



Zazi Izandi

Narrative

2025 Report



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building a Scalable, High-Impact Intervention with Government

2025 was a transformative year for Zazi iZandi. The programme took major steps forward in 2025, launching a major government partnership, building critical (and innovative) infrastructure to scale, and testing the model with additional grades and even curriculums. A special projects manager was hired to oversee growth and he is now fully integrated.

We have run and tested various cohorts of Zazi iZandi over the past 3 years. Each cohort allowed us to test various aspects of the model and approach. There are a few critical variables, such as the type of youth. For example, we have tested the model multiple times with the BEEI government teaching assistants that work full-time in classrooms, with part-time Social Employment Fund youth that work four half-days a week, as well as with privately funded youth that work full-time for NGOs.

Another important dimension is the methodology and ‘curriculum’ implemented by the youth. We have experimented with teaching only letter sounds, teaching only blending, combinations of both, and even plugging a numeracy curriculum into the model. The cohorts also range in duration, dosage per week, and starting and ending dates. They also vary in age, as we tested implementing the core letter sounds programme up into Grade 2 and down into the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector. Finally, we have continued to iterate and refine our training, mentor tasks, materials, digital tools, assessments, games & activities, and more.

In 2025, we began the year with two cohorts 1) a 10-month ECD cohort of 16 preschools and 2) A 4-month part-time SEF cohort of 42 primary schools. Mid-way through the year, we launched a third cohort 3) a 4-month numeracy trial in 14 ECD Centers. Finally, in August & September, when BEEI youth became available, we launched the two huge pilots intended to test our systems and operations at scale 4) a 2-month 148 primary school cohort in the Nelson Mandela Bay District Municipality and 5) a 1-month 42 primary school cohort in the Buffalo City Municipality.

The next section provides detail and narrative around the 2025 key themes and cohort interventions. This is followed by a Results section highlighting a few key performance metrics for each cohort. Please note that our Data Portal provides far broader and deeper analyses for each of these cohorts, as well as for those of prior years.

Following the results section, we provide a very brief ‘In the News’ section. This is kept intentionally brief, but brings attention to both President Ramaphosa highlighting Zazi iZandi in one of his monthly national newsletters as well as our own Executive Director, Zama Zulu, winning the Gqeberha Citizen of the Year Award in the education category. Please note that Zama and the team have presented at numerous reading panels and literacy conferences across South Africa in 2025 as part of Zazi iZandi’s advocacy and public relations work.

We then provide a brief section on Challenge and Opportunities as well as a 2026 & Beyond section where we highlight some of the exciting plans going forward.

The report ends with two summary pages, highlighting the problem Zazi iZandi solves as well as the model. While we would typically lead with these pages, we are aware that the Binding Constraints Labs and Allan Gray teams are intimately familiar with both.

This year, we tested our model at large scale, strengthened our systems, technology, and infrastructure, and demonstrated, across multiple cohorts, grades, and learning domains, that we have built something special.

The momentum generated this year positions Zazi iZandi strongly for the next phase of expansion and impact. We are deeply grateful for the continued partnership and look forward to taking things to the next level in 2026.

ABSTRACT

Government Relationships, Scaling Infrastructure, Piloting the Model

1. Major Partnership Expansion with Government

In 2025, Zazi iZandi significantly expanded its partnership footprint, with a particular emphasis on working with government and large-scale delivery systems. The most substantial of these was a major collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Bay Department of Education, led by the District Director, which represented the first time Zazi iZandi was implemented at this scale within a government context. Through this partnership, 460 BEEI Teacher Assistants were trained and supported to deliver structured literacy instruction in public schools, demonstrating once again that (a) that BEEI youth can drive meaningful improvements in child literacy outcomes and (b) this can happen at a District-wide scale.

Alongside government, Zazi iZandi continues to explore expansion via partnerships, with pilots run with YearBeyond in the Cape Town and Click Learning in the Buffalo City Metropole. These partnerships provide critical insights towards our goal of building a model that can scale by being embedded into governments systems, but also via the NGO sector.

2. Sector-Leading Data, M&E, and Digital Infrastructure

In 2025, Data Portal V3 was launched, providing deeper analytical insights and making high-quality programme data publicly available to the sector. Sophisticated algorithms are being developed to surface trends, flag struggling schools, and generate actionable intelligence for the core team overseeing scale. ZazAI, an interactive AI data analyst, was launched to allow users to query the dataset directly and extract insights in real time. These algorithms are critical to scaling while maintaining quality and impact.

The team also piloted two new digital assessment tools, working closely with SurveyCTO and Teampact to develop, test, and roll out EGRA questions on their platforms. Both tools have since been adopted by other organizations. In parallel, the team is finalizing a WhatsApp-based training bot in partnership with Digify Africa. Our continued investment in high quality digital education assessments will benefit the entire education sector.

Across these systems, Zazi iZandi assessed over 15,000 children in 2025, generating one of the largest, most granular datasets on early literacy implementation in the Eastern Cape.

3. Extending the Zazi iZandi Model

The magic of Zazi iZandi is not the curriculum, but rather the model: Small-group work, teaching at the right level, frequent assessment, real-time data feedback, working within the public school system, and training of community youth.

In 2025, the model was piloted vertically, extending both downward into early childhood development (ECD) settings and upward into Grade 2 (responding to government demand). In parallel, the model was tested horizontally through the piloting of a structured numeracy intervention, applying the same systems, training, and data systems to a new learning domain.

Across all pilots, early results were exceptionally strong, reinforcing that the strength of Zazi iZandi lies in its scalable delivery and accountability systems rather than any single content package. They reinforce our belief that the programme is not a standalone literacy intervention, but a platform for improving foundational learning outcomes, capable of expanding across schools, grades, and learning domains.

THREE YEARS OF GROWTH

Testing Models, Repeating Results

Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

The Zazi iZandi team has spent the past 3 years running numerous pilots, backed by professional research, in multiple languages, multiple cities, and with multiple youth employment initiatives.

2023: Pilot Launch

ZZ 1.0 - Letter Sounds

August - November 2023

- 12 Schools
- 52 Youth
- 1897 Children

Initial pilot testing the letter sounds curriculum and delivery model.

2024: Expansion & Innovation

ZZ 1.0 + 2.0 Launch

Cohort 1:
February - October 2024

- 16 Schools
- 82 Youth
- 3490 Children
- Improved 1.0 with lessons learned

Cohort 2:
July - October 2024

- 6 Additional Schools
- 28 Youth
- 1134 Children

Introduced ZZ 2.0 (blending & word reading)

First ECD center pilot

2025: Scaling

ZZ 1.0 at Scale
Multiple Streams

Cohort 1:
Preschool/ECD Pilot (Feb-Nov):

- 16 Preschools
- 323 Children

Expanding vertically down in ECD

Cohort 2:
SEF Youth (Feb-May):

- 42 Schools
- 73 Part-time TAs
- 4 days/week model

Part-time insights and quality

Cohort 3:
Government TAs - NMB (Aug-Oct)

- 148 Schools
- 2-month trial

Huge partnership with Dept of Education.

Cohort 4:
Government TAs - East London (Oct)

- 50 Schools
- 1-month trial

Short blitz intervention 4-6 weeks testing roll-out in a new district

Cohort 5:
Numeracy Pilot (July - Oct):

- 582 Children
- 14 Preschools

Piloting numeracy using ZZ infrastructure



1. Major Partnership Expansion with Government

Working Within The Public School System



In June 2025, Zazi iZandi hosted a Principals' Breakfast, at which District Director Mr Ernest Gorgonzola formally endorsed the programme and encouraged more than 150 primary school principals to adopt Zazi iZandi in their classrooms.

The team also invested in building strong working relationships with the Department's implementation leadership, including Zazi iZandi Task Force Lead Ms Debbie Jeptha, who also serves as a Circuit Manager in Algoa. The engagement was further strengthened by participation from Human Resource Development (HRD) officials Mr Pillay and Mr Banda, as well as representatives from the Foundation Phase Curriculum Unit, Mrs Kilani and Mrs Mgobo. Their involvement reflected broad departmental alignment and a shared commitment to collaborative implementation across circuits and district structures.

In August, Zazi iZandi trained 460 Teacher Assistants from participating primary schools. Over the following eight weeks, approximately 300 Teacher Assistants across 150 schools implemented the programme with nearly 20,000 children. Despite challenging timing, late in the school year and interrupted by a two-week Term 3 break, the rollout demonstrated that Zazi iZandi can be rapidly deployed at scale across a large number of schools while maintaining implementation momentum.

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Meanwhile, Zazi iZandi continues to iterate on our partnership model, developing tools, materials, and systems that allow us to scale into additional cities and districts via partnerships with other NGOs. In 2025, we ran a short pilot with Click Learning and the Department of Education with 3000 children in 41 primary schools the Buffalo City Metropolitan District.

We also partnered with Year Beyond to run the model in 22 Early Childhood Development Centers in the Western Cape.

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As the programme enters 2026, Zazi iZandi has effectively completed the groundwork for district-scale implementation. With strong government alignment, tested partnership models, and systems proven across multiple contexts, the programme stands ready to deliver a high-quality, large-scale interventions as soon as funding and youth capacity are unlocked.

2. Sector-Leading Data, M&E, and Digital Infrastructure

Data-Driven Quality & Transparency



Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Our [data portal](#) integrates three complementary data sources to provide a comprehensive view of programme implementation and impact. By triangulating these different perspectives, we ensure data quality, validate findings, and gain deeper insights into what's working.

EA Daily Sessions	EGRA Assessments	Mentor Visits
Education Assistant Submissions Daily session logs submitted by EAs capturing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters taught each day Groups worked with Participant attendance Session duration <i>Real-time implementation data</i>	Formal Learning Assessments Standardized EGRA tests conducted every 6 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline Midline Endline <i>Measures letter sound knowledge per minute (and, in some cases, word and non-word reading fluency.)</i>	Site Observation Data Trained mentors conduct site visits documenting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation quality EA performance observations School environment factors Qualitative feedback Action items and support needs <i>Contextual insights and quality</i>

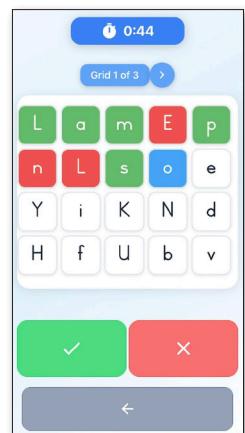
These three sources above are triangulated around two objectives:

- 1. Measuring programme impact:** Tracking literacy gains across all children
- 2. Prioritizing support resources:** Sending trainers & mentors to schools, coaches, or children needing additional attention

Digital Tools, Intelligent Systems, and Advanced Analytics

In 2025, Zazi iZandi piloted two new digital assessment platforms, working closely with SurveyCTO and Teampact to develop, test, and deploy EGRA-aligned literacy assessments at scale. These collaborations focused on ensuring assessments were accurate, efficient, and usable in real classroom conditions. Both tools have since been adopted by additional organizations, extending the benefits of this work beyond Zazi iZandi and contributing to stronger digital assessment capacity across the education sector.

Beyond data collection, Zazi iZandi is leveraging real-time implementation data to develop advanced quality-assurance algorithms. These systems go beyond tracking attendance and session frequency to detect deeper implementation risks, such as Teaching Assistants deviating from the methodology, introducing incorrect letter sequences, or progressing too quickly or too slowly rather than teaching at the right level. By automatically flagging these issues, the programme can direct mentor support precisely where it is needed.



Finally, Zazi iZandi's comprehensive data portal brings together assessment results, daily session data, automated quality flags, and learning-gain analysis into a single, integrated system. The platform analyzes programme performance across multiple dimensions: Programme-wide, school-level, Teaching Assistant-level, and individual child trajectories. This enables both rigorous impact measurement and rapid identification of implementation risks. This level of real-time, multi-layered monitoring is rare in the sector and underpins Zazi iZandi's ability to scale without losing quality.

This combination of high-quality digital tools and intelligent analytics is central to Zazi iZandi's ability to scale efficiently without compromising fidelity or impact, and sets the programme apart as it expands across districts and partners.

3. Extending the Zazi iZandi Model

A Model, Not a Methodology

The core strength of Zazi iZandi lies not in a single curriculum, but in the delivery model and supporting infrastructure that enable quality at scale. This includes small-group instruction, teaching at the right level, frequent assessment, real-time data feedback, operation within public systems, and the training and support of community youth. In 2025, the programme intentionally tested the flexibility of this model, both vertically across age groups and horizontally across learning domains, to assess whether these systems could drive impact beyond the original Grades R and 1 letter-knowledge focus.

Expanding Down into Early Childhood Development

In Nelson Mandela Bay, the model was piloted in 17 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers, reaching children before formal schooling. Results were striking: participating children improved from 1.7 letters correct per minute at baseline to 22.0 letters correct per minute at endline, approximately 50% higher than the average Grade 1 learner at the start of the school year. These findings indicate that strong foundational literacy skills can be developed earlier than previously assumed when the right instructional and data systems are in place.\

In Cape Town, our Year Beyond partners saw similar gains with 291 children doubling and tripling their letter knowledge scores across three languages, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English.

Expanding Up Into Grade 2

Responding directly to government demand for continuity beyond the early grades, Zazi iZandi piloted the model in Grade 2 classrooms. Learners improved their assessment scores from an average of 37 to 55, demonstrating that the model remains effective beyond initial literacy acquisition. These results reinforce the importance of teaching at the right level and ongoing assessment in later primary grades, where many learners continue to struggle with foundational skills.

Expanding Horizontally Into Numeracy

In parallel, Zazi iZandi tested the model in a new domain through a six-month numeracy pilot. A total of 582 children participated, receiving an average of 29 structured sessions.

Learners' scores doubled, improving from 25 out of 90 at baseline to 50 out of 90 at endline, with clear gains in number recognition, basic operations, and problem-solving.

In a country where more than 50% of South African Grade 1 learners cannot add or subtract single-digit numbers, it's incredibly promising to see a proven model like Zazi iZandi show such excellent results in numeracy.



Across all pilots, results were consistently strong, reinforcing a central insight: Zazi iZandi is not a standalone literacy programme, but a scalable platform for improving foundational learning outcomes. Its strength lies in the systems that support quality, accountability, and continuous improvement, systems that can adapt across grades, ages, and learning domains in response to need and demand.

2025 RESULTS

2025 STATS AT A GLANCE

175

schools in the Eastern Cape

400

community youth employed as Literacy Coaches

20,000

children received daily literacy instruction

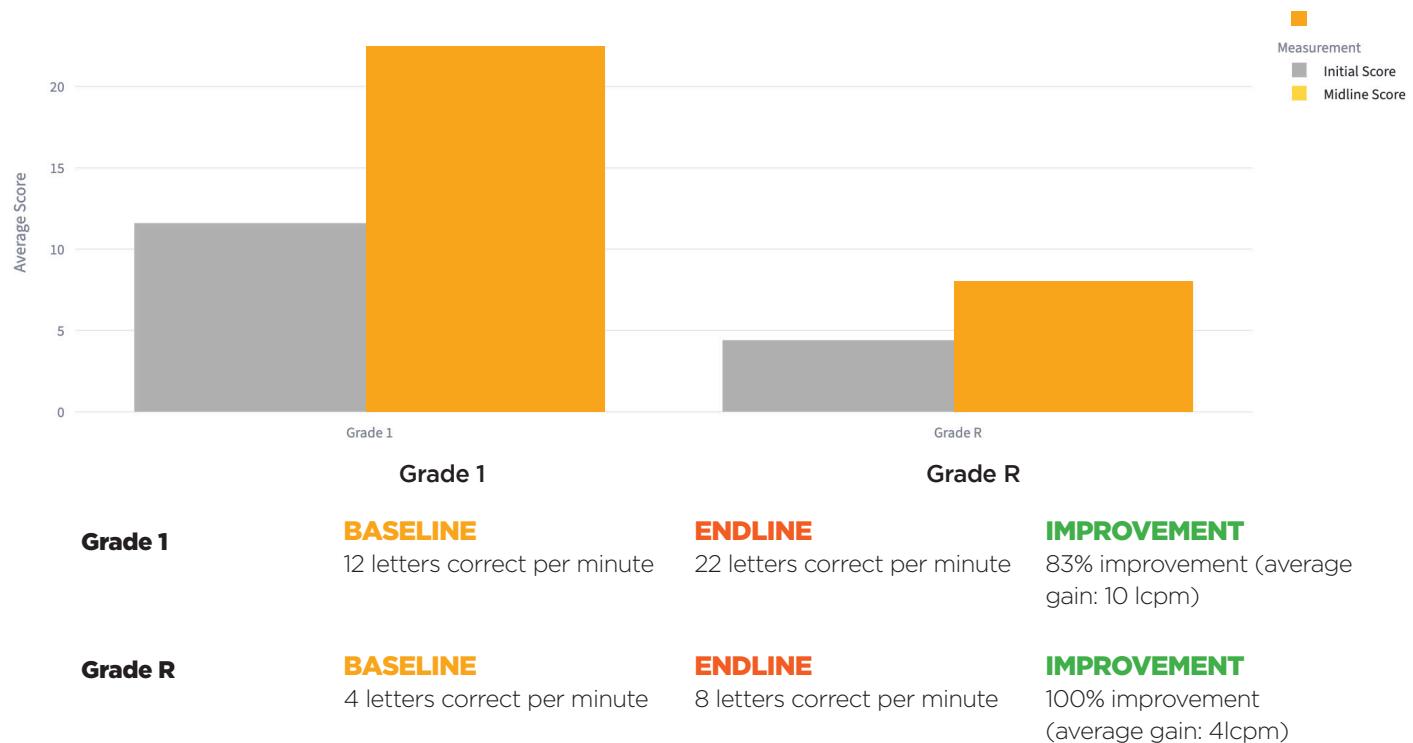
179%

average improvement in letter-sound knowledge

COHORT 1: FEB - MAY

42 schools, 73 education assistants

Letter EGRA Improvement

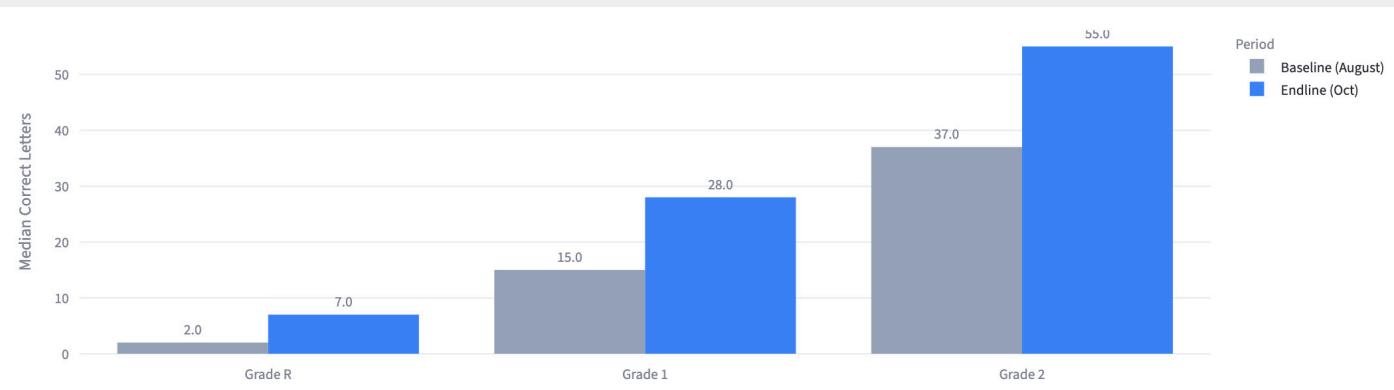


This first cohort of youth were Part-Time SEF participants working only four days per week, half days. It is heartening to see strong improvement despite lower dosage than full time TAs.

COHORT 2: SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

148 schools, 373 education assistants

Letter EGRA Improvement



Grade R

BASELINE

2 letters correct per minute

ENDLINE

7 letters correct per minute

IMPROVEMENT

250% improvement
(average gain: 5lcpm)

Grade 1

BASELINE

15 letters correct per minute

ENDLINE

28 letters correct per minute

IMPROVEMENT

86% improvement (average gain: 13 lcpm)

Grade 2

BASELINE

37 letters correct per minute

ENDLINE

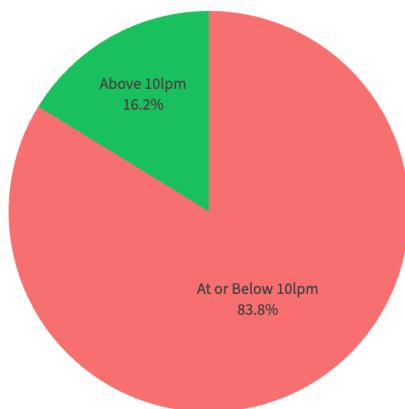
55 letters correct per minute

IMPROVEMENT

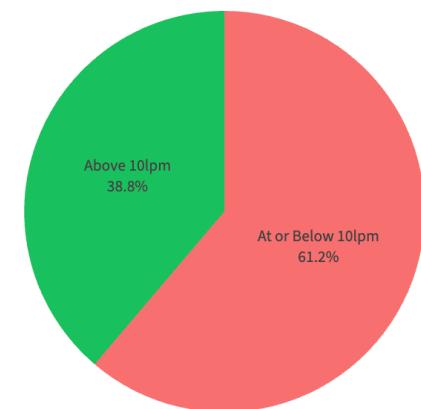
52% improvement (average gain: 18 lcpm)

Percent of Grade R Children Hitting 10 lcpm benchmark

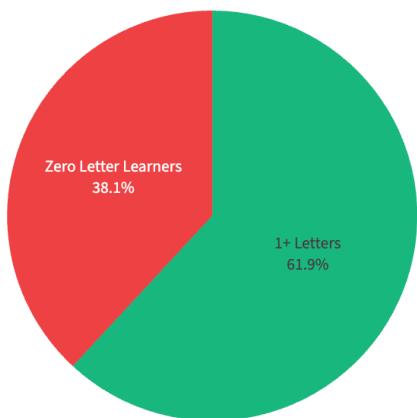
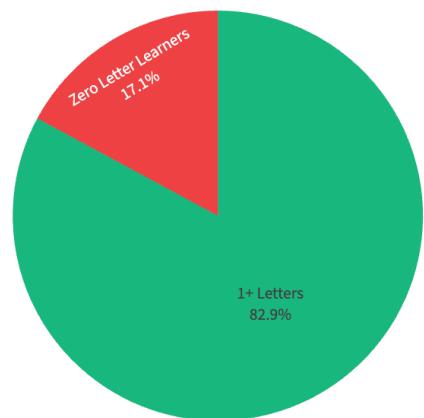
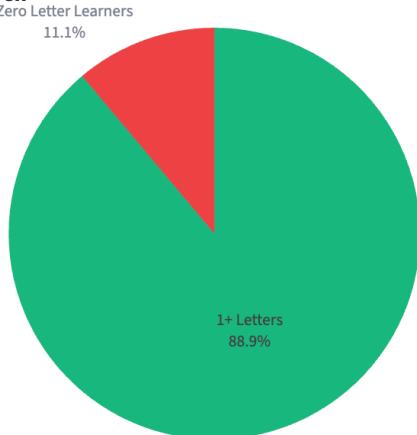
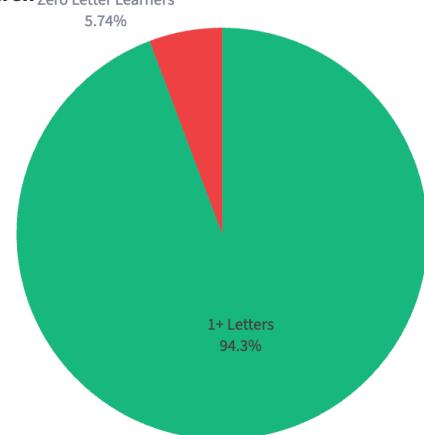
Grade R Baseline (August)
Total: 4,525 children



Grade R Endline (Oct)
Total: 3,357 children



The number of Grade R children that could hit the 10 letters correct per minute target more than doubled in six weeks.

COHORT 2: SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER (cont.)**148 schools, 373 education assistants****Percent of Children with Zero-Letter Knowledge****Grade R Baseline (August)**
Total: 4,525 children**Grade R Endline (Oct)**
Total: 3,357 children**Grade 1 Baseline (August)**
Total: 6,611 children**Grade 1 Endline (Oct)**
Total: 5,279 children

We were heartened to see that even in a six-week blitz, we can cut the number of zero-letter knowledge children in half in both Grades R and Grade 1.



The second cohort of youth worked for only 6 weeks. It was a very short intervention, with a goal of testing implementation at scale, not literacy results per se. They were government Teacher Assistants working full-time with the children.

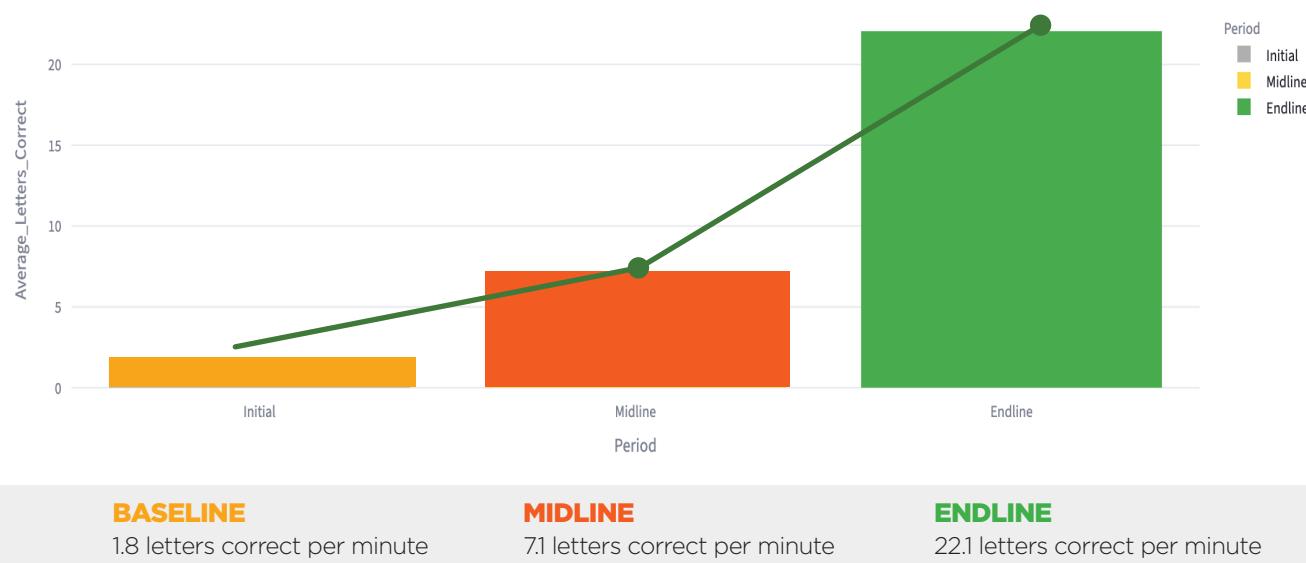
ECD CHILDREN

16 preschools, 323 children

Letter Knowledge

Over the course of 9 months, the children reached an average letter score of 22lcpm (Letters Correct per Minute). For context, Masinyusane assessed over 10,000 Eastern Cape children entering Grade 1 in 2025 and their average score was 11.2 lcpm.

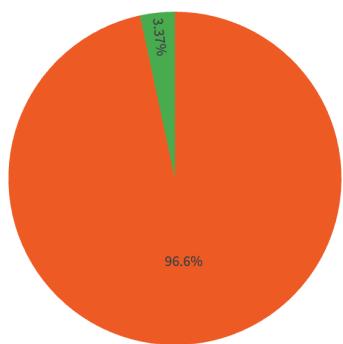
ECD Centers: Initial vs Midline vs Endline Performance



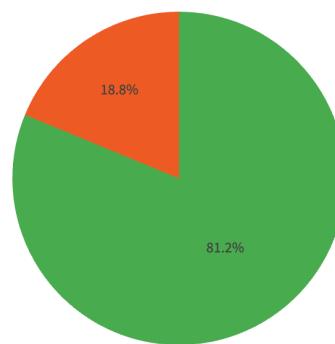
Percent of Children Hitting the Benchmark

The number of children reaching our benchmark of 10lcpm increased from 3% to 81%.

Baseline: Children at Benchmark



Endline: Children at Benchmark



BASELINE

3.3% of children hitting the benchmark.

ENDLINE

81.2% of children hitting the benchmark

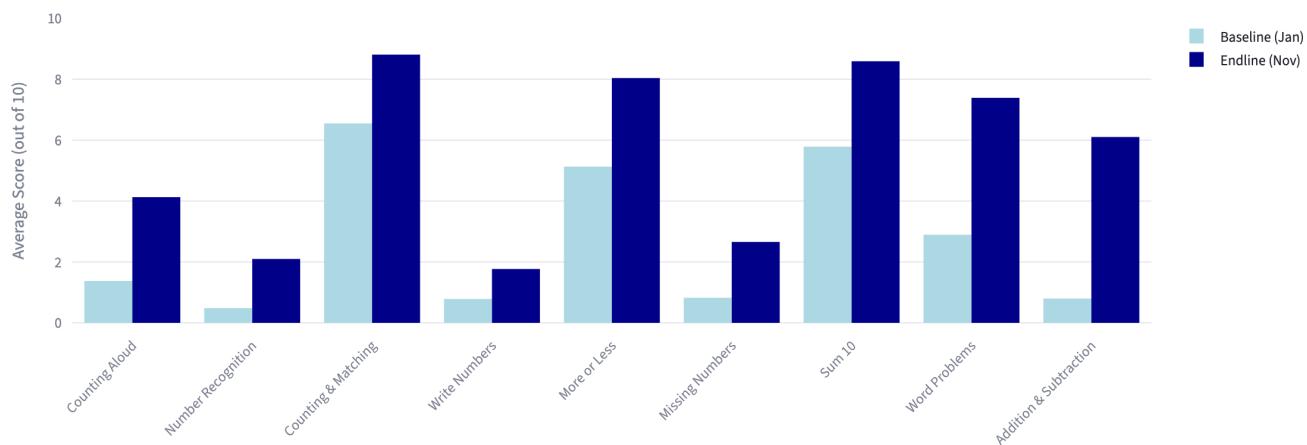
NUMERACY PILOT

14 preschools, 582 children

Improvement Across Various Metrics

In just 5 months, the children improved significantly across 9 important numeracy metrics.

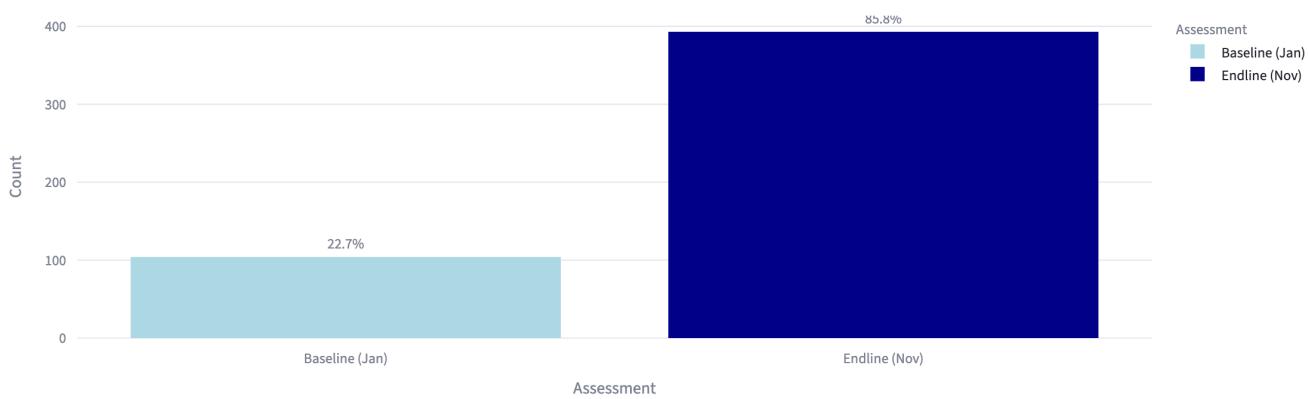
Baseline vs Endline: Average Scores Across All Components (out of 10)



Counting Ability

The number of children that could count to 20 increased by 4x.

Baseline vs Endline: Children Who Can Count to 20+ (All Schools)



BASELINE

23% of children

ENDLINE

86% of children

IN THE NEWS

President Ramaphosa Mentions Zazi iZandi

In June, the President of South Africa mentioned Masinyusane in his national newsletter. It's a small but meaningful acknowledgment of the work we've been doing over the past 15 years.

In highlighting the Basic Education Employment Initiative, the President shared the story of Sibongile Joni, who is part of our team. He quoted her advice to new participants in the programme, reflecting on the lessons she's learned and the value of showing up with consistency, professionalism, and a willingness to grow.



We're proud of Sibongile and all the young people we've worked with over the years. Her story is one of many, and it reminds us why we do this work.

Zama Zulu wins Citizen of the Year!

NPO claims top honours in education category of The Herald Citizens of the Year Awards

18 August 2025

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"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

The quote was made famous by former statesman Nelson Mandela but is having a practical application in the lives of hundreds of disadvantaged Nelson Mandela Bay pupils through the unwavering efforts of Masinyusane.

And it is for that reason the nonprofit organisation has claimed the top honours in the education category of the prestigious The Herald Citizens of the Year Awards, supported by Nelson Mandela University.



In 2025, Zama Zulu, Executive Director of Masinyusane, was named Citizen of the Year, in recognition of his leadership and contribution to improving early childhood education outcomes across Nelson Mandela Bay.

The award reflects not only individual leadership, but the scale and significance of the work achieved through Zazi iZandi as it expanded across the city and into government systems.

Under Zama's leadership, Zazi iZandi moved from a successful programme to a city-wide intervention, mobilizing government, schools, youth employment initiatives, and community partners around a shared, data-driven approach to early literacy. His ability to align diverse stakeholders, maintain a relentless focus on quality, and champion evidence-based implementation was central to the programme's success at scale.

The Citizen of the Year recognition underscores the broader civic impact of Zazi iZandi and affirms the role of strong local leadership in translating innovation into lasting, system-level change.

CHALLENGES & LESSONS FROM 2025

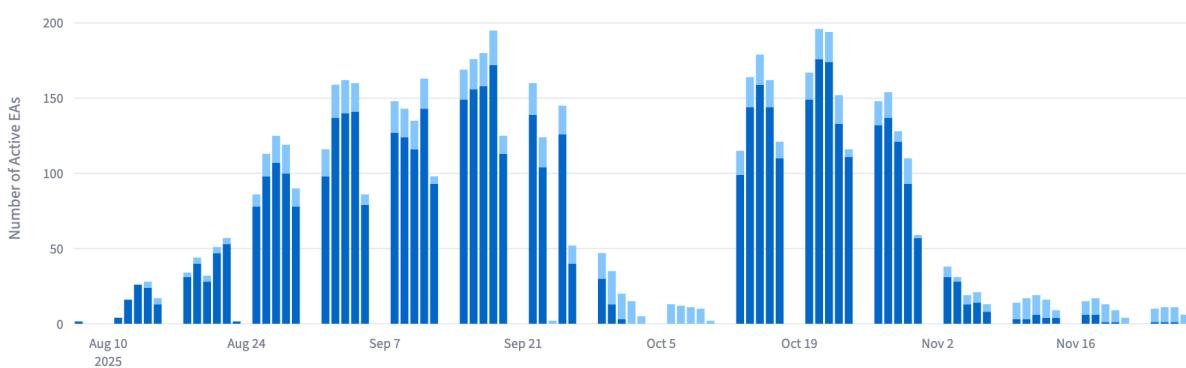
The major challenges faced by Zazi iZandi were related to the district-level BEEI cohorts and the timing of the intervention. These challenges were largely out of our control, yet they still provided important learnings as the programme prepares for further implementations in partnership with government.

Timing of the BEEI Roll Out

One of the most significant constraints in 2025 was the timing of the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI). Government-funded Teacher Assistants only became available in the second half of the year, resulting in a highly compressed implementation window. Zazi iZandi's largest government pilots were therefore limited to six to eight weeks, rather than a full school term or academic year. While results were still strong, the programme would be substantially easier to implement, and far more impactful for the children, if Teacher Assistants could be onboarded and trained at the start of the school year, allowing for proper planning, integration, and sustained delivery.

This challenge was compounded by a two-week Term 3 school holiday that fell in the middle of the intervention period. The following chart clearly illustrates the challenge.

Daily Active EAs by Schools & ECDs



Clarity of Reading Priorities & Reassigning Teaching Assistants

Another challenge related to communication and alignment around reading priorities within schools. In some cases, principals and teachers were unclear about how Zazi iZandi related to other literacy initiatives, such as Reading Champions, or whether Zazi iZandi should be treated as the primary literacy intervention. This occasionally led to confusion around expectations, time allocation, and accountability. This was again compounded by the attempt to launch a district-wide intervention in August of the school year.

The implementation was further affected by the fact that Teaching Assistants had already been assigned duties when Zazi iZandi training began. Asking schools to reallocate approximately one hour per day for literacy instruction a month into the third term proved challenging in some contexts. Once routines and schedules are established, changes can create friction amongst teachers and youth, even when school leadership is supportive.

As a result of both of these, our team has to exert enormous time, energy, and resources to get Zazi iZandi up and running in all of the schools mid-term (once again, see the chart above showing the ramp up).

These experiences underscored the importance of clear, consistent messaging from district and circuit leadership when multiple programmes are operating simultaneously.

2026 & BEYOND

Building on the strong evidence from 2023 - 2025, Zazi iZandi enters 2026 with a focused plan to expand reach, strengthen quality, and prepare the programme for national implementation.

Full Year District-Wide Implementation

Zazi iZandi hopes to implement across the entire Nelson Mandela Bay district in partnership with the Eastern Cape Department of Education for a 6-9 month intervention testing the results of ZZ at scale.

Vertical Expansion

The team intends on scaling Zazi iZandi up into Grade 2 & 3 classrooms at the request of the Department of Education. This will include a combination of letter knowledge and blending-skills (eg ZZ 2.0). At the same time, we will replicate our ECD pilot projects (expanding vertically downwards) at larger scale.

Launching in Additional Districts

Zazi iZandi hopes to continue to launch pilots in additional districts and cities, testing replication in new environments and languages, while continuing to demonstrate adaptability across South African contexts.

Horizontal Expansion

We seek to continue to introduce additional languages, particularly isiZulu, to the Zazi iZandi programme. If funding is available, the ZZ team seeks to replicate our :numeracy initiative at a larger scale. The incredible 2025 numeracy pilot results warrant testing a larger scale.

Digital Tool Innovation

The team will work closely with Teampact to develop an enhanced version of their app, including word and passage reading assessments. In addition, the Masi team intends on launching their open-source basic assessment mobile app in 2026.

Upgraded Data Portal

Our data portal and websites will continue to be enhanced with deeper insights, improved quality flags, school-level performance views, and export-ready reports for government and research partners.

AI Integrations

The ZZ team will continue to integrate artificial intelligence solutions into the work flows and Zazi iZandi systems. There are scopes of work for an enhanced ZazAI, a mentor AI assistant, and personalised TA AI assistants.

Enhanced Teaching Tools

We will release upgraded games, activities, decodable texts, and training materials—designed from field feedback and aligned tightly with the Department of Education's Reading Strategy.



Doubling Literacy While Creating Jobs



81%

of South African children cannot read for meaning by age 10

27%

of Eastern Cape Grade 1 learners meet government literacy benchmarks

Evidence from 3,490 Children in South Africa's Eastern Cape

But there's a proven solution that simultaneously addresses South Africa's youth unemployment crisis.



THE DUAL CRISES

The Reading Emergency

South Africa faces one of the world's most severe literacy crises. According to the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), 81% of South African children cannot read for meaning by age 10. In the Eastern Cape, the crisis is even more acute: only 27% of Grade 1 learners meet government literacy benchmarks.

The root of this crisis begins early. **Research consistently shows that letter-sound knowledge is highly predictive of future reading success.** Yet 73% of South African Grade 1 children do not know their letter sounds. The foundational building blocks of reading are not being learned.

The Youth Unemployment Crisis

Alongside this educational emergency sits another crisis: youth unemployment. South Africa's youth unemployment rate exceeds 60%, leaving hundreds of thousands of young people without work, income, or pathways to economic participation.

The Solution

Unemployed youth from the communities most affected by the literacy crisis are uniquely positioned to solve it.

They understand the context, speak the languages, and need dignified employment.

With proper training and support, they can become highly effective literacy coaches.

This is the foundation of Zazi iZandi.



81% of children cannot read by age 10



73% of Grade 1 children do not know their letters sounds



Letter Sound Knowledge is highly correlated to future reading



Zazi iZandi is highly effective at teaching letter sounds

THE MODEL & SCALE

A Structured, Evidence-Based Approach

Zazi iZandi recruits and trains unemployed community youth, primarily young women, as Literacy Coaches who deliver daily phonics sessions in public schools. The model combines international best practices with real-world scalability:

- 1 Government Partnership** Zazi iZandi has formally partnered with the Department of Education, and is working closely with officials to roll out a model, with proven results, across multiple education districts.
- 2 Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)** Children are grouped by ability (5-7 per group), not age, ensuring instruction meets each child where they are. This is a stark contrast from the typical South African classroom where every child follows along as the teacher teaches one lesson.
- 3 Science of Reading Methodology** Letters are taught in frequency order based on phonics research, prioritizing the sounds children need most to begin decoding words. Sessions focus on phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and sometimes even blending.
- 4 Professional Assessment Tools** Zazi iZandi uses the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), an internationally recognized tool for early literacy. Specifically, we measure Letters Correct Per Minute (LCPM), allowing direct comparison to national and international benchmarks.
- 5 Real-Time Data & Continuous Improvement** Every session, every child, every group is tracked carefully. Coaches record daily data; mentors conduct regular observational visits. This creates a continuous feedback loop for quality assurance and programme improvement.
- 6 Ongoing Mentorship & Support** Literacy Coaches receive initial training plus ongoing site-based coaching from experienced mentors who visit schools regularly, observe sessions, and provide targeted support.

2025 STATS AT A GLANCE

175

schools in the Eastern Cape

400

community youth employed as Literacy Coaches

20,000

children received daily literacy instruction

179%

average improvement in letter-sound knowledge

2025 Key Programme Metrics

20,000

children served

400+

youth employed

175

primary schools

10x

literacy
improvement

ECD

4x

numeracy
improvement

ECD

\$6.38

cost per child

Learn More

Explore the full programme data
data.zazi-izandi.co.za

Contact

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About Masinyusane Development Organisation:

Masinyusane operates at the intersection of education and youth employment in South Africa's Eastern Cape. We serve 150+ schools, employ hundreds of young women, and maintain partnerships with leading funders, government education departments, and multiple universities. Our programmes are recognized for combining rigorous impact measurement with scalable, systems-based design.

