

ACTION LEAD:

**Tebogo Chake [Bana Pele PMU] Zanele Mochechela [DBE] &
Roshene Singh [Bana Pele Secretariat]**

October 2026

Between April and June 2026, the Bana Pele Local Government team ran 47 Environmental Health Practitioner onboarding workshops across all nine provinces, covering all 52 municipalities, namely the 8 metropolitan and 44 district municipalities. These workshops were very successful in bringing together EHPs from municipalities/ districts as well as the provincial department of education's district Social Workers, to work together in driving the ECD mass registration drive.

At a glance: the onboarding is working, and the numbers are already moving.

- **Consultations with the National Department of Health (NDOH)** and provincial Health Managers followed by District Health managers in March was critical to ensure buy-in to content and planning the district level workshops.
- **47 workshops covered all 52 municipalities** (8 metropolitan municipalities and 44 districts) across all nine provinces, with attendance above 75 percent of the roughly 1,700 EHPs currently in post.
- **EHP inspection reports submitted increased from 727 to 2,400** in a matter of weeks, with 1,525 approved reports now in the system. That number now sits above 3500.
- **Most municipalities are now issuing the reports needed.** Only three (Johannesburg Region F, Tshwane and Randfontein) still lag, and those challenges are far from insurmountable with SALGA and COGTA support. The eCares (early childhood administration and reporting system) data will continue to flag priority districts that need follow-up.

There are approximately 1,700 Environmental Health Practitioners currently employed across most municipalities nationally, with a substantial number of posts still vacant. Attendance exceeded 75 percent at most workshops. Full attendance figures will be confirmed later.

This report consolidates what we learned from five sources of evidence: facilitator feedback reports, challenges generated by the district and metro municipal workshops attended; 606 participant evaluations, the pre-workshop questionnaires completed by EHPs and Social Workers, and the research for the development of the programme and manual that set out the objectives and approaches for the work of EHPs.

The onboarding was built around the ECD Silver Registration pathway and the proposition for a developmental approach, requiring practitioners to classify risk, distinguish immediate danger to children from manageable improvement, and use the inspection report to bring ELPs into the regulatory net rather than exclude them. The urgency was concrete. At the start of the rollout, on 7 April 2026, more than 14,264 ECD programmes had been registered at Bronze level, and more than 3,967 Silver and Gold applications had been lodged, but only 727 EHP documents had been verified, representing 18.3 percent of the inspection reports the system needed.



By the close on 26 June 2026, Bronze approvals stood at 15,524, Silver and Gold applications had risen to 6,082, and the number of EHP inspection reports submitted had risen sharply from 727 to 2,400. Of these, 1,525 approved reports are now in the system, representing 37.3 percent of the total needed. This is strong, rapid progress, and the trajectory is clearly upward. Daily progress is tracked through eCares (early childhood administration and reporting system). The timing is telling. This jump came in the weeks during and immediately after the onboarding, and the workshops were a clear catalyst for it. Where EHPs and Social Workers met, understood the pathway and agreed to work together, reports began to flow. The onboarding did not just explain the process; it visibly moved it.

What happened

The sessions were a success. They were constructive, well attended and, most importantly, they changed behaviour on the ground. The single most valuable design choice was bringing Environmental Health Practitioners and Social Workers into the same room, since the two professions sit on opposite sides of the same registration decision, yet, in many districts, do not have a constructive working relationship to accelerate the Bana Pele registration drive. The way-forward discussion at the end of each workshop proved to be the most useful part of the day. In session after session, EHPs and Social Workers agreed to meet monthly/quarterly and set up WhatsApp groups; in some workshops, EHPs also agreed to alert Social Workers once a report had been completed and left at the centre so that the registration step could proceed.

An unexpected finding emerged consistently. Many EHPs were already applying the principles of a developmental approach without describing it in those terms. The onboarding therefore did not introduce a new way of working so much as reframe existing practice within the Silver pathway and give practitioners a common language for it. Where sessions were hard, the difficulty stemmed from fears of personal legal liability and land-use and planning consent constraints rather than unwillingness.

What the different perspectives told us

The four perspectives agree more than they differ. Responses to the questionnaires showed that the obstacles are structural: land use and zoning, poverty and infrastructure, transport and distance, and weak coordination between departments. When asked what would speed things up, participants did not ask for softer standards. They asked to work between departments, share data and lists, and be given the tools to conduct the visits. The facilitators identified the same structural barriers and added those beyond an EHP's reach: zoning, tariffs, capacity, and the legal protection practitioners need.

The facilitator group outlined the levers: a SALGA circular, eCares data sharing, municipal flexibility and fast-tracking on zoning, and engagement with Mayors and Municipal Managers. The facilitators also pointed to two deeper structural issues: the major infrastructure gaps facing ELPs in informal settlements, townships and rural and impoverished communities, and the fact that many ELPs operate from privately owned homes, such as a garage, a converted part of a house or an external structure attached to a family home.

What we recommend

The central lesson is that the factors blocking Silver registration largely lie above the individual EHP, so the next phase should focus less on training practitioners and more on strengthening the system around them. The priorities are the following:

- Pursue a SALGA circular that provides authoritative national guidance on issuing inspection reports and addresses the liability concern that is holding some reports back. This should align with the new Environmental Health Norms and Standards to ensure consistency across districts.
- Fix the data flow by weekly or monthly sharing of Bronze, Silver-applicant, and renewal lists between the Department of Basic Education, EHP managers and Social Workers, and progress towards EHP access to eCares data.
- Investigate the unsubmitted report gap, where reports completed at ELPs and left with operators are not being submitted or entered into eCares.
- Escalate the structural barriers, namely land use and zoning, inspection tariffs, and infrastructure support, to the metro, district and intergovernmental political and administrative level, where they can actually be resolved.
- Together with SALGA, consider political onboarding at the municipal level, so that councillors and political leadership understand and own the barriers that require their authority.
- Build a closer relationship between the Provincial MECs of Education and Local Government to address municipal bylaws and processes, particularly those related to land use and zoning, that impede registration.
- Request the National Department of Health issue a circular driving national adoption of the revised Norms and Standards gazetted in October 2025.

The next measure of success will not be the number of workshops delivered, but the increase in the number of inspection reports uploaded, Silver registrations approved, and centres supported to progress towards full compliance.

Proof of movement

EHP inspection reports submitted

