% of the 42,420 ECD programmes evaluated reported assigning less than 30 minutes for free play per day. Furthermore, ECD centres subsidised by the DBE present a wider selection of learning and playing materials, with an average of 13 or 14 out of the 20 categories vs 11 categories for those without the subsidy.

Fundamental to this sizable project's success has been the partnership between the Do More Foundation and Care for Education, supported by other key organisations. This collaboration has enabled significant investment in the early years of thousands of children by bringing life to the foundational importance of play-based learning for some of South Africa's most disadvantaged communities.

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