

ECO CHILDREN

ANNUAL REPORT

2025|2026

Sowing Seeds of Change



CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER 4-5

GOVERNANCE 6-7

ECO CHILDREN IN NUMBERS 8-9

ABOUT US 10-11

HOW WE WORK 12-13

OUR PROGRAMMES 14-15

COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION 16-19

BURSARIES 20-21

FINANCIAL INFORMATION 22-23

LOOKING AHEAD 24-25

HOW YOU CAN HELP 26-27



LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Dear Friends and Supporters of Eco Children

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I write to you as the General Manager of Eco Children. Having started in this role in May this year, I feel incredibly privileged to be part of an organisation so deeply committed to making a meaningful difference in the lives of children and communities.

I have had the privilege of working with Eco Children previously, and returning to the organisation has been a very special experience. Coming back has allowed me to reconnect with the people, schools and communities that are at the heart of our work. I am truly happy to be back and excited about the opportunity to contribute to the continued growth and impact of Eco Children.

At Eco Children, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to receive a quality education and to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to build a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

This is where Eco Children plays such an important role. As the Community Pillar of the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, Eco Children works to ensure that conservation does not stop at the reserve boundary but reaches into the neighbouring communities and schools. Through education, environmental awareness and meaningful engagement, we help build positive relationships between the Reserve and the communities around it, creating opportunities for children to learn, grow and develop a deeper connection with the natural environment.

We believe that conservation is strengthened when communities are included, supported and given the opportunity to become part of protecting the natural heritage we all share. By investing in education and community development, we are not only supporting individual children, but also helping to build stronger communities and nurturing the next generation of people who can become stewards of the natural world.

Through our whole-school approach, we support schools and communities across a range of important areas, including nutrition, educational support, teacher development, environmental education, school maintenance and infrastructure, as well as opportunities that broaden learners' horizons. From our youngest learners in Early Childhood Development through to our older learners and bursary students, we aim to create opportunities that help children build confidence, discover their potential and prepare for their future.

The challenges facing our communities cannot be addressed by one organisation alone. They require collaboration between communities, conservation organisations, government, non-profit organisations, private-sector partners and individuals who are willing to invest in the future of our children. Through strong partnerships and shared commitment, we can continue to create sustainable change and strengthen the relationship between people and the natural environment.

As I begin this new chapter as General Manager, I am committed to working alongside the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, our team, partners, donors, schools, conservation partners and communities to strengthen the work of Eco Children and expand our reach. Every contribution, whether large or small, plays a part in creating opportunities and making a lasting difference.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to return to Eco Children and once again be part of an organisation whose work is so close to my heart. Looking back on the year, I am reminded that the impact we create is only possible because of the collective commitment of our schools, communities, team, partners and supporters.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Together, we can continue to empower children, strengthen communities and build a future where both people and the natural world can thrive.

With sincere thanks and warm regards,

Celia Hancke

Eco Children General Manager



"When people unite behind a shared vision, we can grow brighter futures, inspire lasting change and build stronger communities."

GOVERNANCE

STRONG GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Good governance remains the cornerstone of Eco Children's success. Our independent Board of Directors provides strategic leadership, oversight and accountability, ensuring that the organisation remains financially responsible, ethically governed and focused on delivering measurable impact.

Throughout the 2025–2026 financial year the Board continued to guide organisational strategy, programme development, financial sustainability and risk management. Management is responsible for implementing the Board's strategic direction while ensuring that every programme is delivered effectively, responsibly and transparently.

WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO:

1	Accountability and transparency
2	Ethical leadership
3	Responsible stewardship of donor funding
4	Strong financial management
5	Continuous monitoring and evaluation
6	Sustainable programme development

Together, these principles ensure that every contribution entrusted to Eco Children delivers the greatest possible benefit to the children, schools and communities we serve.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

GG Huysamer (Chairman, 2007)
GH Rinsma
CL Myers
K Monareng
AJ Huysamer

FOUNDER

Sandy Wilkes (2004)



MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

General Manager	Celia van der Merwe
Programme Manager	Winkie Mokgope
Operations Project Manager	Charles Makukule
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Patrick Ndlovu
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Lydia Mahlakoane
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Lindy Sekome
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Lorraine Malatji
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Tsoseletso Chiloane
Environmental Educator	Themba Mankgela
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Khutsho Mahlake
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Rumi Malope
Environmental Educator & Librarian	Lolo Dilebo

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

Maths Capacity Building Coordinator	Dr Hannah Barnes
Auditors & Company Secretarial	PKF Cape Town Inc.
Digital Marketer	Verena Smit

LEGAL STATUS

Eco Children NPC is a non-profit company with registration number 2007/012052/08, incorporated in terms of Schedule 1 and Item 4(1) of Schedule 5 of the Companies Act (Act 71 of 2008) and is sanctioned by the South African Revenue Service as a Public Benefit Organisation, number 930024822, in terms of Section 18A of the Income Tax Act (Act 58 of 1962).



ECO CHILDREN IN NUMBERS

INSTALLATIONS

- 5,516 Learners Reached
- 9 Partner Schools
- 355 Keyhole Gardens
- 792,350 Seedlings
- 37,921 Books
- 8 Libraries
- 8 Kitchens
- 34 Classrooms
- 26 Toilets
- 2 Playgrounds
- 1 Early Development Centre

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- 11 Environmental Educators employed
- 144 Teacher Workshops
- 6 Educator Enrichment Programmes

INCENTIVES

- 13,475 Merry Moments
- 59 Holiday Workshops
- 26 Winners' Excursions

"The seeds we plant through education today become the opportunities, leaders and stronger communities of tomorrow."



ABOUT US

GROWING FUTURES THROUGH EDUCATION, CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Eco Children is a registered Non-Profit Company established in 2004 by the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve as a small Bush School project for the children of reserve staff.

Today, Eco Children has grown into a leading community development organisation operating on the western border of the Kruger National Park across Limpopo and Mpumalanga. We partner with schools, communities, conservation organisations and generous donors to improve education while inspiring environmental stewardship.

We recognise that quality education extends far beyond the classroom. By strengthening Early Childhood Development, improving infrastructure, supporting teachers, promoting literacy, enhancing nutrition and creating opportunities for talented learners, we empower children to reach their full potential.

Our work is founded on the belief that education is one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty while creating communities that value and protect South Africa's extraordinary natural heritage.

Today Eco Children partners with nine primary schools, positively impacting 5,516 learners through integrated education and conservation programmes.

OUR VISION

To promote conservation and sustainability in our adopted primary schools, empowering young minds with knowledge and skills to benefit the community and the environment.

OUR MISSION

We empower the children in rural Mpumalanga and Limpopo by developing their capacity to flourish and become catalysts of positive change in their families and communities.

We sow seeds of change by creating an environment conducive to learning, increasing students' awareness of conservation, improving the quality of their education and providing opportunities for talented learners.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Long Term Commitment
Creating sustainable change through long-term partnerships.

Authenticity
Working with honesty, transparency and integrity.

Preserving Heritage and Conservation
Protecting South Africa's natural environment for future generations.

Collaboration
Building meaningful partnerships that multiply impact.

OUR VALUES

- Impact
- Inspiration
- Kindness
- Integrity
- Involvement

HOW WE WORK

OUR DIFFERENCE

Eco Children is committed to transforming rural schools through a holistic approach that combines quality education, environmental stewardship, and community development. We believe that lasting change happens when children, educators, schools, communities, and partners work together towards a shared vision.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Our programmes are designed to strengthen every aspect of a school. From improving infrastructure and supporting educators to developing learners and engaging communities, we create environments where children can thrive academically, socially, and environmentally.

FOCUS ON CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education lies at the heart of everything we do. By connecting children with nature and teaching conservation principles, we inspire the next generation to become responsible custodians of South Africa's natural heritage.



SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

Rather than creating short-term solutions, we build on existing strengths within schools and communities. Our programmes are designed to create lasting change through sustainable partnerships, local ownership, and continuous development.

OUR PROJECTS

Eco Children's projects are deeply committed to sustainability, focusing on bottom-up approaches to enhance education quality and community well-being.

We support schools with strong leadership, practice eco-education through Eco Villages, build essential infrastructure, promote literacy, train teachers, award bursaries to talented learners, reward top performers and engage volunteers for meaningful community impact. This commitment ensures that our projects have a long-term, sustainable impact.

PROJECT PATHWAYS

Phased approach

Eco Children's Project Pathways outline the stages of our holistic support process for schools.

Each pathway represents a phase of development, from infrastructure improvement to eco-education and literacy promotion, ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable impact. By following these pathways, we create thriving educational environments and foster community growth, giving hope for a brighter future and instilling confidence in our partners about the effectiveness of our approach.



OUR PROGRAMMES

1. WE SUPPORT SCHOOLS

Strong schools create successful learners. We work alongside school leadership and governing bodies to improve school environments, strengthen governance, and provide practical support that enables schools to deliver quality education.

2. WE BUILD ECO VILLAGES

Our Eco Villages transform unused spaces into thriving educational environments where learners grow vegetables, plant indigenous trees, establish food gardens, and learn sustainable agricultural practices. These spaces improve nutrition while providing practical environmental education.

3. WE BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE

A safe and inspiring learning environment is essential for quality education. We construct and improve eco classrooms, libraries, Grade R centres, kitchens, sanitation facilities and other infrastructure that creates better opportunities for learning.

4. WE TEACH ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Through hands-on environmental programmes, learners gain knowledge about biodiversity, conservation, climate change, recycling, water conservation, and responsible environmental stewardship. We aim to nurture a lifelong appreciation for nature and inspire future conservation leaders.

5. WE DEVELOP A READING CULTURE

Reading opens doors to opportunity. Through our school libraries, literacy programmes, reading activities, and access to quality books, we encourage a love for reading that strengthens academic performance and lifelong learning.





6. WE EMPOWER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS

Our Educators are at the heart of quality education. We provide professional development, mentorship, curriculum support, and specialised training to equip our educators with the knowledge, confidence, and resources they need to inspire their learners.

7. WE REWARD EXCELLENCE

We celebrate learners who demonstrate academic achievement, positive behaviour, leadership, environmental responsibility, and personal growth. Through educational excursions, recognition programmes, and incentives, we motivate learners to reach their full potential.

8. WE AWARD BURSARIES

Our bursary programme provides talented and deserving learners with access to quality secondary education and ongoing mentorship. Beyond financial support, we guide learners through personal development, academic mentoring, career planning, and tertiary education opportunities, empowering them to become future leaders.

9. WE SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Meaningful change is only possible through strong partnerships. We work closely with schools, communities, donors, sponsors, conservation partners, government departments, volunteers, and like-minded organisations to maximise our collective impact. By combining our strengths and resources, we create sustainable opportunities that benefit children, families, schools, and the wider community.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION – BUILDING THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATION

The Klaserie Private Nature Reserve is built on five interconnected pillars:

- HERITAGE
- CONSERVATION
- CONNECTION
- COMMUNITY
- COLLABORATION

Together, these pillars provide the foundation for protecting one of Africa's last truly wild places while ensuring that its legacy continues for generations to come.

Everything begins with **Heritage**. The Klaserie is a landscape of extraordinary natural beauty, rich biodiversity, and history. Protecting this heritage means more than safeguarding wildlife and ecosystems; it means ensuring that future generations can experience, understand, and value the natural world that surrounds them.

At the centre of this is **Conservation**. The protection of wildlife, the management of habitats, and the preservation of biodiversity are essential to maintaining the Klaserie as a thriving wilderness area. Yet conservation is ultimately about more than protecting nature today. It is about creating a future in which people understand their role in protecting it.

This is where **Connection** becomes so important. People are more likely to protect what they understand, appreciate, and feel connected to. By creating meaningful opportunities for children and communities to engage with nature, we can foster respect, responsibility, and a lifelong commitment to conservation.

For Eco Children, **Community** and **Collaboration** are at the heart of everything we do. They form the bridge between conservation and the people living alongside protected areas, creating opportunities for meaningful connection, education, and shared responsibility for the future.

WHEN WE INVEST IN CHILDREN, WE INVEST IN CONSERVATION.









As the community outreach initiative of the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, Eco Children works to extend this connection beyond the reserve boundaries and into neighbouring schools and communities. Through environmental education, bursary programmes, libraries, eco-classrooms, school support, mentorship, and opportunities for young people, we are investing in the next generation of environmental custodians.

Every child who discovers the wonder of nature has the potential to become an advocate for its protection. Every learner supported through education has the opportunity to become a teacher, scientist, conservationist, ranger, entrepreneur, or community leader who contributes positively to their community and the environment.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION – BUILDING THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATION



None of this would be possible without Collaboration. The impact of Eco Children is made possible through strong and meaningful partnerships with the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve, lodge partners, donors, schools, educators, communities, volunteers, researchers, conservation organisations, and corporate partners who share our vision.

Collaboration enables us to achieve far more together than any one organisation could achieve alone. Through these partnerships, we create libraries that inspire learning, classrooms that open doors to opportunity, bursary programmes that unlock potential, and environmental education initiatives that encourage young people to become future conservation leaders.

The result is an approach that recognises that healthy communities and healthy ecosystems are interconnected. By supporting education, creating opportunities, and strengthening communities, we are helping to build a stronger foundation for conservation.

The work of Eco Children provides a unique opportunity to witness this transformation. We see children who may never previously have experienced the wilderness develop a genuine appreciation for nature. We see education creating hope, partnerships opening doors, and young people gaining the confidence and knowledge to shape their own futures.

The future of conservation will not only be secured within protected areas such as the Klaserie. It will also be shaped in classrooms, in libraries, in communities, and in the hearts and minds of young people.

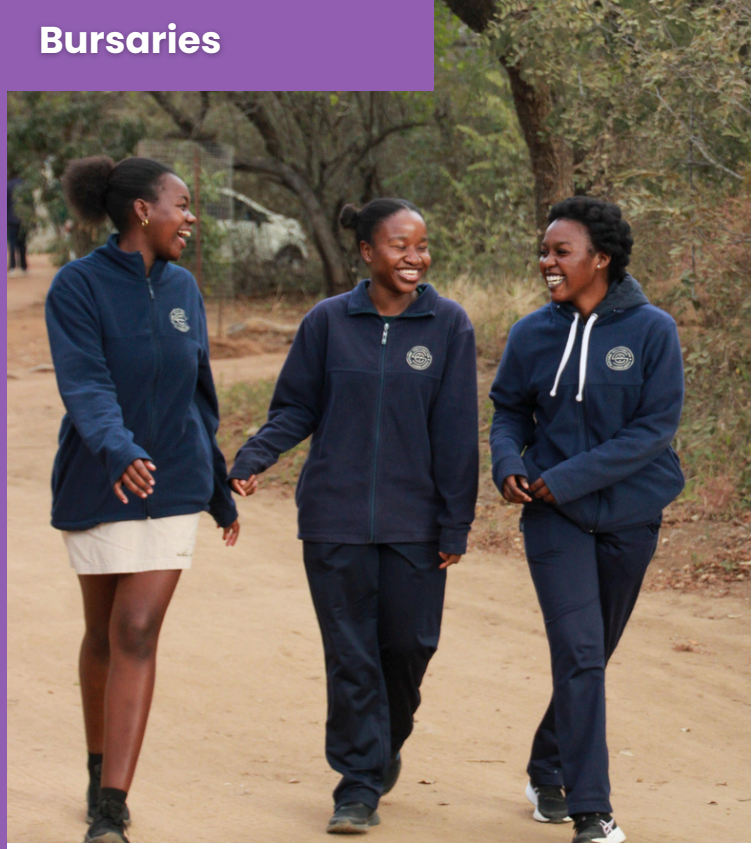
When we strengthen communities, we strengthen conservation.
When we collaborate, we multiply our impact.

And when we invest in children today, we help create the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

Through Heritage, Conservation, Connection, Community, and Collaboration, we are not simply protecting the true wild. We are helping to ensure that future generations will have the opportunity to experience it, value it, and become its custodians.



TOGETHER, WE ARE BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE PEOPLE AND NATURE CAN THRIVE SIDE BY SIDE.









BURSARIES

OUR STUDENTS – OUR FUTURE

Our current bursary programme supports students across a wide range of educational levels:

2 students	Grade 8
1 student	Grade 9
3 students	Grade 10
6 students	Grade 11
1 student	Grade 12
1 student	2nd Year University of the Free State
1 student	Final Year at Emeris, Waterfall

From learners taking their first steps into high school to students preparing to enter the professional world, we are privileged to walk alongside them throughout their educational journeys.

For our Grade 8 learners, this is the beginning of an exciting new chapter. For our Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, the focus is increasingly on preparing for life beyond school and considering their future studies and careers. And for our university students, the finish line is coming into sight as they work towards completing their qualifications and entering the world of work.

WALKING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

A bursary is not simply about paying school fees. It is about investing in a young person and supporting them through the challenges and opportunities that come with education.

We are grateful to our sponsors, donors, mentors, schools and families who walk this journey with us. Their support makes it possible for these young people to access quality education and to dream beyond the circumstances into which they were born.

As our students progress from one grade to the next, we are reminded that every opportunity can become a stepping stone towards a brighter future.

Our hope is that these young people will not only achieve their own goals, but one day use their knowledge, skills and experiences to contribute positively to their families, their communities and South Africa.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

We celebrate every achievement — every passed subject, every new grade, every examination, every university milestone and every moment when a student realises that they are capable of more than they once imagined.

Their journeys are still unfolding.
And we are honoured to walk alongside them.

With the continued support of our donors, Eco Children can open more doors, reach more young people and give more students the opportunity to step into a future filled with possibility.



BECAUSE WHEN WE INVEST IN A CHILD'S EDUCATION, WE ARE NOT ONLY CHANGING ONE LIFE — WE ARE HELPING TO CHANGE A FAMILY, A COMMUNITY AND THE FUTURE.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED APRIL 2026

During the 2025/2026 financial year, Eco Children received R 6.14 million in revenue, of which R 6.13 million was received through donations.

Total operating expenses amounted to R 7.51 million, with R 4.47 million directed towards projects supporting education, conservation and community development.

At 30 April 2026, Eco Children held R 122,578.00 in cash and cash equivalents. Our financial position reflects the significant investment made during the year in delivering programmes and creating meaningful opportunities for children and communities.

INCOME RECEIVED

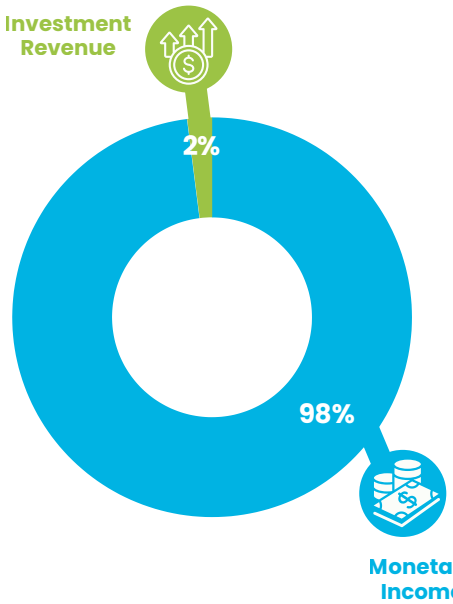
Eco Children generated R 6,135,464.00 in revenue during the year.

Additional investment income of R 146,258.00 was earned during the financial year.

<u>Funds were generated from the following sources:</u>

<u>Monetary donations received from:</u>

- Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR)
- The SORAI Foundation
- The Holder Family
- The Jell Foundation
- The 100% Foundation
- SMH Group
- Cometa Plant Hire (Pty)Ltd
- Individual & company donors
- Individual & company donors - Bursary Fund
- GivenGain International Donor Platform





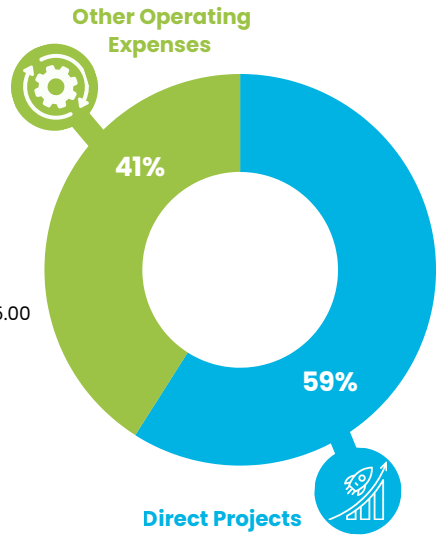


HOW FUNDS WERE USED

Total operating expenses amounted to R 7,509,704.00. The largest component was direct project expenditure of R 4,465,573.00, representing approximately 59% of total expenditure.

Other significant costs included:

- Employee costs: R 1,791,043.00
- Consulting and professional fees: R 398,025.00
- Other operating expenses: R 855,063.00





Detailed Audited Financial Statements are available on request.



LOOKING AHEAD – GROWING FUTURES ACROSS THE WHOLE SCHOOL

As we look to the future, Eco Children is committed to strengthening our whole-school approach, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to benefit from our programmes — from the youngest children entering Early Childhood Development (ECD) to the oldest learners preparing for the next chapter of their education.

We recognise that meaningful change begins in the early years. By placing greater emphasis on Early Childhood Development, we aim to build strong foundations for learning, curiosity, confidence and environmental awareness from an early age. Our vision is to support children throughout their primary school journey, creating a continuous pathway where academic development, environmental education, life skills, nutrition, infrastructure and personal growth work together to support the whole child.

A key part of this vision is creating better learning environments where children can learn, explore and thrive. At Seganyane Primary School, we plan to furnish the Eco Classroom, transforming it into a welcoming and functional space where learners can engage in environmental education, practical activities and additional learning opportunities.

At Mahlathi Primary School, our plans are even more ambitious. We aim to develop a new Eco Classroom and library, creating spaces that will support both environmental learning and literacy. These facilities will provide learners and teachers with valuable resources while creating opportunities for reading, research, creativity and hands-on learning.

Our goal is not simply to build classrooms or provide resources, but to build stronger schools and brighter futures. Through a whole-school approach, Eco Children hopes to create an environment where every child — from the youngest ECD learner to the oldest primary school learner — is supported, encouraged and given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

As we move forward, we remain committed to working alongside schools, teachers, communities and our valued partners to create sustainable change. Together, we can grow confident children, stronger schools and communities that understand the importance of caring for both people and the environment.

STEP INTO CHANGE WITH US

EVERY STEP CREATES AN OPPORTUNITY.
EVERY CONTRIBUTION HELPS BUILD A FUTURE.

At Eco Children, we believe that meaningful change happens one step at a time.

A step towards a better education.
A step towards a brighter future.
A step towards stronger communities.
A step towards protecting the natural world that surrounds us.

For more than two decades, Eco Children has walked alongside children, teachers, schools and communities — creating opportunities through education, libraries, Eco Classrooms, Early Childhood Development, conservation and mentorship.

Now, we invite you to take the next step with us.
Your donation can help us reach more children, strengthen our schools and create spaces where young people can learn, grow and believe in what is possible.



DONATIONS

Donations, gifts and grants made to Eco Children are tax deductible subject to the limitations prescribed in section 18A of the Income Tax Act. Contributions under Section 18A greatly assist in enhancing educational facilities and opportunities beyond what regular fees can cover. It is a meaningful way to support education and receive tax benefits. In addition, Eco Children is B-BBEE accredited. Contact admin@ecochildren.co.za for more information.

GIVENGAIN CAMPAIGNS

Visit https://www.ecochildren.co.za/get-involved to discover the diverse initiatives Eco Children has launched to support education and conservation. Explore how each campaign, from bursaries to educational trips, contributes to our mission of empowering communities and fostering a love for nature. Your support helps drive these impactful projects forward



COMMUNITY TOURS

Our Eco Villages empower Grade 6 and 7 students to embrace sustainable living practices that nurture both the earth and their minds. With vibrant vegetable gardens providing fresh produce for school kitchens, students actively engage in lessons on ecology and conservation, fostering a deep connection with nature. Book a tour with one of our passionate Environmental Educators to discover this inspiring project. You can also inspire the youngest learners in Grade R through fun and interactive activities like beading, tracing, skipping, and throwing, which enhance their gross and fine motor skills.

Your contribution can make a meaningful difference - choose to support one of our worthy projects:

- Kit-a-Kid
- Bursaries
- Eco Villages
- Library Programme
- Merry Moments

WALK THE CHANGE.
GIVE THE FUTURE A STEP FORWARD.

BANK DETAILS

Standard Bank
Account details: Eco Children NPC
Account type: Current
Account number: 01 325 361 1
Branch: HATFIELD
Branch code: 001545
SWIFT code: SBZAZAJJ

THANK YOU!

For more information, visit our website: www.ecochildren.co.za