



## 1 Introduction

“These children, with a far-away look, have souls more beautiful than the sun. They are angels. They are like lightening conductors on whom we should gaze with veneration. God could have created them normal, but they are as they are. There must be a reason for it which we cannot fathom. So we accept their creation as God’s design and accept them as a sign of His predilection” (Hyams 2007a: book cover).



## 1.1 Overview

According to Statistics South Africa (2001: 38-40), over two hundred thousand South Africans are afflicted by some form of intellectual disability. About twenty percent of these people suffer from the most acute form of this disability and are classified as being profoundly intellectually disabled. Profoundly intellectually disabled people have an IQ of below twenty, where an average person would score around one hundred.

An intensive and specialised type of care is required for such persons, and is provided by a limited number of state facilities and NGO's throughout the country. Attitudes and the practices pertaining to the care of these persons have also begun to change, from a traditional institutional approach, where they were accommodated and treated in self-contained institutional facilities removed from society, to today's thinking where greater integration of these people into society is advocated.

This dissertation deals with the study and design of a home, which will serve the needs of persons with profound intellectual disabilities in the greater Tshwane area. The client and organisation upon which the study will be based will be the Little Eden Society for the Care of Persons with Mental Handicap (hereafter referred to as Little Eden Society).

Little Eden (hereafter referred to as Little Eden – Edenvale) is a home for intellectually disabled persons established in 1967. Based in Edenvale and with a satellite home in Bapsfontein it currently serves the Gauteng area, with preference given to those closest to them in Ekurhuleni. The purpose of the home is to care for persons with profound intellectual disability. The Little Eden Society is a non-profit organisation, reliant on donations from the public and private sectors to supplement government grants and subsidies.

## 1.2 Formal problem statement

To design a facility to care for the profoundly intellectually disabled in order to care for and develop each person's mind, body and spirit to their full potential in an accessible and sustainable environment.

## 1.3 Research methodology followed

Research for this dissertation involved interviewing and discussing the needs and requirements for a new facility for the Little Eden Society, as well as using their existing homes as precedents for the planning and operational functioning of a new facility. Historical precedents and literature on the subject were also reviewed with the specific aim of establishing the needs and requirements of designing such a facility.



*Figure 2 – A view from the south of the proposed new Little Eden facility at Prinshof in Pretoria*

## 1.4 Assumptions

It is assumed that:

- The need for facilities to care for people with profound intellectual disability will continue to exist into the foreseeable future.
- The new facility will not cater for persons whose intellectual disability is combined with challenged and aggressive behaviour. This need will be met by the Little Eden – Elvira Rota Village facility based in Bapsfontein (hereafter referred to as Little Eden – Bapsfontein).
- The management and care system provided by the Little Eden Society is effective and efficient.
- The site will be made available for this purpose and that access to it will be approved.
- The funding mechanisms of the Little Eden Society are sufficient in acquiring the necessary finances for the construction of the new facility.
- The Little Eden – Prinshof home and the Prinshof School for the Visually Impaired (hereafter referred to as the Prinshof School) will share the open field.

## 1.5 Limitations

The Little Eden – Prinshof home will care for people with profound intellectual disability, which is often accompanied by physical disability and in some cases mental illness. As stated in the assumptions, this excludes those with extremely challenged and aggressive behaviour, as they are cared for elsewhere by the Little Eden Society.

The profoundly intellectually disabled are classified as persons with an IQ below 20. These people, unlike those with mild or severe intellectual disability, are considered uneducable. (See section 2.1.1 for an explanation of these terms).

Little Eden – Prinshof will provide for the 24-hour hostel care for 144 residents. In addition to their basic needs for sleep and food, the new facility will be required to provide mental and spiritual stimulation and development for the residents.



**Figure 3 - One of the Little Eden - Bapsfontein residents making music (photograph by the author 2007)**

## 1.6 Drivers for the establishment of the new facility

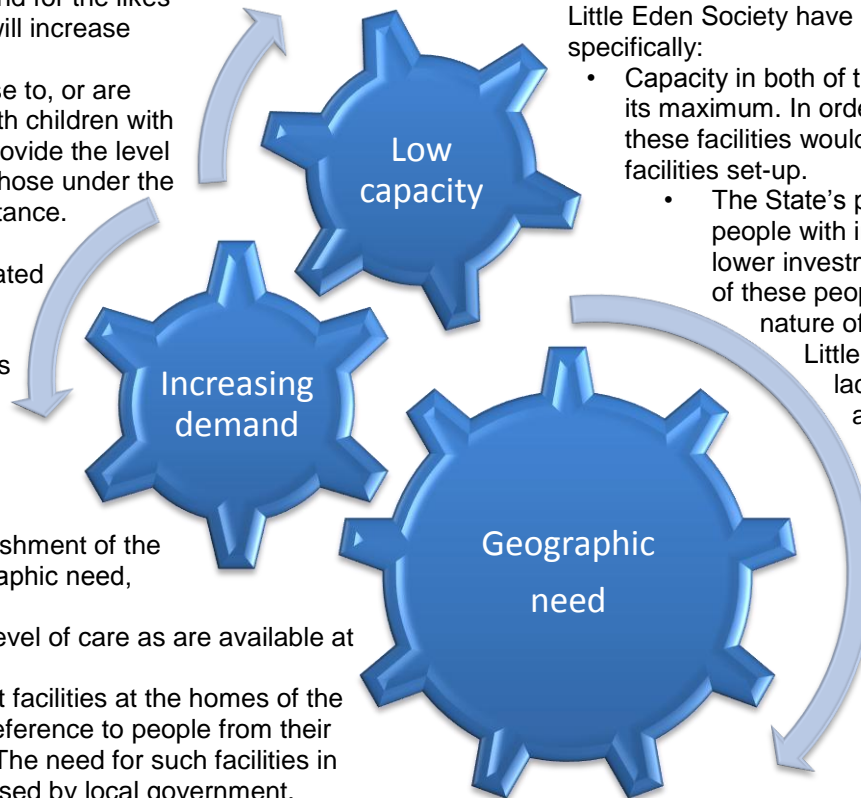
In continuing to meet the needs of those persons with profound intellectual disability, the Little Eden Society has identified a need to establish a new facility driven by three factors: increasing demand, low capacity and geographic need. These are explained below.

**Increasing demand:** It is anticipated that demand for the likes of services provided by the Little Eden Society will increase appreciably in the near future due to:

- An increasing number of families who choose to, or are required to, earn a dual income. Families with children with intellectual disability are no longer able to provide the level of care required and will turn to homes like those under the auspices of the Little Eden Society for assistance.
- Increasing urbanisation which leads to the breakdown of communities and their associated support structures, found amongst rural communities. Newly urbanised families previously reliant on these support structures would turn to homes like those under the auspices of the Little Eden Society for help.

**Geographic need:** A core driver for the establishment of the Little Eden Society's home would be the geographic need, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Few facilities, which provide the type and level of care as are available at Little Eden, exist within South Africa. The current facilities at the homes of the Little Eden Society serve Gauteng, with preference to people from their immediate surrounds, namely Ekurhuleni. The need for such facilities in other urban areas has been widely recognised by local government, communities and religious organisations.
- According to the Little Eden Society, they generally receive two or three telephone calls a day requesting placement in either of their two homes, including many calls from Tshwane. When vacancies are available, the Little Eden Society is required to place those from its catchment zone, but preference given to calls from its immediate surrounds, which excludes the greater Tshwane area.



**Low capacity:** Capacity issues in facilities in the homes of the Little Eden Society have been experienced, and more specifically:

- Capacity in both of the Little Eden Society's homes is at its maximum. In order to accommodate further residents these facilities would need to be expanded or additional facilities set-up.
- The State's policy of "community integration" for people with intellectual disabilities has led to lower investment in facilities to cater for the needs of these people. However due to the extreme nature of the disabilities of the people the Little Eden Society serves, and the lack of resources, including financial, available to communities, integration is often not possible. A need therefore still exists for institutional facilities. This has, in general, impacted capacity.

**Figure 4 – The three key drivers for the establishment of a new home: low capacity, increasing demand, geographic need**



## 1.7 Solution principles

In establishing a new facility, a set of governing principles has been defined by the client. These principles can be grouped into 3 categories: location, facilities and operations.

The new facility must provide for all the needs of the residents. While it goes without saying that this would include the physiological and safety needs such as accommodation, ablutions and kitchens, Little Eden Society's philosophy requires that those described by Maslow (Oxford Dictionary of Sports Science 1998) as higher needs for love and belonging, esteem and self actualisation are also addressed in a holistic manner. The new home should therefore have facilities which cater for:

- *Mind*: Being intellectually disabled, residents require specialised activities and thus facilities which develop their cognitive capabilities.
- *Body*: Persons with intellectual disabilities almost always have some form of physical disability which needs to be treated and developed.
- *Soul*: Involvement and participation in religious activities is essential to addressing the residents' love, belonging and self-actualisation needs.

The location of the new facility is of key importance to the establishment of a successful home. The following should be considered in choosing a location:

- *Located in Tshwane*: the Pretoria CBD and immediate surrounds have been identified as the location in which the new facility should be based. The reason for this is the following:
  - Tshwane has seen a marked increase in population as a result of urbanisation. As a direct result, the number of profoundly intellectually disabled persons within the city has also markedly increased. At present a limited number of facilities within Pretoria exist that provide the level and type of care offered by the Little Eden Society homes. The establishment of a new facility in Pretoria would alleviate a growing shortage in care services for profoundly intellectually handicapped persons.
- *Proximity to medical facilities*: the facility should be based within close proximity to state medical facilities. This is important, as most residents require specialised and frequent medical care.
- *Local support*: the success of the current facilities is in part due to the support of local religious, corporate and commercial organisations. The proximity of the new facility to these types of organisations within Pretoria is essential to ensure local support of the home.

The design of the new facility should facilitate the day-to-day operation of the home in terms of:

- *Economy*: The facility should be economically viable not only in its implementation but also in terms of its ongoing maintenance.
- *Quality*: Quality should never be sacrificed in favour of cost; the facility should be designed and built with a maximum lifespan in view before an overhaul is required.
  - *Environment*: The construction and operation of the facility should have a minimal impact on the surrounding environment.
  - *Best practice*: the facility layout and design should facilitate the day-to-day operations of the home and be based upon industry best practices, as well as those in use and identified at Little Eden Society's current facilities.



**Figure 5 – The 3 core solution principles upon which the new home should be based, namely: facilities, location and operations.**