

SWEET LIFE



ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 2025/2026



ABOUT SWEET LIFE

Sweet Life **empowers South Africans with diabetes** through education and community by giving them the information they need to live healthier lives.

The goal? To **reduce the health burden on the South African public health system** and the unnecessary mortality rate of diabetes in our country.

We believe that **lived experience** needs to be at the core of diabetes education, so that it's easy to understand and implement behaviour change.

As a registered NPO (220-984) and PBO (930066897), our mission is:

- To **solve diabetes education in SA**, by testing out different formats and languages.
- To **empower people with diabetes** on their journey to a healthy, happy life – by providing answers to all their diabetes questions, and a community to support and share their experiences.
- To **bring diabetes into the national spotlight** by creating media-friendly talking points around diabetes, so that it's a frequent topic of discussion on radio and TV.

Our focus is on **simple, easy-to-understand information** for South Africans with diabetes.

Our values are **authenticity, empowerment and empathy**.

Our vision is **a South Africa where diabetes is a well-managed condition**.

We recognise that diabetes isn't just a medical condition - it's an intricate blend of mental health, lifestyle and medical. That's why our team includes top diabetes experts in South Africa, who help us to share **reliable, relevant and accurate diabetes information, simply**.

Connect with us!

Website: www.sweetlife.org.za

Facebook: [South Africans with Diabetes](#)

LinkedIn: [Sweet Life Diabetes Community](#)

Instagram: [@sweetlife.org.za](#)

X: [sweetlife_orgza](#)



SWEET LIFE BOARD

Lynette Ntuli

Lynette Ntuli is the Founder and CEO of Innate Investment Solutions. She has held executive leadership positions in diverse sectors, and sits on the boards of various listed and unlisted organisations as a non-executive director. Lynette is passionate about sustainability, people-centered governance and socio-economic development.

Claire Barnardo

Claire Barnardo is the Case Writing Centre Manager at the UCT Graduate School of Business, and one of the original founding members of Sweet Life. Prior to cases, Claire was an experienced print editor and journalist. She is passionate about writing and championing African and emerging market business cases.

Dr. Amanda Saunders

Dr. Amanda Saunders is a public clinic doctor with an MBChB (UKZN), a Diploma in Anaesthesia and presently completing a specialisation in Family Medicine at UCT. She has a deep passion for our public healthcare system, and an interest in how to improve healthcare in South Africa, following exposure to other healthcare systems.

Sebastian Thompson

Sebastian Thompson is a behavioural design practitioner and the co-founder of two of South Africa's most respected behavioural science companies. Sebastian is working to make the world a better place by designing for the mind, and curious about how this can be applied to diabetes.

Dr Ankia Coetzee

Dr. Ankia Coetzee is a Consultant Physician and Subspecialist Endocrinologist affiliated with Stellenbosch University and Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town. A former president of SEMDSA, she is widely recognized for her leadership in endocrinology.

Buyelwa Majikela-Dlangamandla

Buyelwa Majikela-Dlangamandla is a professional nurse who obtained a Master's Degree in Nursing Science at University of Cape Town (UCT). She is a co-facilitator for the Diabetes short course and advanced courses at Groote Schuur Hospital, with more than 20 years experience in diabetes.

Find out more at www.sweetlife.org.za/about-us



FOUNDER'S STATEMENT

The 2025/2026 year was our year of **reach**. The image I have in mind is planting golden seeds of diabetes education across the country, and empowering as many South Africans with diabetes as possible to share their lived experience in their communities.

The reality is that diabetes is now the **number one killer of South Africans**: this is crisis mode, and we aren't going to be able to fix the problem from the top-down. We need coordinated top-down efforts, with government and civil society collaborating together, but we also need to **empower individuals on the ground** to make a difference in their own communities.

That was the big driver behind our two campaigns for the year: **#DiabetesLooksLikeMe**, our (new) annual diabetes stigma campaign, and **#WearBlueforDiabetes & Change a Life**, our diabetes awareness campaign. We changed it up this year to include 100 DIY Diabetes Event boxes, and the response from our community was amazing: so many people wanting to hold events in their communities, and just needing advice and resources to do it.

One of the behind-the-scenes things that Sweet Life consistently engages in speaks to this need: that there are so many South Africans quietly making a difference in their areas, and just needing support. Any time we are asked for resources (predominantly Healthy Food Guides, TEEL leaflets and whatever book we have just printed - most recently *The Diabetes Guidebook*), we courier a parcel directly to the person who asked for it. This could be a support group, a workplace or a school - regardless of where they are, the fact that they are doing **diabetes outreach of their own volition** deserves support from us.

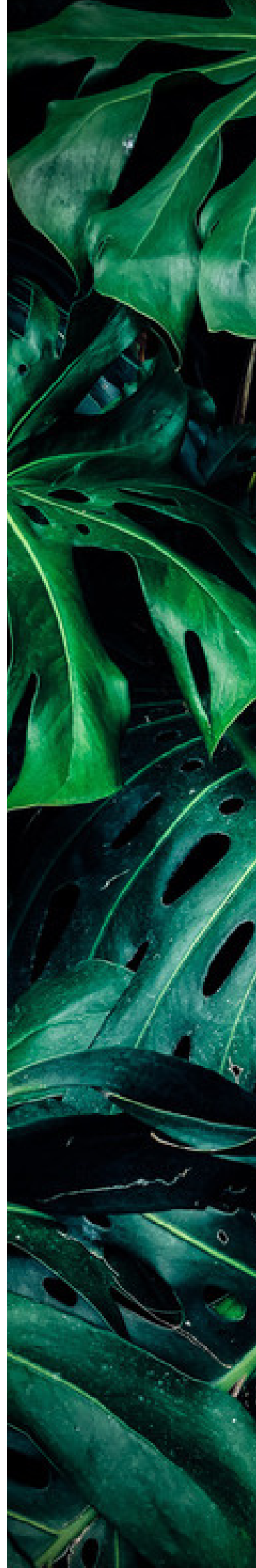
The other big driver for us is **lived experience**, which has always been at the core of Sweet Life (both Shiara and I are living with diabetes). We are cognisant of needing to bring in as many diverse experiences and backgrounds as possible. It's a touch point for us before we launch any campaign: have we got community input into this? Do we have unchecked bias? Are we assuming our experiences are consistent? We don't always get it right, but we are always trying and continuing to learn

Our **online community**, [South Africans with Diabetes](#), continues to grow, and our website remains a trusted 'Wikipedia for Diabetes' in South Africa, with our content strategy determined by what our community asks us for.

What an honour to represent South Africans with Diabetes in this way!



BRIDGET MCNULTY
22 JULY 2026



YEAR IN REVIEW

After the intense focus in the 2024/2025 year on the Sweet Life Chatbot, we decided to take a broader view on what our community needed this year. Here are just a few highlights from a very busy year:

Sweet Life Chatbot feedback drive

Shiara Pillay (the Sweet Life Chatbot Project Manager) embarked on a nationwide in-person feedback drive to gather feedback on the Sweet Life Chatbot: face-to-face sessions with support groups, healthcare professionals and clinics across South Africa.

Diabetes stigma campaign

We launched the first annual targeted diabetes stigma campaign, [#DiabetesLooksLikeMe](#), on the 14th May (6 months after World Diabetes Day) and will mark it each year. The focus is on lived experience online: people speaking up about having diabetes and using the hashtag, and the media: bringing diabetes stigma into the media spotlight with an in-person media lunch. [Watch the video here!](#)

Sweet Life 14 Day Meal Plan

Building on the success of the Sweet Life 7 Day Meal Plan, we created a 14 day version that incorporates all the healthy plate information from the Sweet Life Chatbot. [Take a look here!](#)

The Diabetes Guidebook

One of the things we feel really strongly about is ensuring that Type 2 diabetes is as represented as Type 1 diabetes, so we created *The Diabetes Guidebook*: a Type 2 focused printed book with all you need to know if you've just been diagnosed. We printed 10,000 copies to distribute directly to people with diabetes around the country, through healthcare providers and Clicks Clinics. [You can also download a copy here.](#)

#WearBlueforDiabetes & Change a Life

This year's [#WearBlueforDiabetes](#) campaign was our most impactful yet. Instead of only focusing online and on schools and companies, we empowered 100 individuals to hold their own events. 100 diabetes events around South Africa – take a look at our top [#WearBlueforDiabetes & Change a Life events here,](#)

Monthly diabetes media

Not all of our ideas were successful, of course! We decided to create a monthly diabetes press release about a specific diabetes-related topic or diabetes hero and the pick-up from the media was... mostly disappointing. Occasionally something would spark, but it was largely unsuccessful.

Grant funding

We continue to apply for any applicable grants, and to wait to hear back from them!

And, as always, we are building South Africa's **largest online diabetes community**: through daily social media connection, expert answers to community questions, and making life with diabetes easier.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Our financial position is stable amidst a constantly shifting landscape. This was our first year in 3 years without the annual T1D Community Fund grant of \$25,000 (R400,000) which had a significant impact on our annual income. Despite a lean operation of only two full-time employees working from home, and as few expenses as possible, we ended the year only just breaking even – and that was largely thanks to a superb performance from our Allan Gray Unit Trust investment. We use that as a cash flow stop-gap during the lean months (January to April) and refill it during more lucrative months. Please refer to the Annual Financial Statements document for more detail.

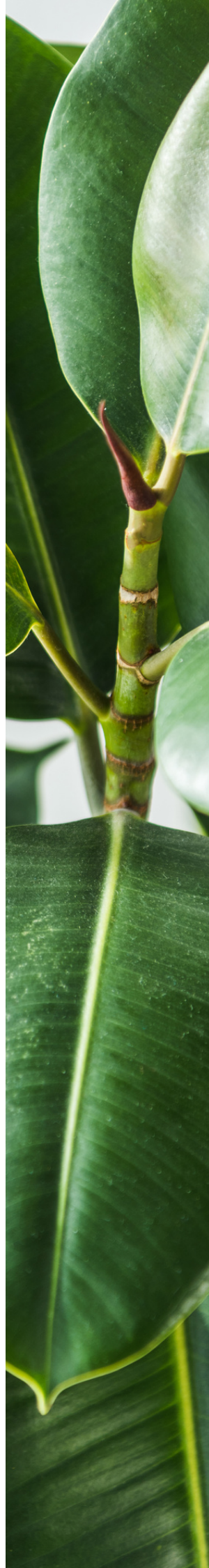
We maintain a hybrid model of applying for grants, alongside values-aligned diabetes marketing. Marketing budgets have been cut across the board for many pharmaceuticals, so we are approaching new companies to sponsor our annual campaigns: #DiabetesLooksLikeMe and #WearBlueforDiabetes, as well as take ads in our annual printed book. We also ran our first Donation Drive this year, with some success.

The main expense from this year was the Sweet Life Chatbot feedback drive (flights, car hire, accommodation and event costs) which was partly sponsored, but not entirely. The data we were able to collect from these in-person interactions has proven invaluable to helping us decide where to invest in diabetes education (most notably: video and print).

In 2025/2026, we worked with Abbott, AstraZeneca, Activo Health, Aspen, Cipla, Clicks, Discovery, Embecta, Medtronic, Merck, MSN, Novo Nordisk, P&G, Pharmaco, Pick n Pay, Roche, Sanofi, Servier, the University of Pretoria and the University of Stellenbosch. We only work with values-aligned brands on content that we suggest as truly useful for our community.

For the 2026/2027 year, our business model remains a hybrid, with our two big campaigns and one printed book alongside other community-focused projects that we are asking for funding to support.

Our main monthly expense remains two full-time salaries. We also pay for accounting, internet, insurance, newsletter and design tool subscriptions, web hosting and tech support, and courier services. Our campaign expenses include paying for lived experience diabetes voices to contribute to our campaigns, as well as videography support and influencers to help us spread the messages about diabetes stigma and awareness. We are registered for PAYE and UIF, and all our accounting is done in Xero with regular updates from our accountants, Zuydam Konsult, who specialise in PBO finances.



GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Our 2026 goals are already well underway, with specific projects for the year ahead. We made sure to highlight these focus areas in December 2025 and send them out to all our contacts so that we could be included in 2026 budgets.

Diabetes stigma campaign

A targeted diabetes stigma campaign with strong doctor and media exposure to bring diabetes stigma into the spotlight: 14th May, with sponsorship options.

Diabetes awareness campaign

A nationwide diabetes awareness campaign with strong schools and companies focus to spread diabetes awareness: 14th November, with sponsorship options.

Diabetes & Mental Health book

An annual printed book, this one with a focus on bringing mental health information to those who might not have access to a psychologist. Published in October this year, for Mental Health Awareness month, with ad page options.

Community Outreach Projects:

- **Diabetes education in schools**

Let's educate children in underserved schools about the basics of diabetes and healthy eating, so that they can be empowered as future South African adults, and spread this information in their families and communities.

- **Type 1 Diabetes Guidebook**

Children with Type 1 diabetes and their families need support: particularly when they have just been diagnosed. Especially those in underserved communities, who are dependent on their local clinic doctor. We're creating the definitive tool to do just that, full of expert advice, at the right health literacy level.

- **Gestational Diabetes education**

The one puzzle piece missing from our foundational diabetes education is the definitive gestational diabetes leaflet. We need to empower women with gestational diabetes to take care of their health – and that of their unborn babies.

- **Sweet Life Chatbot Version 2**

Now that we have piloted the Sweet Life Chatbot, we are ready for an enhanced Version 2: including short 1 minute videos as requested during our nationwide in-person feedback drive, and a diabetes coach.

At the same time, we work hard to remain South Africa's favourite diabetes community, and grow our community in size and impact. The direct communication we have with South Africans with Diabetes - particularly on Facebook and Instagram - is invaluable.

We are all in this together.



SWEET LIFE EXPERTS

Sweet Life is supported by an expert panel of top diabetes specialists in South Africa. We know that diabetes isn't just a medical condition. Our volunteer team includes top diabetes experts from all over South Africa who help us to provide the South African diabetes community with reliable, relevant and medically accurate diabetes information, as they ask for it.

Endocrinologist: Prof. Joel Dave

The Head of Endocrinology at the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital. Prof. Joel Dave specialises in the diagnosis and management of a wide spectrum of simple and complex endocrine-related disorders. He runs the Groote Schuur Diabetes Centre.

Endocrinologist: Prof. Peter Raubenheimer

The Head of the Division of General Internal Medicine at UCT and the Groote Schuur Hospital Academic complex and a Specialist in the Division of Endocrinology and Diabetes. A current Counselor in the College of Physicians and on the EXCO of SEMDSA, in the Academic Portfolio.

Diabetes Educator: Kate Bristow

A qualified nursing sister and certified diabetes educator who runs a Centre for Diabetes in Pietermaritzburg. Kate Bristow has been involved in diabetes education since 2006, and has a Diploma in Diabetes Care from Glammorgan University.

Dietician: Ajita Ratanjee

A Registered Dietician in Pretoria East and the Founder of Easy Health Wellness in Moreleta Park. Ajita Ratanjee specialises in ICU nutrition and lifestyle diseases, mainly obesity and diabetes. She loves seeing the results of people making positive lifestyle changes.

Dietician: Lauren Moore

A Registered Dietician in Cape Town, Lauren Moore holds a Masters degree in Nutrition and has a special interest in nutritional management of diabetes, kidney disease, cancer and gastrointestinal disorders. She is passionate about empowering people with practical knowledge.



SWEET LIFE EXPERTS

Dietician: Louise Ferreira

A Registered Dietician in East London and an accredited diabetes educator, Louise Ferreira has a Masters degree in the management of diabetes and a special interest in paediatrics. She has designed courses for people newly diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, and is passionate about holistic health care.

**Podiatrist: Andy Blecher**

A podiatrist in private practice since 1996 with a National Higher Diploma in Podiatry. Andy Blecher served on the committee for the Diabetic Foot Working group of South Africa, and is currently a member of CAWCC (Cape Advanced Wound Care Centre) as well as a member of PASA (Podiatry Association of SA). Andy has a special interest in the diabetic foot.

**Podiatrist: Anette Thompson**

A podiatrist with a PhD in clinical medicine (UKZN) and a Masters' degree of Technology in Podiatry cum laud (UJ), Anette Thompson is an active clinician, based at the Centre for Endocrinology and Diabetes, Netcare Umhlanga Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal. She is a fellow of the Faculty of Podiatric Medicine, Royal Society of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow.

**Ophthalmologist: Dr. Dale Harrison**

An ophthalmologist in private practice in Cape Town. Dr. Dale Harrison did his undergraduate training at UCT, graduating MBCHB in 1992, and completed his specialist training at Groote Schuur FC Ophth (SA) in 2002.

**Psychologist: Daniel Sher**

Daniel is a clinical psychologist with a special interest in diabetes-focussed therapy, having lived as a Type 1 for over thirty years. Daniel works from Cape Town, but also offers sessions online.



Thank you for reading our 2025/26 Annual Report!

