

eThembeni annual report 2017

Umazisize

Self Help Groups

Coordinator: Mrs Maureen Makhaya

Community Facilitators:

- Dudu Ndlovu (Bergville KwaDukuza)
- Thabile Hlongwane (Bergville Woodstock area)
- Nomusa Dladla (Sahlumbe Weenen)
- Ntombifuthi MaZwane Ngubane (Mhlumayo/Mjindini)
- Lungile Hlongwane (Nhlalakahle, Mchunu area)
- Celiwe Langa (Hlathi/Sonshoek/Nasaretha)
- Welile Ntshangase (Roosboom/Ladysmith) (New project)

All over the uThukela District and Msinga, in the most remote rural communities, women meet in groups. Weekly they save R2.00 (i-pondo) each, building up a little banking system where they can loan, grow capital, access funding, becoming financial independent. Almost 2000 women meet in this way in 94 different groups.

By this project, rural women, traditionally excluded from the economy, depending on “loan sharks” for immediate cash, now can form their own little banks. They are well trained in the administration of loans. The book keeping system is user friendly and effective.

Women now have a say in their future, becoming independent entrepreneurs, proud spouses standing next to their husbands, taking dual responsibility for domestic expenses.

The women groups call themselves “Umazisize” (The one helping herself).

But it is more than money. It is also about coming together, supporting each other socially, emotionally, and as rural women in their communities.

In the groups the women also get skills, making life better, for themselves and their families. In total these ladies care for more than 8 000 children in their homes, many being single parent mothers and grand mothers caring for orphaned grand children.

The Umazisize project, under the management of Mrs. Maureen Makhaya, helps these ladies to help themselves.

Courses that were run this year include:

- Basic book keeping
- Conflict management in groups
- Marriage enriching courses
- Parenting teens.

- Micro Business Skills
- Planting vegetables without ploughing, making small plant stations, making own compost and doing mulching.
- Planting and processing Soy as alternative source of protein.

### **Sewing and handcraft**

Local business, Durban Overall, presented training in basic sewing early 2017. As a result three young girls were employed and 11 older ladies assisted in basic sewing skills.

Off cut material is transformed in the most beautiful ethnic festive garments.

Beadwork is a natural skill, with 1100 bracelets supplied to our Dutch partner, Bijzondere Noden. They are using it to encourage their youth on expressing their faith as a witnessing community. The beads are made in the colours that summarise the basic Good News of the Bible.

The Bergville ladies also got training in embroidery artwork and are selling their products to make an income.

### **Food security**

We are so excited about the new Soy processing machine that Eden Foundation installed at Jabulani Camp Site. It is used to illustrate Soy dietary values during all camps and trainings run at Jabulani. The Hlathi ladies are almost ready to apply for their own processing machine, to make Soy products in their own community. They already are processing on a smaller scale in their kitchens and are often invited to supply Soy Yoghurt at community meetings. We trust they will soon generate a good income with this skill.

### **Youth Education**

Where the ladies form bigger community clusters, one of their focus areas is education to the youth. A big priority is put on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The Bergville Creche/Care Center/ECD Center is completed and will be officially opened in 2018.

The Sahlumbe ladies already acquired a piece of land, and are busy fundraising to build a functional building for this purpose. Could be quite amazing if they can buy the cement blocks from their local women cluster. And so doing generating a good kick start transaction.

At Nazaretha the ladies held a prayer and motivational talk to pupils who completed their academic career and who were planning for a better future. These ladies also assisted the local creche to hold a graduation ceremony for the little one leaving for the “big school” . It was well received and the children were thrilled with the idea.

### **Entrepreneurial training**

As standing item on the annual training program, Mrs Makhaya is training the ladies in entrepreneurial skills. The result is many small businesses that flourish in poor communities, circulating the money within the community, generating profit, rather than spending it in shops where big cooperatives already make a lot of profit.

One of our new training modules is “Bulk purchasing training”

Through the USAID initiative we attended a panel on Women’s Entrepreneurship and Value Chain Linkages.

### **The dignity of girl children campaign**

In July, through the SALT Alliance’s intervention, our office manager, Mrs Simangele Siwela and Mrs Maureen Makhaya attended a very inspiring workshop, initiating campaigns in SA to address the dignity of girl children. The first launch in eMnambithi, was done successfully end of 2017, with planned follow up campaigns in 2018, also involving local church Sunday schools and the local ecumenical Thukela Amajuba Mzinyathi Christian Council, under the management of Rev. Sonto Thusi.

Gender based issues related to violence, domestic relationships and health are regular items in the group agendas. The USAID also assist in capacitating the ladies with knowledge.

### **Water**

Through Franklin Wells (Wold foundation) , we applied for assistance to drill bore holes to supply sufficient water to community gardens. As an experiment they assisted to supply a solar pump at Jabulani Camp Site. Unfortunately the panels were soon stolen! We are still looking at creative ways to secure solar panels at Jabulani, and also learning in how to secure it for rural gardens. The Franklin contact team says in other communities, other than SA, there is much more community ownership of development infrastructure. It is so sad that we have a culture of immoral self interest in SA! But..... we will get a way.....

When assessing the water need at community gardens, the following surfaced, that need continuous lobbying attention from the groups:

- Next to the beautiful Woodstock dam, communities cannot access the water for agricultural need. The community rely on week handpumps for domestic use, queuing for a few buckets of water a day. Often the water crisis in SA has to do with infrastructure development. A huge system to supply water, was started and never completed. Why must these communities rely on week handpumps and water trucks delivering water?
- The soil next to the Woodstock dam is good. Close by commercial farmers yield good crops.
- The Sahlumbe ladies are right next to the mighty uThukela River, but need infrastructure to pump the water into their fields. So close, and yet so far! A mobile solar pump will make all the difference....
- At Hlathi/Somshoek/Nazaretha the Namakazi River run dry in the drought of 2017. Water trucks deleiver irregular domestic water.
- The Watersmeet community has potted municipal water, under pressure during the drought, relying on water trucks for domestic use.

## **Caring for our communities and environment**

The ladies become involved with the environment and general community issues. One example is the Ubuhle Bembokodo Cluster at Nazaretha. These ladies launched a huge clean-up project in their community, gathering waste and getting rid of it in an appropriate manner.

Each of the women groups are also involved in community campaigns. The 16 days of activism was one such an example of the ladies become part of the answer in their own communities.

## **Religious support groups**

The women are also a very important religious support group to one another. Although they all belong to different churches, they pray together, do Bible studies together, and support those in need. Through a donor the ladies were supplied with their own Bibles. A supply of audio Bibles will also assist the illiterate to hear the Word of God.

## **Clusters**

The women groups become visible when they form clusters in communities. These clusters start communicating with local authorities, and lobby for basic services to the community. Many good stories exist of women who successfully lobbied for water, electricity, pre-schools and school services.

Eight clusters are successfully functioning. They should then take the project over from eThembeni, and form bigger regional associations. The project has a definite out-phasing agenda.

## **Networking**

- Early 2017 our coordinator was invited to assist our Dutch partner, Bijzondere Noden, with training of 20 women in the Self-Help concept. The training added value, was much more affordable, run in Africa from an organisation in Africa. For our coordinator it was also very empowering.
- Mrs Makhaya was also invited to do training in food security at Encwadi, near the south coast of KZN. The training was facilitated by Foundations for Farming. A follow up visit was also arranged.
- Mrs Makhaya also attended a USAID workshop in Gauteng in April. Flowing from this network, she was invited to a workshop in designing and facilitating training in women development. This is planned to take place April 2018 in Washington DC .
- Mrs Makhaya and the management is also regularly invited to our founding partner in KZN, Sinamandla, who also assisted with the bonuses to our community facilitators.
- Together with most of the eThembeni staff, the Umazisize staff also attended training in Narrative Therapy, which assisted us all in developing better listening skills, respecting people's stories. Great appreciation to Mrs Welly Den Hollander for excellent training presented.
- We are often invited to attend government initiated community awareness sessions, where the ladies make valuable contributions. We also become visible in local

community data base capturing. This happening on local community level, is very special.

- Our partnership with Trans World Radio KZN is also still in place, with planned follow up visits in 2018

#### **How is a Self Help group started?**

**Mrs Maureen Makhaya explains: Take for instance the new project at Roosboom. We have a formula by which we can identify the most needy in a community. After identifying these families, we start visiting them each, one by one. So, at Roosboom, we visited 60 families. There after we established two groups of 15 people each. This is determined by accessibility, willingness and motivation of the community to join. Then we start the introduction of the concept and the community facilitator starts with the initial training. As soon as the groups were established we started with training in Soy cultivation and Soy processing for domestic use.**

#### **Good Stories**

**Standing out from all above good stories is that in the poorest most rural community, community leaders recognise these ladies as change agents with whom they would like to partner, in lifting their communities up to be more functional, employable and hope generating.**

#### **Highlights in the planning for 2018**

- **The Dignity for Girl Children is a high priority in 2018. Facilitators will also be trained in the communities.**
- **Training in entrepreneurial skills and linking the ladies with the local Department of Economic Development, who will assist in getting the co-operates registered by government. This is a big one.**
- **We continue to be part of the 26 days of activism, women empowerment days and HIV awareness campaigns.**
- **We continue to plant food gardens and the Soy production is now going to a bigger level, We hope to see the planting season of 2018 starting with more and bigger Soy fields in the community, planting on the no-tilling method. The 2017/18 rai season was exceptional good. The soil is wet. We hope for a good season in 2018/19**
- **Building more capacity into our community facilitators is also a standing item on our agenda.**

**Siyabonga/Thank You/ Baie dankie**

**The Rural Women Capacity Building program is a huge blessing. It touches on where it is needed: Empowering the so many single parent mothers/grandmothers in our community. This is only possible due to:**

- **Abundant blessings from Above. God loves these women and want to see them prosper. If a women prospers, her whole family prospers!**
- **Our dedicated staff and community facilitators. They are the stars in this story!**
- **Our committed supporters in the SALT Alliance, Bijzondere Noden, Durban Overalls, Sinamandla, and many other local community leaders**