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IMPACT

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**Strengthening the
Burns Service in the
Western Cape through
the Red Cross War Memorial
Children's Hospital**

MAY 2024

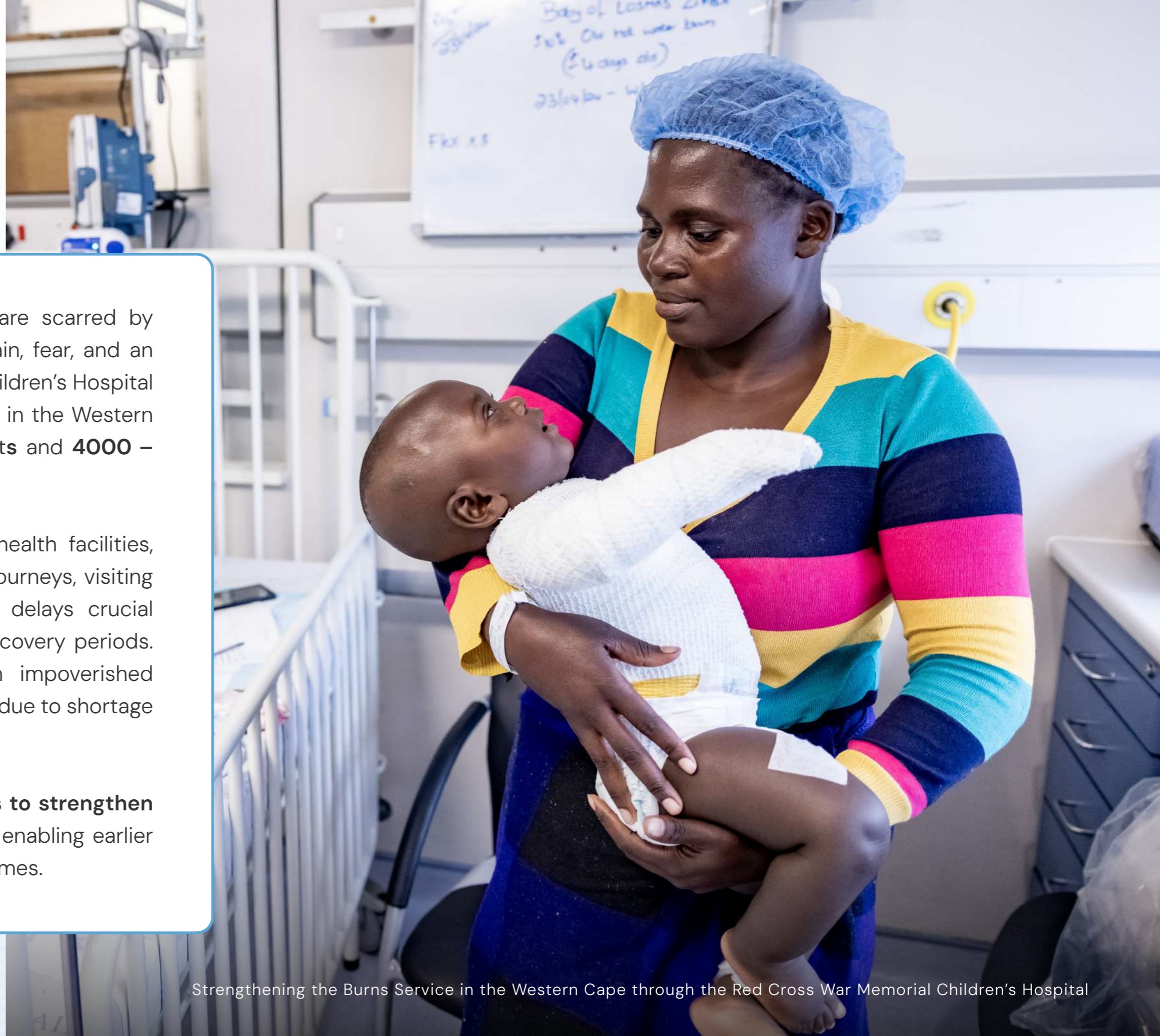


Introduction

Every year, countless young lives in the Western Cape are scarred by devastating burn injuries, leaving families grappling with pain, fear, and an urgent need for expert care. The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH) is the only dedicated burns service for children in the Western Cape, admitting up to **1000 children annually** as inpatients and **4000 – 5000** as outpatients.

Due to a lack of burns facilities and expertise in other health facilities, children from areas outside of Cape Town endure lengthy journeys, visiting multiple health facilities before reaching RCWMCH. This delays crucial treatment, exposes them to infection risks and prolongs recovery periods. Compounding this challenge, most families come from impoverished communities and must cover their own transportation costs due to shortage of ambulances.

Leveraging off the expertise at RCWMCH, this project **aims to strengthen the burns services for children** across the Western Cape, enabling earlier intervention and improving overall outcomes and recovery times.



Wineland Woes

Sitting in his hospital cot, little four-year old *Chulumanco's big eyes and calm demeanour hide the trauma of the painful ordeal he has had to endure over the past two months.

Even though winter has been slow to start in the Western Cape this year, it is a cold morning in Ceres when *Noluthando boils water on a gas stove to make porridge for herself and her son. When Chulumanco hears the bubbling sound of the boiling water, he reaches his hands up towards the gas stove while his mother fusses with the maize, and in an instant the boy is covered in white, hot burns.

Ideally, burns should be run under cold water immediately, however there is no running water in their home. She immediately bundles up her precious child and calls for help from her neighbour, who rushes them to Ceres District Hospital Emergency room. Although he is seen to quickly, Noluthando is told that they cannot help him further and that they need to go to the Worcester Hospital – 60km away.

The challenge is there aren't any ambulances on standby in town, and there's an ambulance transfer waiting list, essentially turning a 40-minute trip into a six-hour-long ordeal. When they finally arrive at Worcester the nursing staff lovingly tend to Chulumanco's wounds, but Noluthando is devastated when they are further referred –this time to Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital (RCWMCH) in Cape Town.



Wineland Woes



It's another ambulance ride for the weary Noluthando and her son, but they have to join the ambulance queue again, so they end up having to wait another twelve agonizing hours to be admitted to the Burns Ward. Neither of them gets any sleep that night. Noluthando's heart breaks for Chulumanco, but she can do little to comfort her sobbing son, whose voice is almost gone from crying.

By the time mother and son finally arrive at RCWMCH, Chulumanco's burns have become much more severe and painful. Although things move quickly when he is admitted, Noluthando doesn't quite understand what is happening. She is wracked with guilt that Chulumanco had to suffer for so long and agonises over what else should she have done.

Fast forward to two months later, and little Chulumanco, despite being wrapped up in dressing, is the picture of calm. He and his mother have had to make the RCWMCH their impromptu second home due to the severity of his injuries. Noluthando is worried about how many days she has missed out on work; her employer keeps texting to ask when she'll be back, and he doesn't sound happy. That's part of the reason Chulumanco has been kept in the hospital for so long: although her son is technically well enough to go home, Noluthando can't afford the day trips she would have had to take to bring her son in for wound care and dressing changes. Sr Goosen, nursing manager of the burns ward at RCWMCH, reflects on Chulumanco's experience. "We see so many patients like him: travelling long distances, sent from facility to facility before coming here. With the right training and equipment, staff will know the right first aid, how to directly refer severe cases, and be able to manage the follow-up care."

Chulumanco is definitely on the road to recovery, but it is one that could have been a lot shorter and less fraught with worry if he had timely treatment closer to home.

Project Goal

The goal is to strengthen burns services for children in the Western Cape to ensure earlier intervention, improve overall outcomes and reduce the burden on families who do not reside near RCWMCH.

The initial focus is on the Cape Winelands Health District, a significant source of referrals to the RCWMCH burns service. Extending up to 200km outside of Cape Town, it is a largely agricultural areas where over 50% of households live in poverty.

Objectives:

- **Improve wound care infrastructure** and equipment at clinics and hospitals.
- **Upskilling and supporting healthcare workers** to confidently assess and treat child burn injuries.
- Ensure the **proper and timely management** of child burn victims by providing standardised recommendations for their assessment.

Impact:

- **Reduce the cost and time for a child to access the right medical care** close to home, alleviating the traumatic and painful experience for burn victims and their families.

- **Earlier access to intervention can reduce infection risk from 31%–8%**, with bigger burns from 62%–23%. Health facilities will be adequately equipped with appropriate space and resources and staff proficiently trained to deliver comprehensive wound and burn management services.
- **Accredited training** will be available to the 338 nurses in the region who can take this expertise to another facility if they move.
- **Strengthen collegial relationships** and communication lines between nurses and healthcare workers across facilities.
- **Alleviate the burden on RCWMCH** by reducing admission and outpatient visits of patients who do not need to go to RCWMCH by 30%



Project progress: Jan- May 2024

Objective 1: Improve wound care infrastructure and equipment at select clinics and hospitals.

Working in collaboration with the RCWMCH and senior health managers and clinicians in the Districts, three facilities in the Cape Winelands Health District have been prioritised for infrastructural improvements needed to strengthen burns care across the health system: **Worcester Regional Hospital, Worcester Community Day Centre (CDC)** and **Ceres District Hospital**.

Work on planning and the design concept drawings for the Burns/Wound Care rooms, in line with clinical staff and nursing requirement, is well underway. Concept drawing have been approved by the relevant managers according to their requirements for the areas. All new areas will be equipped with burns wash beds, vitals monitors, cardiac monitors, dressing trolleys and examination beds.

Summary of planned infrastructure improvements:

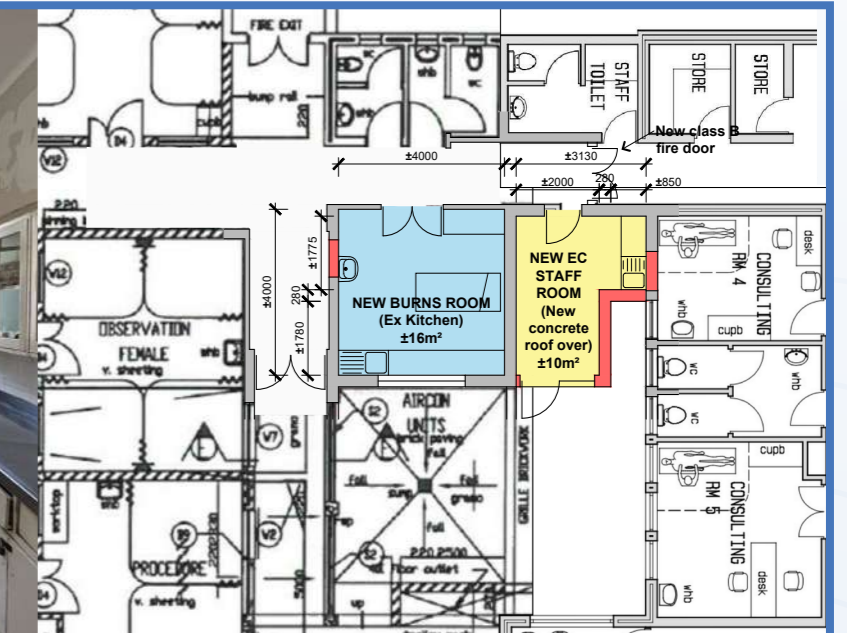
Ceres Hospital

Current Patient Pathway



Patients are seen in the Emergency Centre, stabilized and if required transferred to Worcester Hospital and in some cases directly to RCWMCH. **There are no treatment/wash facilities for burns in the EC.**

Proposed Improvement



A new Burns/Wound Care room will be provided between the emergency centre and outpatients area, enabling efficient access for both new and follow up treatment of children with burn injuries.

Project progress: Jan- May 2024

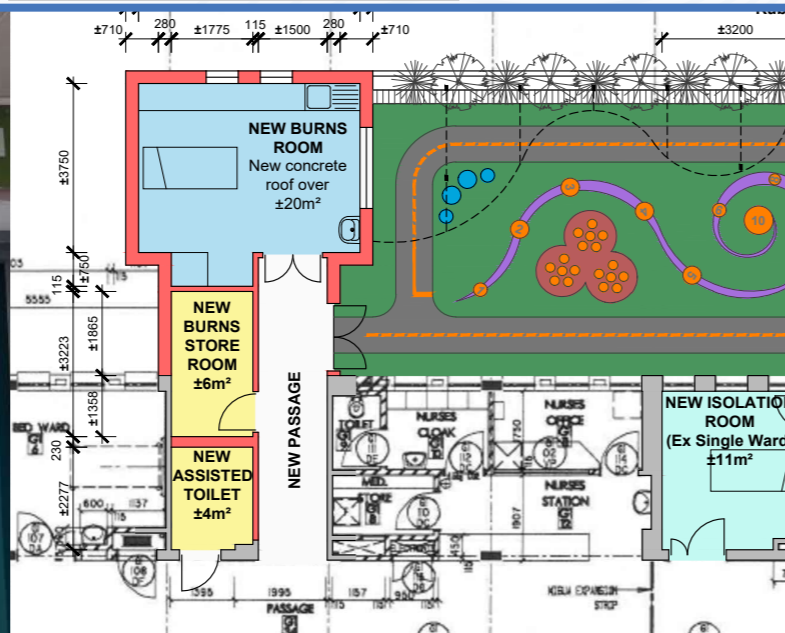
Summary of planned infrastructure improvements:

Worcester Hospital

Current Patient Pathway



Proposed Improvement



Patients are seen in the Emergency Centre, stabilized and if required admitted to the surgical ward or transferred to RCWMCH. **There are no treatment/wash facilities for burns in the EC or in the paediatric ward.**

A burns isolation area is required should a burns patient need to be admitted as an inpatient.

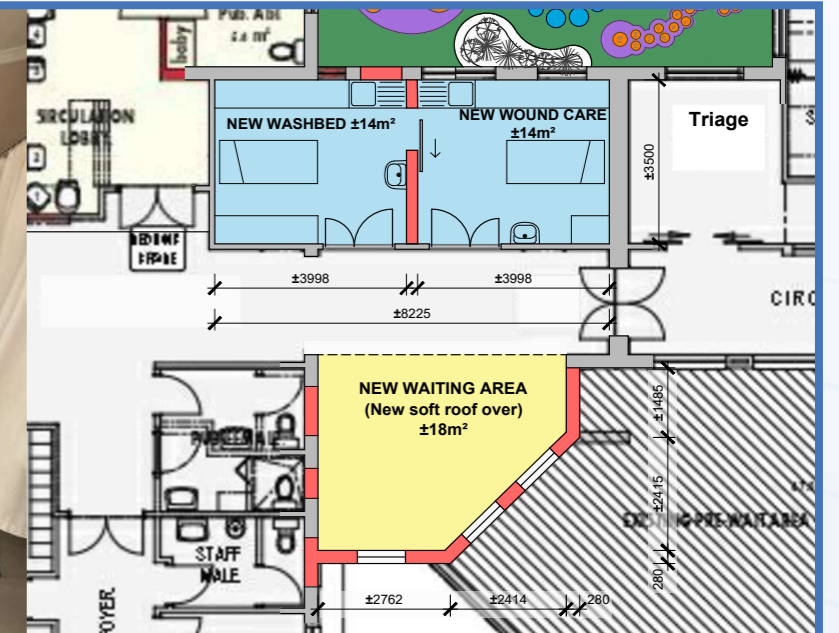
A new Burns/Wound Care room will be provided in the paediatric ward with a passage extending out into a courtyard play area.

Worcester CHC

Current Patient Pathway



Proposed Improvement



Patients are triaged on arrival and if minor burn will proceed to Wound Dressing Room for washing and dressing. If moderate/major, will be transferred to Worcester Hospital. There are no treatment/wash facilities for burns in the current dressing facility.

The existing wound care room will be expanded and divided into separate sections for children and adults.

The adjoining courtyard will be converted into a therapeutic play area available to the paediatric physiotherapy and occupation therapy departments. Opposite the burns/wound care room a new waiting area will be created to allow for seating for parents and their children whilst they wait for dressings.

Objective 2: Upskilling and supporting healthcare workers to confidently assess and treat child burn injuries.

Care for burns patients requires a multidisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dieticians, and social workers. **However, there is currently no formal training focusing on burns care for children.** Staff members at respective sites have demonstrated a strong interest and openness to learning and receiving training in proper burns management.

Training and skills development in child burns care will be led by The Harry Crossley Children's Nursing Development Unit (HCCNDU) in collaboration with the Burns Team at RCWMCH.

In April, the HCCNDU team conducted a preliminary visit to the Cape Winelands health facilities to document a practice and learning needs assessment. The insights gained have shaped the initial design of a comprehensive training program. This program will include various training opportunities for different types of health professionals caring for children with burns in this sub-district including:

- **An accredited blended learning program** in paediatric burns care for health workers, featuring **12 weeks of online learning and 2 in-person workshops**. The course will be offered twice a year, accommodating **20 healthcare workers** per session. Following the completion of this project, the course will continue to be available to healthcare workers across the Western Cape and Africa.
- **Two-week clinical internships at RCWMCH** for **10 nurses** (attending in pairs) from the Cape Winelands, providing valuable in-service experience in tertiary paediatric burns care.





Objective 3: streamline referral pathways, improve communication, and grow the capacity of healthcare providers to manage burn cases effectively.

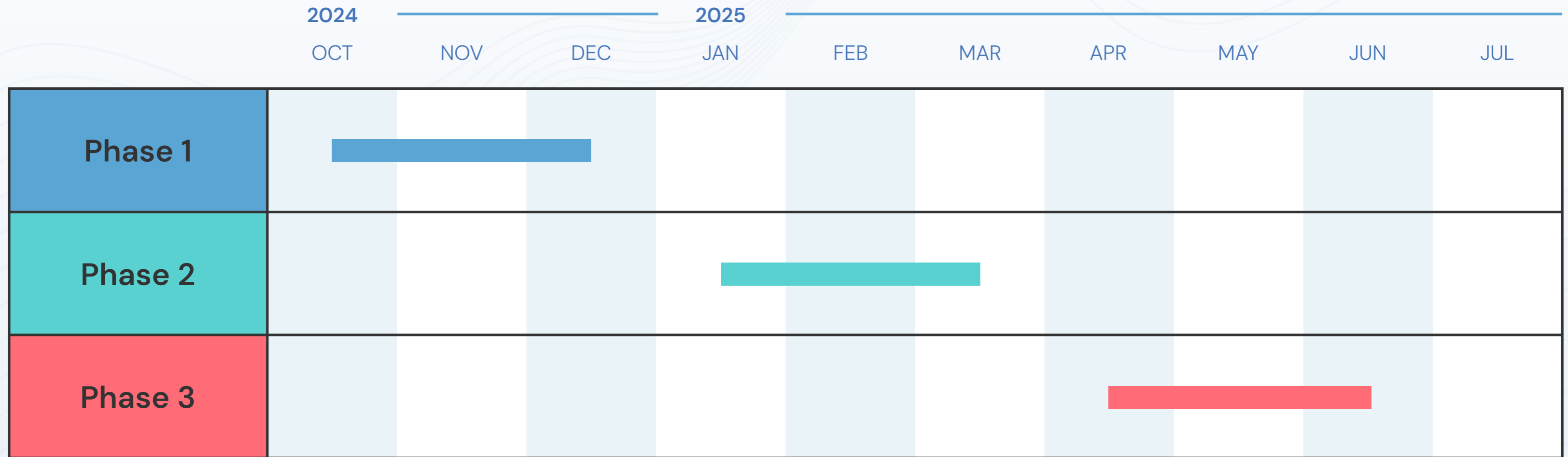
Ensuring Best Practice and Standardized Care: There has already been significant progress in developing standardized recommendations for the assessment and referral of child burn injuries in the Western Cape. In August 2023, the Western Cape Department of Health and Wellness approved new criteria for the assessment of child burn victims. These criteria were developed by the Head of the Burns unit at RCWMCH in consultation with other clinical burns experts and align with recommendations and protocols from the South African Burns Association, World Health Organisation (WHO) and The International Network for Training, Education & Research in Burns (Interburns). These criteria will be reviewed over the next three years to incorporate evolving evidence and best practices emerging from the project.

Improved Communication: One of the primary objectives has been to develop and implement clear lines of communication between healthcare facilities. Initial communication protocols have been drafted and are currently being piloted in selected facilities.

Monitoring patient outcomes: A burn injury data surveillance system is being developed to support clinical decision-making and manage service demands across different facilities. The design phase of the surveillance system is complete, and implementation is scheduled to begin in the next quarter.

Project Timeline – Estimated Building Programme

Estimated Building Programme (funding dependant)



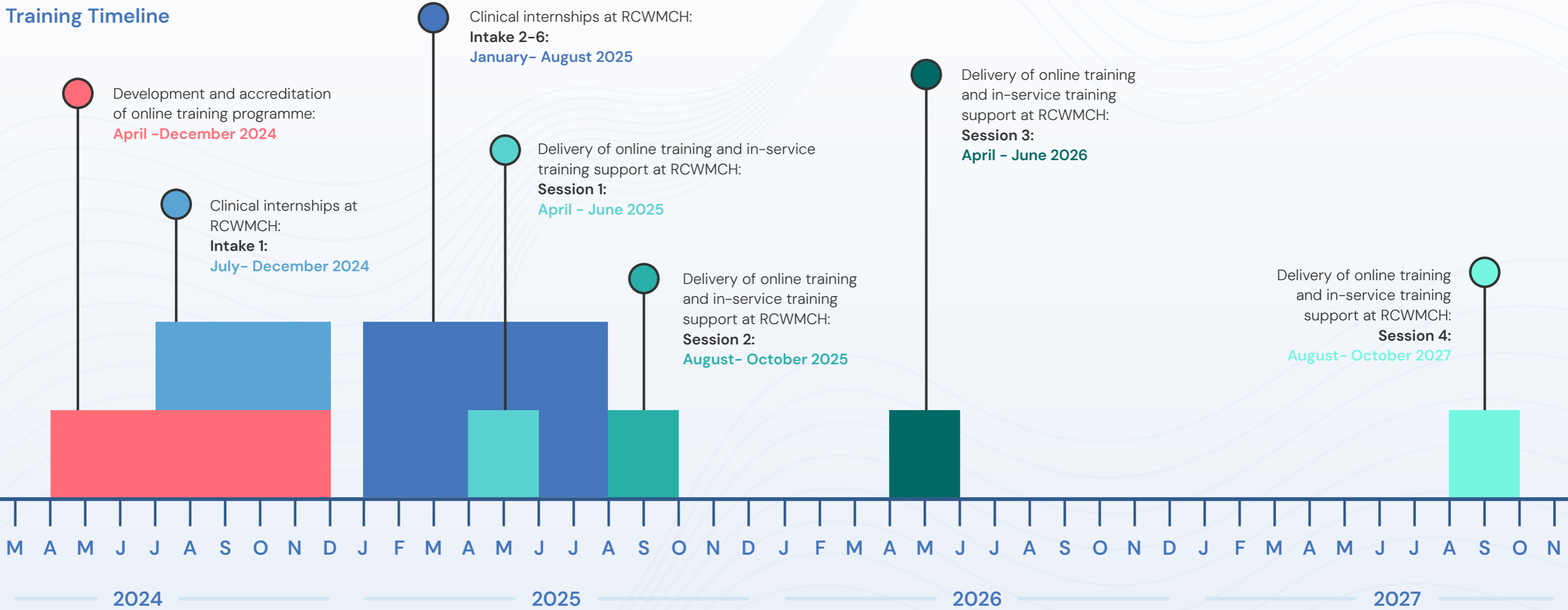
Phase 1: Ceres Hospital Wound Care Room:
October 2024 – December 2024

Phase 2: Worcester CDC Wound Care Room:
January – March 2025

Phase 3: Worcester Regional Hospital Paediatric Burns Room:
April – June 2025

Project Timeline – Training Milestones

Training Timeline



Project Budget



Project Start Date:

April 2024



Anticipated Completion Date:

End of 2026



Estimated Building Cost:

R12 802 000



Estimated Equipment Cost:

R2 898 000



Estimated Training Cost:

R2 300 000



Total Estimated Cost:

R18 000 000

**Note: Still awaiting final elemental estimates for building and equipment cost may fluctuate depending on purchase dates and local/international suppliers.*



Our sincere appreciation for your support in ensuring better outcomes for child burn victims.

The project is currently **only 15% funded**. Please help us achieve our goals and donate. You can find our details on the following page.

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100% of your donation will go towards strengthening child protection services for abused and neglected children at the Red Cross War Memorial Children Hospital.

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