



Scalabrini
Centre of Cape Town

LAWRENCE HOUSE

IMPACT REPORT 2024

OVERVIEW

2024 was a year of growth, reflection, and deepened commitment to the children and young people in our care. In response to greater demand and a request from the Department of Social Development, we expanded our capacity and opened our doors to a greater number of children than usual. We welcomed them into our environment, often for shorter stays – what we call temporary safe care placements. Although the increased number of young people presents challenges, we believe it is important to meet the demand for more specialised care for children on the move.

We continued strengthening our trauma-informed approach. This journey is not always smooth; it requires a great deal of self-reflection, flexibility, accountability to ourselves and others, consistency, and empathy.

Consistently applying a trauma-informed approach at all levels, both with the young people and the team, has been crucial for making progress. Individual supervision with the Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) and reflective moments are essential for understanding our current status, ensuring that we are aligned with our vision and principles and identifying areas for improvement. The team aims to foster an environment that empowers young people to be themselves, to strive to show their goodness while overcoming their challenges.

When working with young people on the move, who have experienced trauma and relationship loss, it is essential to see their behaviours through a trauma lens and approach them with sensitivity and empathy. We have learned that while routines are essential, as they provide a sense of safety, CYCWs need to use their observation skills to read situations and group dynamics sensitively. This will enable them to implement appropriate interventions as needed.

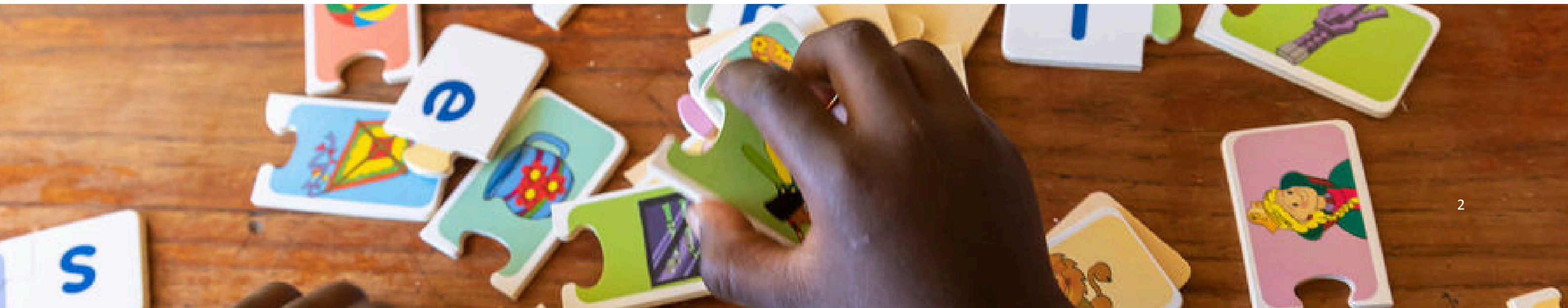
Flexibility also involves being attuned to the general emotions of the group and adjusting routines when necessary to help de-escalate situations, as well as to address individual needs.

A positive impact was the employment of a programme coordinator, who facilitated in-house developmental programmes aimed at helping youth develop a positive sense of self. This was achieved through art-based activities that encouraged reflection and group discussion

This was achieved through art-based activities that encouraged reflection and group discussion. Furthermore, the programme coordinator coached the House Committee to strengthen their leadership skills and their decision-making within Lawrence House and organised holiday programme activities, ensuring that the holiday period was filled with engaging in-house games and outings. Activities were planned according to the children's ages and interests. Some examples are a "spa" for the girls in the house, movie day, dressing up and modelling, playing at the park, and beach and water games.

Additionally, an external service provider facilitated a masculinity process for six teenage boys. This process instilled a sense of pride in the boys. They have become more aware of their beliefs and their identities as young individuals. They also learned a great deal about each other's differences, as well as how to express their opinions and address inappropriate behaviour in others.

In March 2024, we installed solar panels, which have greatly helped with cost savings. They also allow the house to use electricity during loadshedding, reducing disruptions to our routine and helping to avoid unnecessary anxiety.



ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2024, we began the transitional support process with six youth who will transition out of Lawrence House by the end of 2025. There were some milestone moments throughout the year: the start of the process in January, a mid-year review in July, and a closing reflection in December. The process aims to empower them to know themselves better and develop practical skills - building on their interests and existing knowledge. This year the focus was on identity and the power of stories. The young people have shown remarkable engagement with complex ideas, and they've applied the concept to their own lives, reflecting on how others might perceive them and examining their own perspectives of others. Through a variety of creative methods – including collaborative storytelling, collage-making, presentations, reflective writing, and music – the young people have actively explored these themes.

The programme was also adapted to the young people's interests and needs. For example, when anxiety around exams and future plans came up, we had a session on practical grounding techniques that the young people can use in their daily lives. This flexibility ensures that the programme remains relevant and engaging while addressing real challenges the young people face.

The young people in transition are very aware of their place within the house. The monthly sessions and the marking of important moments have created a safe space for them to explore their journey. As they approach their final year at Lawrence House, they carry a sense of responsibility. Many of them are taking the role of "role model" seriously; they come forward with suggestions, are open to helping when needed, and at the same time, they seek support for what is important to them.

We work holistically with young people on the move, recognising that their spiritual side is often absent or very weak due to the instability of their life experience. While some may have been introduced to a religion, it is not deeply rooted in them. We introduce the children to the Catholic faith, which offers a way to reflect on their beliefs, find meaning in their lives, and ultimately support their process of healing and spiritual growth.

This is why the collaboration with St. Agnes parish, the Catholic Church community right next to Lawrence House, currently managed by the Scalabrini Fathers, is important. Our involvement in the various pastoral activities has increased. A group of our children and young people are actively participating in the altar service.

Five of our young people participated in the Children on the Move Conference hosted by the Scalabrini Centre in collaboration with the Western Cape Children's Commissioner. On the first day, our young people, together with others, reflected on the definition and the concept of the [White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection](#), talked about real life situations, and created an advocacy poster with their reflections. Those posters were presented on the day of the conference and represented their voices. These two days had a great impact on our youth, because they had the opportunity to hear the stories of other young people on the move and other fellow South Africans, to broaden their knowledge in advocacy topics. It was also a space where many questions about their life experiences arose, and for some, it became an emotional moment.

Our recreational activities continue to play a vital role in the daily routines of the children. Engaging in sports helps the body to restore, channels energy positively, and leads to various rewards. Currently, we have nine children participating in our local soccer club – Salt River Blackpool FC (seven boys and two girls). One of our boys received an award for player of the year. Our teenage girl is part of the senior girls' team, which was promoted to the Sasol league. Additionally, two children are involved in rock climbing, and a group of five are taking dance classes.

Also, in the school environment, some of our children are doing very well. Many received academic awards for specific subjects, two received awards for being part of the top 10 in the grade. Others showed their leadership skills and became prefects. These achievements significantly boost the self-esteem of our young people, making it a moment worth celebrating.

LOOKING FORWARD

We are excited to celebrate our 20th anniversary with the alumni, friends, and sponsors who have been part of the larger Lawrence House family. We want to have more moments of fun with the children and young people who are in Lawrence House to strengthen the relationships. We want to intentionally celebrate the small and the big achievements to make the children feel valued. We will deepen our approach and best practice for working with children on the move, asking, listening and learning from the young people.

A WORD OF THANKS

Thank you to all the interns and volunteers who provided their valuable services in various ways. A very special thank you goes to our board members for their unwavering support and guidance.

Thank you to SAMSAM for sponsoring our solar panels and the Rotary Kirstenbosch for assisting with our basic needs.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Department of Social Development, the Holy Childhood Commission, the HCI Foundation, the LSEG Foundation, and all International Scalabrini Networks, as well as both local and international supporters for their financial support.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930075335) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
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