



THE THEMBISA TRUST

**Grassroots support
in South Africa**

Newsletter no 31
Summer 2016

**Thembisa has
no political affiliation**

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about us



join us



projects



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events

Focus Projects 2016: MNCP



Chishawasha



**JOIN
US**

Thembisa Trust Walk and Barbecue, Sunday 17 July 2016

All profits will go to support MNCP and Chishawasha
(see p. 8 for more details)

Dreams and realities

Tonia Cope Bowley, Thembisa Trust Co-Founder



It was 1988. The situation in South Africa was dire. Nelson Mandela was in prison. Sanctions were being imposed on the country by several nations and the poor were hardest hit. It was then that Stephen and I used our month's leave, over Easter, to explore the realities for ourselves. This venture led to a dream.

The dream

The dream began to evolve into reality soon after we returned home to Oxford. It embraced the poor and marginalised – to give at least some a chance to put a foot on the first rung of the ladder of self-sufficiency and self-worth. We soon found ourselves in the position of being catalysts among like-minded people with the same dream. And so Thembisa was born.

The realities

It is now 2016 – 28 years on. Following Mandela's release, the elections of 1994 and the move away from apartheid brought euphoria in the country. This was particularly marked amongst the poorest – for a time, they had hope of real progress towards improved living conditions, education and a place in the sun. However, in recent years South Africa has fallen prey to greedy governance, corruption, a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, and this year a severe and prolonged drought. The poor, as usual, are hardest hit.

In an article by Marelise van de Merwe in the *Daily Maverick* on 17 May, entitled *Suffer the children: SA's inequality strikes hardest where it hurts most*, she quotes from a report that revealed that *nearly 4 million children – almost two-thirds of the child population – were not receiving the crucial services they needed during the most important phase of their development ... some 63% of the country's youngest are living in poverty, affecting their cognitive and emotional development.*

For 28 years Thembisa has been converting the **dream into a reality**. Around 75 projects have received encouragement and financial support. Some are now self-sustaining while others, like child development schemes, have an ongoing need for outside assistance. On the one hand, the needs across the country are hazardously high; on the other hand, there are encouraging realities. On our visit to KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape in February/March this year we became aware of a groundswell of small charities run by caring individuals and small NGOs. Michael Cassidy, founder of African Enterprise, quotes: *For evil to triumph it only requires that good people do nothing.* The bigger picture – there are literally thousands who are challenging the status quo and pursuing the aim of bringing about a radical change that will benefit all of South Africa's people.

On **Sunday 17 July Thembisa will celebrate** the Trust's achievements as we hold our annual walks and a barbecue. This year we are aiming to raise substantial funds for two projects, MNCP working in informal settlements (shacklands) in and around Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; and the Chishawasha Orphans' Project near Harare, Zimbabwe. Both projects major on uplifting children and, in fact, impact their entire communities. We will be reporting on the six projects we visited in 2015 and 2016. Do join us!

Report-back: What happened next?



The Alexandria Haven Story

Tonia Cope Bowley, Co-founder



Alexandria Haven – as known to Thembisa – is in fact named Jehovah Jireh – 'God my provider', by its founder, Molly Bam. When asked *How are you funding the feeding of so many each day?* she replied *I am not, God provides.* This remarkable woman, born into a family of 12, was orphaned at 18 and set about raising the rest of the family. The next year she took on her first foster child, who now works at The Haven.

Molly is married to Neels who was orphaned when very young and ended up on the streets. Together, this compassionate couple now care for about 100 children. No destitute child arriving on their doorstep is ever turned away. A bed is found even if they have to share. The Bams have seen many children grow up to work and live a normal life. Some return, offering a portion of their wages to help feed the growing Haven family. Others assist wherever they can.

It was in 2009, when planning Thembisa's 21st celebrations, that Gary and Deborah Kirsten, our star guests, introduced us to the Alexandria Haven, situated in the impoverished Eastern Cape. By then some 40 children were cared for in the Bams' extended home. Their property included a

stretch of vacant land and Molly's vision was to convert this into a small residential area. In each house would be a foster mother caring for 6 children. Thembisa's aim was to raise £10,000 towards the building of 6 wooden chalets. In fact, despite the world economic downturn at that point, due to the generosity of supporters, we were able to send £15,000 for this purpose. Plans changed as it became necessary to build more substantial brick structures. Costs escalated. A security wall was built first for the safety of the children. Thembisa's donation was saved towards the building of the first home.

When Stephen and I visited in February 2016 we were greeted by happy children and the first two completed houses. In one of them the 'mother' is the Bams' daughter. Molly somehow manages to care for each child as though he or she were the only child in the world that matters. Part-time and full-time helpers cook and help care for the children, together with a residential social worker – many of the children are highly damaged. Hopes are high that funds will become available to build more homes.



Focus Projects 2016

MNCP's holistic approach

Tonia Cope Bowley, Thembisa Trust Co-founder

www.facebook.com/MamaNtombisCommunityProjects

Making a meaningful difference to the Informal Settlements round Pietermaritzburg (PMB) through a holistic approach.

When in PMB in February, Stephen and I touched base with Sandra Pillay, MNCP's project manager. Our eyes were opened to new levels of MNCP's work. Sandra, quoting Mother Teresa, said: *We feel that what we are doing is but a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.* These settlements would be short of many drops were it not for MNCP.

Mentoring programme

MNCP is providing workplace experience for young people. This year MNCP has mentored 6 auxiliary social workers and 6 third-year public relations students. One auxiliary social worker, Skho, after her first week with MNCP, wrote: *Work with the poorest of children and aged grannies, visiting community members etc, was a difficult change from school. We had to find our way by taxis to an area we didn't know. It has taught me to be independent and to do things for myself.*

Neglected animals in Ezinketheni

The neglected animals became of acute concern for MNCP. During a week-long holiday club they invited an inspector from the PMB SPCA (animal welfare charity) to talk to the children and adults on animal welfare. MNCP worker, Solomon, gave the inspector a guided tour to see the state of these animals. Then an SPCA team vaccinated 140 dogs and provided owners with record cards, sample dog food, shampoo and pieces of carpet for their dogs to lie on. Delighted community members think their dogs will be better cared for.



Remarkable, inspiring gogos

79-year-old Gogo (Grannie) Zuma – a disabled divorcee and stroke victim who has had leprosy and one foot amputated – grows vegetables, crochets beautiful table cloths, and lives in a tiny, meticulously clean home with a welcome to all. She says her faith keeps her strong. MNCP volunteers transport her for hospital visits and to fetch her pension.

The value of volunteer involvement

One volunteer told *The Big Favour* (a radio station in Umhlanga that matches donors



Chishawasha orphans

Our second focus project for 2016 is the Chishawasha Orphans' Project run by Maggie Norton and helpers, near Harare in Zimbabwe. The economic situation in Zimbabwe continues to worsen, and the long drought has meant the harvest will be very poor. Maggie and Steve's borehole has run dry and they have had to buy water.

The fortnightly Perekedza Orphans' Club continues to provide food packs and life skills lessons to about 90 children in desperate need; this is actually 30 too many – but another 30 are on the waiting list. A childcare worker told Maggie about a large group of children who were raiding the bins of the local boarding school, scavenging for food. Some of these children were heading their households (i.e. no adults present) and weren't going to school. The project now pays their school fees and provides food packs as often as possible. The clinic sister Maria continues to give advice on those who need medication and help getting hospital care, and also help with seed and fertilizer so they can be independent.

The project employed one of their orphans, Crispin, to do follow-up visits to check that the children are going to school and keep up on what's happening in their homes. He had done a graphic design course and got a job, but was fired when his firm heard he is HIV positive. Sadly Nigel, the young man with a brain tumour who was helped with hospital costs, has died.

Maggie also passed on \$100 to another orphan project about 15 miles away, Masami, to purchase underwear for the girls (none of whom could afford any) and medicines. Lots of the children have bilharzia (a parasitic infection) from bathing in a nearby dam.

Those running the project need much wisdom as to how best to use the funds to meet the endless needs.



with need-requests) of MNCP's work. The result – a huge 15-meter container valued at R100,000 is to be installed on Gogo Dlamini's property. It will replace a falling down building and be used to store breakfast club food, equipment, books and, if ventilated, a classroom!

Watch this 5-minute video of MNCP work in the community:

www.facebook.com/MamaNtombisCommunityProjects/videos/545793328914413/



Project update

Cross Over's pop-up classroom

Cross Over is an exceptional education programme started by Deb Norton that aims to help vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. Cross Over works with small groups of 12 students, plus a mentor who teaches them but is also a role model and counsellor for the children. Each group is thus like a little family.

In 2015, out of 9 students writing Grade 7 exams, 7 passed – a major advance from the total failure experienced in the past! The number of students this year is 80, with 12 on track for 2016 exams. So there are now 7 groups but only 4 classrooms; 3 of the groups meet outdoors.

To manage the lack of premises (and to enable them to extend their model to other community groups), Cross Over have developed a 'pop-up classroom' concept.

The pop-up is a steel cupboard on wheels which incorporates storage and unfolds to provide display boards and working surfaces. Getting the equipment built has proved to be challenging but, as we write, the first unit is almost ready.

See more at: www.crossoverzim.com

Facebook: Cross Over Zim

There is also a video of Cross Over made by an organisation called OneHope at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-xmziZB0iyIZI95YkhBU2tqd3c/view?pref=2&pli=1>

Stop press

Our enormous thanks to Bernwode News for their very generous grant of £1,000 to Cross Over, towards the cost of producing a pop-up classroom (May 2016)!

Sweetwaters Bonginkosi Self-help Project

Tonia Cope Bowley, Thembisa Trust Co-founder

Driving along the hillside road on the way to Sweetwaters in 2015, we joined this local-goat in admiring the panorama of Edendale in the valley and hills beyond. In February 2016 we touched base with Carol Cassidy who reported as follows.

Short term compassionate care and assistance.

The winter warmth programme included the distribution of warm fleeces and hot water bottles in a bitterly cold spell. The volunteers were rewarded with jubilant singing and dancing.

Schemes to promote dignity and self sufficiency

The gardening programme

Seeds were distributed to promote home-grown vegetables so families could be fed.

The sewing and handiwork group

Second hand sewing machines were acquired, enabling 26 women to make



clothes and school uniforms, exquisite quilts and nightwear for selling. Crocheted blankets for adults and children sell well.

Mini business promotion

Two people were set up with second-hand shoes for resale. Another man sells second-hand shirts. Some members have been proactive in hiring premises in town in order to sell their wares.

Cooking project

Donated hot-boxes were used to demonstrate suitable recipes. The boxes were then sold at an affordable price.

Supporting grassroots projects

Stephen Bowley, Thembisa Trust Chairman and Co-Founder



It was a comment Liz Carmichael, one of our Trustees, made that has prompted my theme for the Chairman's article. Liz said that in South Africa, charitable support is based on a myriad of small local groups supporting small local projects. In effect, charity begins at home and cannot be dependent on large organisations distributing money, although that helps.

Tonia and I visited Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape this year. The town has a very active civic community that runs a wide range of projects to improve conditions for the poorest in their community. This is where Thembisa fits in and is still relevant – we support small grassroots projects where we make personal contacts. One example is the

Alexandria Haven, which accommodates up to 100 orphans (see page 3).

We stayed for a week at Morgan Bay Hotel on the Indian Ocean Coast. This wonderful family-run hotel supports the local community in many ways and is in the process of building a school in the local township. We were able to give a small sum of cash towards the school and the next day the new toilets were being installed! The hotel is not a charity, but an example of a local business doing their bit.

We long to continue give those doing the tough work at the grassroots, even more financial help and encouragement. A few pounds or dollars currently go a long way, given the weak rand! We thank you all for your continuing support.

New website launched



The new website has been launched! Please encourage your friends to visit it at www.thembisatrust.org

Under Projects, you'll find more details of iThemba and the Masikhulisane Trust – not covered in this newsletter due to lack of space. Under News and Events/ Newsletters, you'll find copies of previous newsletters dating back to 2005! It's now also super-easy for anyone reading the website to make a donation or become a member.

We plan to update the website more regularly – work that depends on a small number of volunteers with very busy jobs.

And now a plea:



We need a social media-savvy person who cares about South Africa to help us with Facebook and Twitter. Are you that person or do you know someone who could be? Please get in touch (you don't have to be in Oxford!): contact@thembisatrust.org

A perspective from SA

Professor Chris Mann has been an integral part of Thembisa since it was founded and is our contact for the Masikhulisane Trust. Some of Thembisa's Trustees met with Chris when he visited the UK last year. Chris told us that, when those working for change in South Africa get disheartened, funds from supporters in the UK are a tremendous encouragement, quite apart from the financial value. He implored all of us with a heart for South Africa to keep on maintaining the contact.



Project funding April 2015 – March 2016

Project / Organisation	Location	Amount
Masikhulisane Trust Supporting educational projects and job creation Including Pre-school Places for needy children	Grahamstown, Eastern Cape	£800
Sweetwaters Bonginkosi Self-help Project Blanket making and other skills support HIV orphans	Sweetwaters, KwaZulu-Natal	£500
Chishawasha Orphans' Project Includes provision of care and teaching life skills	Zimbabwe	£500
Cross Over Educational programme	Zimbabwe	£2,009 ^a
iThemba Community Projects Life training, crèches, pre-schools, sustainable nutrition, employment opportunities	Mpumuzu, KwaZulu-Natal	£600
Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP) Supporting vulnerable children in two informal settlements	Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal	£1,000 ^a
	Total	£5,409

a Included donations ear-marked for these projects

Raise funds shopping online

Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk, put 'Thembisa Trust' in the search box, and register in order to obtain donations for Thembisa when you shop online. We've raised £150 so far at no cost to us!

A REMINDER

Admin funds come from membership dues (£15 p.a). Donations are passed on in their entirety to projects.

JOIN US Walk and Barbecue, Sunday 17 July

As we had to cancel 2015's event, let's make this a bumper walk year!


Our patron, Dame Janet Suzman, hopes to attend.

- ▶ Day walk through the Chilterns (8 miles) with pub lunch stop. Meet 10.00 at Tiddington or 10.30 at Ibstone. Let Steve Bowley know if you plan to come: 07710 032722 or SBowleyPC@aol.com.
- ▶ Barbecue Tickets £12, children under 10 £6. Food and soft drinks provided; beer and wine and other items for sale. Please RSVP: 01844 338661 or grace.townshend@ntlworld.com.

- ▶ Short walk (2 miles): Meet 3.00 pm Tiddington Village Hall (OX9 2LH)

Both walks finish at Ferndale

- ▶ Barbecue from 4:30 to 8:00 pm at Ferndale, Albury View, Tiddington, OX9 2LQ.

 **moneygiving** Virgin money giving link: virginmoneygiving.com (Find a fundraising event). Put 'Thembisa' in the search box.

All profits will go to supporting MNCP and Chishawasha.