



THE THEMBISA TRUST

Grassroots support
in South Africa

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Spring 2008

Thembisa has
no political affiliation

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Saving starfish one by one

Tonia Cope Bowley, Thembisa Trust Co-founder

As I explored the rocky shores of Vancouver Island one sunny day last summer I was surprised by vibrant starfish colonies in abundance – clinging to rocks, resting on the sands and clustered in the seashore shallows. Captured by their beauty and tenacity as they waited for the turn of the tide to carry them back to safer climes I recalled a well known story:

An old man was walking along a beach littered with starfish beyond the high water mark. An unusually high tide had landed and stranded these stunning sea creatures. As the old man contemplated their imminent fate he noticed a small boy repeatedly picking up a starfish, running to the water's edge and throwing it as far as he could into the rough sea. Curious, the old man could hold his question no longer. "Young man, what are you doing this for? It won't make any difference to all these starfish." "But it will make a difference to each of the ones I'm saving," replied the boy.

So, just as you suspect, this story is Thembisa's story. Instead of rescuing stranded starfish Thembisa steps in to offer a chance in life to people stuck in a poverty trap, offering hope and help in areas like funding skills or leadership training, or at a more basic level financial support to orphanages. You can read about a few of these projects in this newsletter and view all the currently supported projects online at www.thembisatrust.org.

Rescuing starfish is worthwhile! Some years ago Thembisa learnt of a young project in an area of chronic unemployment. The vision that had recently become a reality involved training women in art and creative crafts, to provide them

with skills and employment. At that time their priority was to keep their gallery open to the public – a platform to sell their wares. Thembisa stepped in and for some years provided the salary for the Gallery Warden. Sales soared. But that is not the end of the story. Read an up to date account of The Bethesda Arts Foundation in this newsletter.

History has a habit of repeating itself. In the last Thembisa newsletter there was an introductory account of a new project – Ingelozu Eyetu (Our Own Angels). In one year with modest Thembisa funding this project has taken off. Where there was despair and destitution amongst the local rural people there is employment, creativity, and hope.

It was Chief Albert Lutuli who said "Without development we cannot transform the societies of Africa." By supporting projects like Bethesda and Ingelozu Eyetu Thembisa is adding to the development in South Africa – saving starfish one by one! But there remain countless stranded starfish on countless beaches waiting for their chance to survive. We MUST NOT stand still or stop. We must grow.

Let's celebrate and grow

Thembisa has been a registered charity since 1988 so next year Thembisa turns 21. It's time to celebrate and GROW UP! Let's get Thembisa more widely known and supported. Plans are afoot FOR CELEBRATIONS NEXT YEAR but we want your ideas. Please contact us soon! And, watch this space!

Ingelozu eyetu (Our own Angels)

In an impoverished area of the Free State, employment is provided by the owners of Oban Guest Farm through training local people in bead work and other crafts. Last year, in spite of an uphill struggle, much was achieved. More ladies were employed, craft work now includes making handbags, working conditions have been improved. At the local Christmas drive 1500 angels were sold.

Plans for 2008

Two ladies will be employed, mornings only, to enable them to be with their families after school. A market selling African artefacts is being explored as a possible outlet. In March 2008 crafts will be taken to airports with the view to extending sales outlets. Plans are in place to make tribal dolls in traditional

dress. If this becomes viable Oban estimates they will be able to employ 30 ladies by year end.

Kim Struben writes:

All of us at Oban want Thembisa to know just how timely and significant your support has been. Every time we need to purchase bead stock and now fabrics for the dolls, Thembisa's next donation arrives! A big thank you!

Sadly HIV/AIDS has claimed the lives of some of the workers. Young families are left to fend for themselves. For example one of the craftwork ladies supports nine family members.

We have some amazingly talented and effective workers. Nothing gives us more joy than to lose a worker to a full time job elsewhere, who thus becomes more able to support her family. She can still make a bit extra on the side by beading!



Masikhulisane and job creation

The Masikhulisane Trust based in Grahamstown is a group of volunteers active in creating jobs and alleviating poverty in the Grahamstown area. During the past year the South African Revenues Tax Exempt Unit, after a long wait, registered the Trust as a Public Benefit Organisation. This has tax benefits for South African donors and is an important step forward for Masikhulisane.

Funds donated by Thembisa enabled Masikhulisane to raise matching grants from South African individuals and trusts. As Masikhulisane does not charge an admin fee, the consolidated funds were allocated in full to the recipients, three projects administered by Grahamstown non-governmental organisations.

- ▶ Bursaries for children from impoverished families to attend preschool (Centre for Social Development)
- ▶ Purchase of materials for a literacy programme (Grahamstown and Area Distress Relief Association) for functionally illiterate Grade 8 learners
- ▶ Short-term employment of two men to help prepare the site of a nursery for indigenous medicinal plants and trees (Umthathi Agriculture)

Chris Mann, the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of Masikhulisane, sent his thanks to Thembisa and also sent us a greeting in Xhosa: 'Ungadinwa nangomso!' which means, 'Don't get tired tomorrow'.



Eluxolweni Street Children's Shelter

www.sowetoconnection.org/eluxolweni.htm

The Eastern Cape is notorious for its high level of poverty, due mostly to appalling rates of unemployment. According to the Institute for Race Relations, 49.4% of people living in the Eastern Cape are unemployed. In Grahamstown it could be close to 70%.

Caring for street-children

Most of the children at the shelter come from poor backgrounds, with abuse in the home or from neighbors and as a result ended up on the streets. There they face ongoing abuse, mistreatment and neglect. The shelter gives these kids, aged 8 to 18, the chance to escape the cycle of poverty and addiction. Not only do they have a safe place to live but they also receive an education, and guidance on how to deal with the difficulties they have encountered. With the assistance of volunteers from the community, including students from Rhodes University, a range of support and extramural activities are offered. For some children this is perhaps the first stability they have ever experienced.



► *David Claassen the energetic manager.*

The shelter is run by a management team and a staff of eleven. The house parents include a qualified social worker, and the Director/Project Manager, David Claassen.

The hardest money to raise is for day-to-day living. And this is what Eluxolweni is really short of. Money is urgently needed on an ongoing basis for food, clothing, books, educational materials, laundry and kitchen equipment. The shelter is also planning a significant extension and renovation of the living area. As a start Thembisa was pleased to provide a grant of £600, raised at our annual walk in September 2007.

WARMTH Kitchens – improving the lives of TB patients

www.warmth.org.za

WARMTH (WAR against Malnutrition, Tuberculosis and Hunger) provides low cost nutritious food to disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape, through a network of community kitchens. WARMTH provides the premises and training for the cook, and basic ingredients for soup, soya stew and rice. These meals are sold to customers for a small sum or for vouchers; the cooks receive no salary but earn a living from the meals they sell.

In thanking us for our latest grant, Val Harding of WARMTH wrote:

“The work of feeding those most in need continues, and from time to time I hear encouraging stories. One particular couple

called Storemberg and Joyce living in the area of New Rest and suffering from TB have had their lives turned around because of the WARMTH kitchen. They attend the Vuyani Clinic in Guguletu to get the medication they



Bonginkosi Blankets Project

Imagine...

- ... you live in Sweetwaters, an area of stunning beauty near in Kwa Zulu/Natal. Although densely populated with about 100,000 residents, there is almost no employment. The climate ranges from extreme summer heat to piercing winter cold.
- ... you are a widow with no pension and no source of income. In the last three years you've lost both daughters from HIV/AIDS. Between them they had 7 children and you have inherited the role of mother. You've taken on 4 other orphaned children. You have 11 young mouths to feed, all aged between two and nine.
- ... you need to provide for these 11 children. For a while friends and neighbours help out but they have their own problems. Depending on other people dents your pride. Then one day a few caring South Africans, aware of the plight of Sweetwater residents, arrive to assess the situation. They provide training in blanket making. You are overjoyed. At last you can do something to support your children. You take pride in making beautiful blankets.

need for their TB, and on the way buy a nutritious meal at the New Rest WARMTH kitchen. Eating better has meant that their medication is more effective and both of them have gained weight. They say that the kitchen has changed their lives for the better."

► Like many of the kitchens, this one in one of Khayelitsha's extensions is in a converted shipping container.



The Bonginkosi Blankets Project provides initial funding to buy the yarn so that a group of women in Sweetwaters can crochet blankets – their only source of income. Many are grandmothers – the sole supporters of AIDS orphans in this area of great poverty. Buying the yarn, quality control, packing and marketing the blankets are done by volunteers.

In September 2007 Thembisa raffled two of these lovely lightweight, warm and washable cellular blankets at the time of the annual walk, raising £400. The blanket makers are overjoyed.

Thembisa wants to raise additional funds for them.

How you can help?

Buy a blanket – two for sale now

These cellular crocheted blankets are very light but warm. Dimensions: 228 x 286 cm / 89 x 112 inches (a large double or small king size). Machine washable. One cream, one white. Cost per blanket: £40, plus £7.50 pp UK (OR you can collect from Oxford). All the proceeds go to the blanket makers.

Contact by email: contact@thembisatrust.org
By Post: Thembisa Trust, 34 Trinity Road,
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Bethesda Arts Foundation going from strength to strength

www.bethesdafoundation.org

The Bethesda Arts Centre provides training in the arts and life skills to the impoverished rural community of Nieu Bethesda in the Karoo, where there are almost no other employment possibilities.

The Bethesda Foundation has had a really good year. Sandra Sweers, whose salary Thembisa has supported for several years, has been promoted to Textile Supervisor and oversees the work of Pomegranate, the textile group.

In 2007 Pomegranate focused on making large quilts. Two with a theme of justice were commissioned by the Constitutional Court. Justice Albie Sachs described these quilts as 'a triumph'. In June three quilts were exhibited at the Grahamstown Festival, and attracted good reviews in the papers.

In total the twelve women in the Pomegranate group have earned R14,000 (about £1,000) each during the course of this year from quilts, plus small amounts from the bags and small hangings they made. Counting three other

full-time employees, this means that seventeen families have been totally supported by the Centre this year, through their own work.

The print-making studio is growing, with four full time print-makers.

Also, Bethesda now runs a nutrition scheme, and gives all the participants a hot meal for lunch every day. Nutrition is taught to the participants and their families. Vegetables are grown when possible, or are bought from a local group Bethesda helped to set up.

The first Gallery Warden, Liena Johnson says: "There is not a man, woman or child in this village whose life has not been improved by the Bethesda Arts Centre."

Jeni Couzyn, founder and Director of the Bethesda, is currently working at the centre full time for six months.



► Two of the Bethesda quilts entitled 'Creation' and 'The web of love' (and a detail from 'Creation').



21st Birthday celebrations



Plans are underway for celebrations next year. We aim to:

- ▶ celebrate the achievements of those projects supported over 21 years,
- ▶ promote Thembisa so that we will become more widely known (and the needs in South Africa) and attract new members and volunteers with time to organise things,
- ▶ increase our funding base to enable Thembisa to support more projects and increase the funding of existing projects.

You can contribute! For example: host a fund-raising tea/meal; bake and sell some cakes; go on a sponsored walk/swim/cycle ride; declutter and send us the proceeds of your car boot sale; hold a collection at work or your club; put an item in your local newspaper about Thembisa; etc.

Please let us have your ideas (others may also be able to use them).

Thembisa's 2007 walk

This year's autumn walk on 2 September attracted a bumper crowd. The 10-mile walk with a lunch stop in Thame was for the more energetic. The afternoon walk was a gentler 2-mile walk. Once again we were blessed with ideal weather for walking and for the

tea afterwards in the the founder's garden. The total raised was £1000! Thanks to all who help to achieve this – the walkers, those who sold and bought tickets for the Bonginkosi Blanket Makers blanket-affle and for generous donations.





Project funding 2006 – 2008

Funds are allocated twice a year, in March and September. The totals shown are those funds that were allocated for the financial years 2006–7 and

2007–8 (in September 2006, March 2007 and September 2007). Allocations for March 2008 were not available at time of going to press.

Project	Location	2006–7	2007–8
^a Bonginkosi preschool	Edendale, KwaZulu-Natal	£21,220	£250
^b Gauteng Peace and Development Foundation	Gauteng	£4,600	£2,300
African Leadership Development Institute	Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal	£1,800	£800
Bethesda Foundation	Nieu Bethesda, E. Cape	£1,400	£800
Masikhulisane Trust	Grahamstown, E. Cape	£1,400	£800
Sakhumzi Orphanage	Cape Town, W. Cape	£500	£250
WARMTH	Countrywide	£500	£250
Sinethemba Shelter	KwaZulu-Natal	£500	£250
GADRA	Grahamstown, E Cape	£500	£250
Ingelosi Eyetu	Van Reenen, Free State	£500	£250
^c Eluxolweni Shelter	Grahamstown, E. Cape	–	£600
^c Bonginkosi Project	Edendale, KwaZulu-Natal	–	£400
Totals		£32,920	£7,200

^a Money raised by Kennington Overseas Aid

^b Includes sums designated for the specific project by the donors.

^c Proceeds from the Thembisa walk and raffle in September.

This new format makes for simpler reporting but does mean that the totals under Sep '06 + Mar '07 partly overlap with the amounts reported last year.

Bonginkosi Preschool rebuilding delayed

The £21,220 which Kennington Overseas Aid raised last year to build a new preschool is safely in a bank in South Africa. African Enterprise, which is supervising progress, has been working with a firm of architects who have drawn up preliminary plans free of charge. The plans include a structure to cater for some 75 children, as well as a small Administration Centre and caretaker's house. The Bonginkosi Trustees' long-term vision is for the school to also be used as a community centre, meeting various medical and social needs.

Complex issues of land ownership have delayed the start of the building work. However as this newsletter goes to press we have news that building is to commence soon.



Sakhumzi Orphanage, Cape Town

'Mama Amelia', who runs an orphanage providing a home for 100 children, wrote:

We have received the money, for which we thank you very much; and thank you for all the help you have given us in the past and continue to give us. Your support means much to us and our children, and we are very grateful.