



The Little Optimist Trust

Keeping Hope Afloat

We dream of:

An inclusive world where all youth have access to safe spaces, opportunity, inclusion, education and positive mental health intervention, that fosters hope and inspiration for a better life and a pathway to self-empowerment and future employment.



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NPO Number: 228- 978 NPO
Trust Number: IT002355/2016(C)
USA 501c3 fiscal partner donations*



THEORY OF CHANGE

WHERE

We work in communities where inequality is evident



WHO

We enable socio-economically challenged, mentally and/or differently-abled children and youth



WHAT

We improve access to mental and physical health development, education and pathways to better employment opportunities.



WHY

Because our environment can calm and connect us, increase innovation, insight and even heal what's broken.



HOW

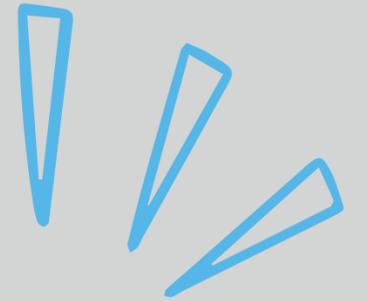
By Creating safe spaces, skills development, mentorship and opportunity through positive mental health interventions (sailing therapy, blue mind healing & growth mindset programs).

CONTENTS

- 1 Who we are
- 2 About Us
- 3 What we do
- 4 Our Impact
- 5 Sailing Therapy explained
- 6 The Opportunity
- 7 Measuring impact
- 8 Finances & Partners



Who we are



The Little Optimist Trust empowers marginalised and at-risk children, through offering opportunity, inclusion, education and positive mental health intervention. We upgrade and beautify under resourced education and health facilities, to create Safe Spaces that positively influence healing, learning and mental health.

Our globally awarded Sailing Therapy Academy harnesses the transformative power of water, and combines tailored programmes that blend sailing instruction with therapy and education, to cultivate resilience, self-confidence, and a sense of community.

Our unique, evidence-based approach to "Growing Optimism", not only offers hope, valuable life skills and a pathway to future employment, but also fosters emotional healing and personal growth in a supportive, nature-filled environment. Join us on our quest to "Keep Hope Afloat", for those that need it most!

He would say to himself:
*"I may be slow and I may be small.
My sail is square and I'm not so tall.
But I am special and I have heart.
My dreams are big and this is just the start."*



About us:

The Problem

OPTIMISM is a powerful health tonic, but is absent amongst the youth of marginalised communities of Cape Town where less than 10% of children and adolescence who need mental health support, diagnosis and treatment will actually receive any. This is a breath taking 90% treatment gap. This is a proven manifestation in most under resourced communities globally.

The Journey

After surviving two heart surgeries and 200 days in hospital, founder Greg Bertish sailed a tiny 8-foot dinghy around the Cape to raise funds for children's hospitals. His story became a movement – The Little Optimist Trust – rooted in one belief: that optimism can change lives.

Timeline of Evolution (2016–2026): From inspiration to innovation

- **2016 – Greg sails the Cape in 8ft dinghy and The Little optimist Children’s Book is published**
- **2017 – Trust established; hospital visits and ad-hoc sailing therapy begins**
- **2016 to present – 12 Safe space renovations across the Western Cape & KwaZulu Natal**
- **2019 – Dame Charity Award Amsterdam – joint winner**
- **2021 – Sport Impact – Paris Olympics 2024 – Laureate & Grant**
- **2022 – Launch of Sailing Therapy Academy at V&A Waterfront**
- **2023 - Full time employment for 90% of our graduated interns**
- **2024 – Laureus Sports for Good Incubation Hub participant NPO**
- **2024 – IOC (Advancing Olympism 365) Laureate and Grant**
- **2025 – Scaling programmes; launched 3 pilot sites in South Africa**
- **2026 - Laureus Sports for Good Foundation – Grant winner**





Inspire

*Hospital &
school visits,
inspiration
days &
Story books*

What we do



Transform

*Safe space
creation
and
renovations*



Empower

*Positive
mental health
intervention
through
Sailing
Therapy*



Educate

*Skills
development,
pathways to
employment*

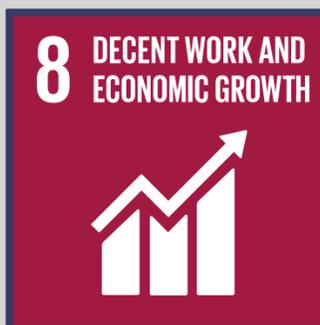


The Little Optimist Trust contributes meaningfully towards these Sustainable Development Goals:

ENVIRONMENT

SOCIAL

GOVERNANCE



Our impact

(Since inception in 2017)

279 000+ 2150+

Children and youth reached

Sailing Therapy beneficiaries

54%

12

Female participation in our sailing programmes

Safe Space creation/upgrade projects

6000+

FREE Storybooks distributed





“ Blue Mind, is a mildly meditative state characterised by calm, peacefulness, unity, and a sense of general happiness and satisfaction with life in the moment. We are beginning to learn that our brains are hardwired to react positively to water and that being near it can calm and connect us, increase innovation and insight, and even heal what is broken.” -
Dr Wallace J Nichols



I'm going to float my way out of this!
Zardin 12 years old



Sailing Therapy Explained

Sailing therapy merges the art of sailing with structured activities, whether group or individual, as a therapeutic approach to enhance psychological, physical, and social well-being.

What to Expect:

- Warm welcome and establishment of a safe environment
- Icebreakers and inspirational storytelling to boost confidence, foster connections, and promote optimization
- Engaging lessons and activities focused on water safety
- Practical sailing skills taught on land
- Enjoyable on-water sailing experiences
- Creating a safe space on the water that integrates blue mind therapy, life skills education, and mentoring
- Nutritious meals and snacks provided
- Knot-tying and enjoyable growth mindset activities
- Environmental and ocean education, including a visit to an aquarium
- Distribution of prizes - books, stuffed animals, certificates, medals, and warm hugs
- Positive reinforcement and reflective practices

*Multi-day programmes include: emotional regulation skills, sailing theory and aptitude, science experiments, growth-mindset, life skills and lots of fun!

Sailing Transforms Lives

Our monitoring and evaluation data indicates that our sailing therapy programs have led to improvements in:

motor skills and coordination, self-confidence, independence, identity formation, focus, and pride through achievement.



Want to know more?
Watch our video or visit us to
experience a sailing therapy
day



<p>Key Indicator</p>	<p>Number of participants reached through regular and sustained sailing therapy</p>	<p>% of participants with improved attitudes and behaviors that support better health, wellbeing, equality and inclusion or livelihoods</p>	<p>% of practitioners who have improved their ability to implement safe and inclusive sports programmes</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>Sailing Thru Life (one-day programme) Broadening Horizons (multi-day programme) Pilot sites</p>	<p>creating safe spaces storytelling mentorship</p>	<p>Train the Trainer</p>

Measuring impact

Today we made a boat and then we sailed in a boat and now I'm happy
Gracie 6 years old

Sir, I wasn't thinking about anything else but trying to sail the boat smoothly
Likhona 15 years old

Method:

- Questionnaires.
- registers,
- instructor observation,
- photos.
- Online Database

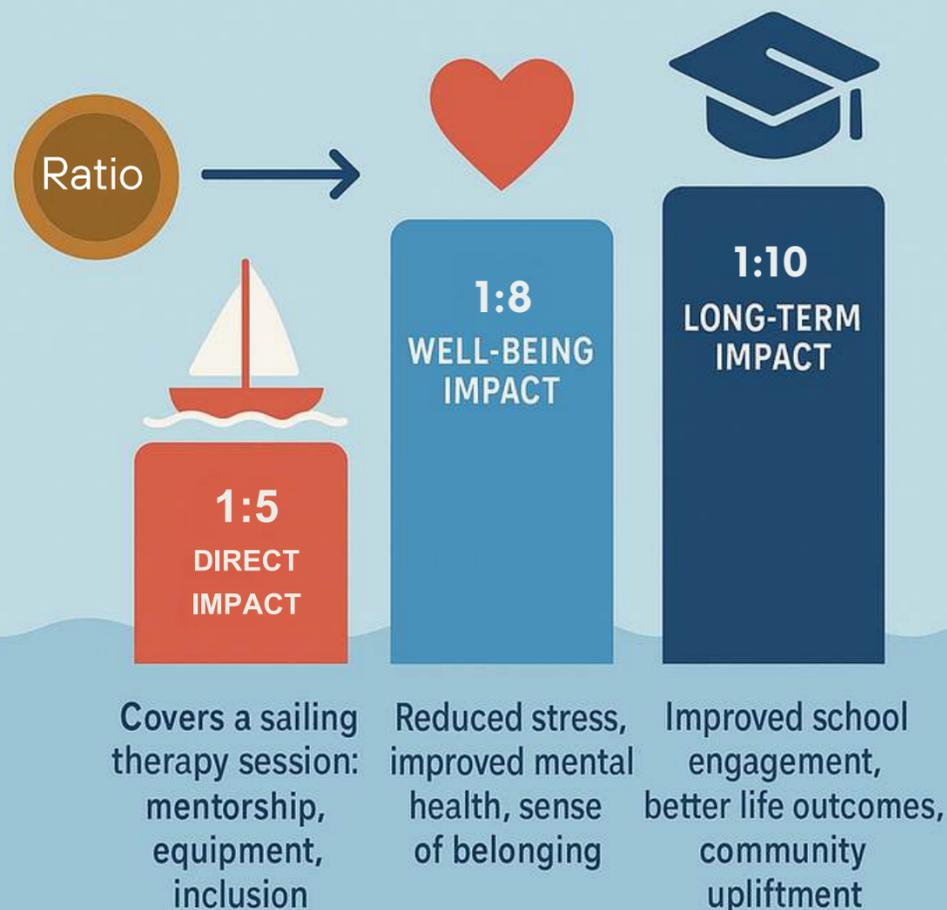


The opportunity

Join us in creating a brighter future for marginalised children, where hope sets sail and optimism thrives!

For every ZAR you invest, the expected return will be:

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)



Operational Funding: Salary top up funds to ensure market related salaries for key staff to ensure retention and sustainability to achieve our goals. **ZAR 650 000** per annum



Purchase of a **Safe transport & service vehicle - ZAR R770 000** + ZAR 100 000 per annum running costs



Media/IT/Web/ PR – Media & web support and creation of educational, instructional, safety, PR videos in multiple African languages & formats **ZAR 750 000**



Fund x **4 Pilot sites/ Impact hubs**
ZAR 150 000 per site / ZAR 600 000 per p/a



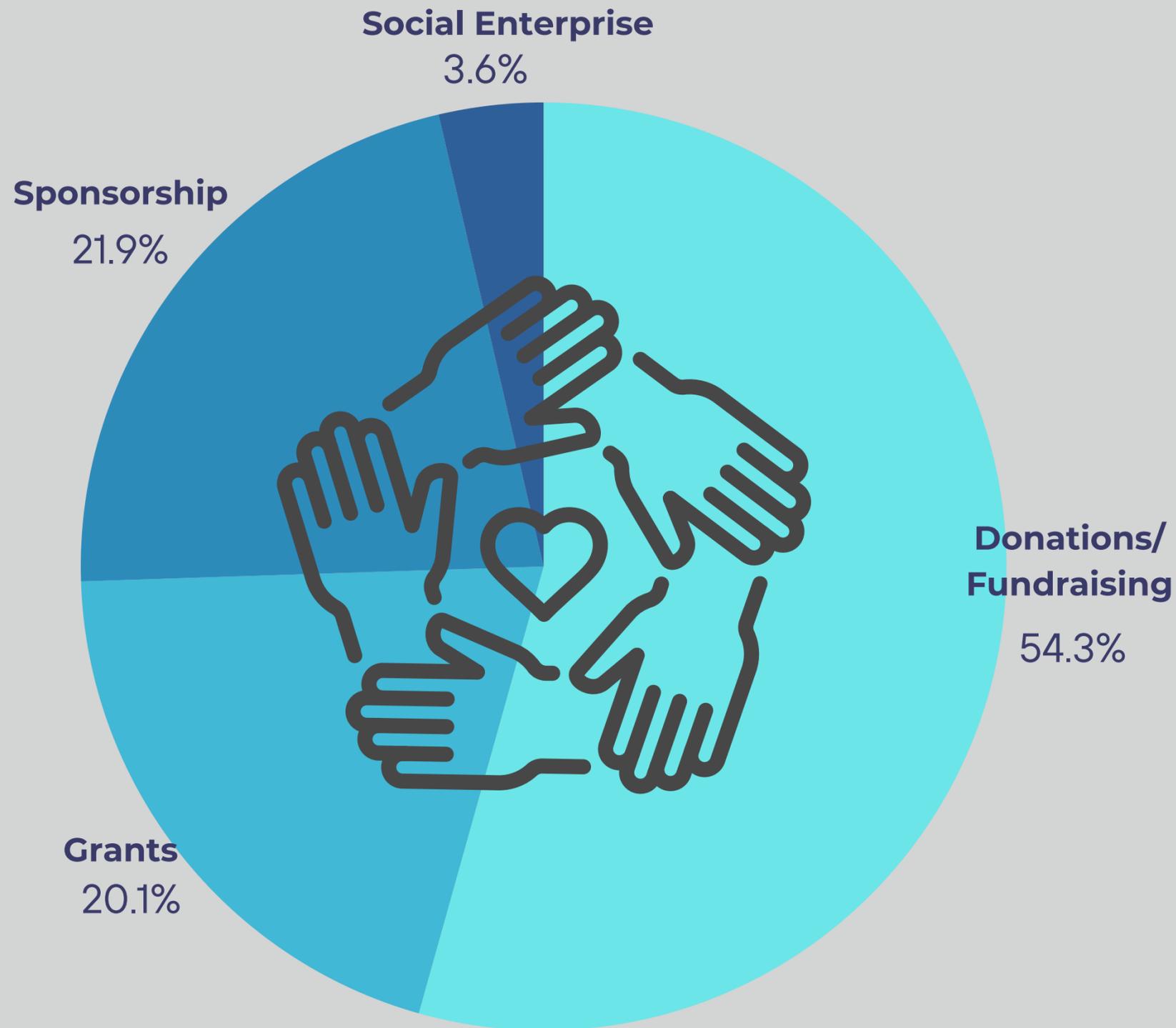
Support a **community sailing club and safe space in the city**
ZAR 170 000 p/a



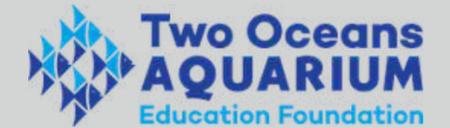
Fund the development & manufacture of **adaptive boat/kit** prototypes to create inclusion in sailing around RSA and the world (to use & take to market) – **ZAR 250 000**

All donations receive ZAR Section 18A or USD 501c3 fiscal partner tax certificates

2025 Funding Streams 01 January - 31 December 2025



Sponsors and Partners



*Today, I have been
brave
Mushfeeqah 8 years old*

Contact us

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*Thank you
For your consideration and support*

