“Overwhelming scientific evidence attests to the tremendous importance of the early years for human development and to the need for investing resources to support and promote optimal child development from conception. Lack of opportunities and interventions, or poor quality interventions, during early childhood can significantly disadvantage young children and diminish their potential for success.

This National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy is aimed at transforming early childhood development service delivery in South Africa, in particular to address critical gaps and to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, universally available and equitable early childhood development services.”

– UNICEF
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Introduction

The Lunchbox Fund is a Non Profit Organisation that focuses on fostering education via nutrition by providing a daily meal at school for vulnerable and food-insecure school children in township and rural areas of South Africa.

Our simple intervention provides a behavioural incentive for children to attend school and stay in school, as well as an economic incentive for their impoverished and/or unemployed caretakers to keep them there.

Children who suffer lack of nutrition don’t have the stamina, health or capacity to work towards a proper education. We provide a varied, daily, fortified hot meal at school. This gives children a strong incentive to be at school. Once a child is in class and no longer hungry, he or she is in place to receive an education.

Through interacting with teachers, fellow-students and food preparers, the child stays connected, cared for and involved. With education a child’s risk of HIV infection and abuse is greatly reduced, and children’s ability to generate income after graduation is significantly increased.

Our Vision

No child in South Africa should be deprived of an education because of hunger.
LBF is a legally registered charity*. Donations to us are tax exempt in the United States and South Africa.

* 501(3)(c) and Section 18A non-profit organisation

The Lunchbox Fund provides a daily meal at school to food insecure and at risk children.

A meal at school promotes education by reducing hunger; encouraging learning and concentration; and providing an incentive to attend.

12M children in South Africa live below the poverty line 25% of children under 5yrs are stunted.

LBF works nationally, in all 9 provinces of South Africa.

Our Monitoring Program includes: site evaluations and unannounced quarterly monitoring visits; in-field electronic data capture and cloud-based management; supplier-to-school delivery with interactive vehicle tracking and on the ground signing protocols.

We develop partnerships with Government, education-focused NGOs, and community-based organisations to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach.

How We Work

Each meal costs R2,50** + 35c for delivery (US: $0.25c + 4c): core operational costs are covered by a dedicated donor. 100% of all other funding is channelled to meal provision.

* Averaged across age and portion size.

Our nutritionally fortified menu has been independently audited* as making a significant contribution to dietary needs.

* Nutrition Information Centre of the University of Stellenbosch.

Our current reach is 25K children each school day in: primary and secondary schools; after-school programs; early childhood development centres; and educational playgroups.

LBF Heat Maps, produced from credible statistical data, together with in-community groundwork and stakeholder liaison guide our growth.

Our Monitoring Program includes: site evaluations and unannounced quarterly monitoring visits; in-field electronic data capture and cloud-based management; supplier-to-school delivery with interactive vehicle tracking and on the ground signing protocols.
23% of South African Children live below the upper bound poverty line.

2 736 000 have inadequate access to food.

936 000 are further characterised as having severely inadequate access to food.

Fruit and vegetable prices in SA increased over 18% in 2017.

The overall basic ‘food basket’ cost increased by 10%.

Between 2015 and 2017, South Africa’s unemployment rate reached 26.7% – the highest in 11 years.

Unemployment has a devastating effect on people’s ability to access healthy food. While there is a system of social grants to provide relief, child hunger is still most prevalent in the poorest households.

– STATS SA
A Year of Growth and Evaluation

In 2017 LBF focused on expanding into grassroots educational interventions targeted at children younger than 5 years of age. Our work in Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programs supports the National Integrated Plan for ECD (Govt. and Civil Society) which aims to converge basic services to ensure improved childcare, early stimulation and learning, health and nutrition, water and sanitation in a child’s first 1000 days.

The approach targets young children, expectant and nursing mothers and community groups and seeks to create an environment where children can grow, thrive and be better prepared for their future roles and responsibilities in society.

Lunchbox Fund widened our involvement in this initiative by offering a hot meal each day to children in deep-rural Educational Playgroups.

While the Department of Social Development (DSD) does offer funding assistance to Playgroups - these are usually interventions that have sound financial and physical infrastructure, that are registered and able to meet the criteria required by the DSD.

Playgroups that are not able to meet registration requirements often educate the most vulnerable children in the most remote areas. Reaching these schools has been our focus. The provision of a breakfast or a lunch enables the women who run the groups to provide a nutritional incentive into a community often characterised by families headed by young, school-going mothers, older caregivers or food-insecure parents.

Through partnerships with education focused NGOs, LBF was able to welcome 3525 children under 5 years of age onto our program. A year has passed and we are delighted to report that our provision of a hot breakfast, served early in the day, combined with educational play and learning, has helped ensure dedicated and fast-growing attendance. Many groups have doubled in size, progress we are proud to be part of and work we plan to continue through 2018.

On the operational front, LBF continues to evaluate the integrity of our program. During 2017, we implemented a Pilot study aimed at gauging improvements in the heights and weights for age (anthropometrics) among children receiving our meals in ECD Centres. We also tracked learner registrations and attendance, and principals were interviewed at the end of the study to learn their views on the program.

The Pilot, run in KZN and Eastern Cape (two of the most food-insecure areas of the country) demonstrated clear evidence of the power of a meal offer in encouraging parents to send their children for pre-school education. Through the study we confirmed that our nutrition has enormous impact on registration and attendance, and a positive impact on children’s ability to participate during the school day.

Through maintaining a lean, stable and fluidly implementable program model, LBF was not only able to provide sustained support to our current beneficiaries but also increase program reach by 54% on prior year. We served over 4.6 million meals to 25,309 children in 691 schools throughout the country - and we didn’t miss a single delivery.

It’s a wonderful achievement — one of which our incredibly hardworking team are all proud; whilst being ever-mindful that there are more schools to support and more children to reach. This knowledge gives us both impetus and focus as we move toward our ultimate goal of a country where no child is deprived of the fair chance to education because of a lack of nutrition.

– Topaz Page-Green
1 in 4 preschoolers is overweight/obese while 1 in 5 is stunted.

74% of children in rural settings are underweight.

More than 50% of primary school children tested below average for motor control skills. Motor proficiency is linked to academic performance.

Less than 50% play sport and few do physical education at school; often environments aren’t conducive.

Most children eat less than 1 of the recommended 5 portions of fruit or vegetables per day.

— The Healthy Active Kids South Africa Report Card (HAKSA) grades various aspects of physical activity and eating behaviour in South African children and youth (6-18 years). Read the full report here.
During 2017, Lunchbox Fund implemented a study to assess the impact of their work. They wanted to ascertain whether anthropometric measurements, attendance, and interview data could provide evidence of positive impacts of the LBF nutrition programme. The Pilot was designed to exploit existing monitoring processes within LBF, and to be longitudinal and reflexive in nature, with programme participants at year-end being compared to themselves at baseline prior to the start of the nutritional intervention. Anthropometric measurements were taken four times—once per school term.

**Findings in Brief**

At baseline, 17 ECDCs were included in the study; eight in KwaZulu-Natal and nine in the Eastern Cape. In total, 322 children were measured at baseline. LBF withdrew support for two participating centres during the study (due to Nutrition Program non-compliance), leaving 15 participating schools in Term 4. There was a 40% attrition of participants between baseline and those captured in the final fieldwork block.

A total of 53 (13%) children were found stunted or underweight at baseline. This is below the six-year national average of 25%, which was surprising given the impoverished areas that were targeted. No children who measured within the normal range at baseline became stunted or underweight during the study. Of the 53 children, data from 30 was captured again after baseline. Seven of these 30 children showed clear improvements in nutrition status.

Centre registration increased by 33% between baseline and the final block, and attendance was on average 29% higher. This is clear evidence that the provision of LBF nutrition at ECDCs provides a strong incentive for parents to enrol their children in schools where, along with a hot meal, they are receiving supervised stimulation and education.

Qualitative interviews with ECDC principals reveal consistent perceptions that the nutrition programme has a marked impact on the children’s ability to concentrate, play and participate during pre-school, on their primary school readiness, and on their overall health and wellbeing. At almost all the participating centres it is clear there are specific children who are surviving particularly challenging home environments and who are dependent on the programme for their ability to attend school, receive a guaranteed meal, and participate.

An important and more nuanced impact of the LBF programme is its influence on the ability of ECDCs to become less marginal in terms of viability. The food offered and the increased child registration numbers contribute to an ECDC environment in which the teachers are heartened, children more engaged, and the parents more motivated to register their child and send them to school. Saved funds are also deployed into school improvements.

**Challenges**

One of the biggest challenges of working in small ECDCs in deep rural areas is that daily attendance is heavily affected by factors such as wet or cold weather, illness of the child or another family member, and the family’s ability to pay the nominal school fees. Centres are small and often must close for a day or two if the principal needs to attend to other matters—such as training or family illness. These challenges were among those that limit the value of repeated measurements of weight and height for age as indicators of LBF’s programme impact in a relatively small study.

**Looking Ahead**

LBF is continually seeking better ways to track our impact. There are many considerations in developing rigorous impact assessments relevant to LBF’s work, but we continue to liaise closely with key stakeholders and are looking to strategic collaboration with external experts to develop new ways to achieve this.

For a full copy of the Pilot Impact Evaluation Report, please contact The Lunchbox Fund.
2017 Achievements

In 2017 Lunchbox Fund served:

- 25,309 children
- 4.9 million meals
- 691 schools
Where We Work
Lunchbox Fund Works Nationally in South Africa’s Nine Provinces
Where We Serve

Lunchbox Fund Provides Meals to:

Early Learning Playgroups: 3,525 children

Early Childhood Development Centres: 11,005 children

Primary and Secondary Schools: 8,266 learners

After-School Programs: 2,513 learners (Homework Assistance, Tutoring, Sports and Skills Development)
Our Average Meal Cost*

$0.25¢
remained constant throughout the year

Breakfast:
$0.20¢

Lunch:
$0.30¢

* Averaged across meal provided/age groups/portion sizes. Includes delivery.
“There is need to consider extending the National School Nutrition Programme (Government’s Primary/Secondary School Feeding Scheme) to accredited early childcare centres, and to offer training and improve knowledge regarding healthy eating for small children among parents and carers. The monitoring of growth and development should be routine…”

– The Healthy Active Kids South Africa Report Card 2017
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TOTAL ASSETS: $ 414,363.39

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY: $ 414,363.39
Sustainability

The Lunchbox Fund’s consistent fundraising strategy in 2017 included:
- Grants and Donations by Privately Held, Community or Family Trusts.
- Solid and long-term relationships with High and Ultra High Net Worth Private Donors.
- Consistent private donations via website and marketing.
- Successful Benefits and high-return Fundraising Events.

Donors

$100,000+
Sir Christopher Hohn
Emmanuel Roman

$39,999 – $99,999
PRADA USA

$20,000 – $39,999
Nicholas Acquavella
Michael Stipe
Lance Uggla

$10,000 – $19,999
Linda Barnett — Simon Defoe — Aileen Getty — Balthazar Getty — Paul Haggis — Emily Spitzer — Tidjane Thiam

$5,000 – $9,999

$1,000 – $4,999

$500 – $999
Sophie Barnett — Barry Burks — Robert Callander — Robbie Crawford — Gary Flom — Rebecca Guiterman — Ruth Lingen — Deborah Roberts — David Schwimmer — Jane S Wu

$100 – $499

TRAVEL PARTNER
South African Airways