



THE THEMBISA TRUST

**Grassroots support
in Southern Africa**

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**Thembisa has
no political affiliation**

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Registered Charity No: 801978



about us



join us



projects



funding



events



Chishawasha relief



MNCP mentorship programmes

**Join us at the Thembisa braai:
Sunday 9 June 2024**



Letter from our co-founder

Tonia Cope Bowley,
Thembisa Trust Co-Founder



For the joy of giving

LIFE IS A JOYOUS GIFT filled with the unexpected. I certainly did not expect to be writing this piece to you just days before I leave eight decades behind me. I did not expect my beloved Stephen, Thembisa's motivator and co-founder, to die before me some six years ago. Nor did I, in my wildest dreams, think I'd ever move from South Africa to live in England. But this much I do know, I was created by our awesome God to fulfil a specific role on this planet. Now is the time to build on the past while fully focusing on my vision for times ahead. I hope you will join me on this pathway expecting the unexpected.

What then has brought so much JOY into my life? For one, THEMBISA. As a little farm girl a tiny seed was planted in my mind. I longed to do something for the oppressed peoples. This seed finally broke through parched ground when watered by Stephen. For two are stronger than one, especially when acting on behalf of the many with similar vision.

So what brings you JOY? Perhaps it includes your giving to Thembisa and the seeing the positive results in lives touched.

There are many ways to give. This includes your time, talents, support, hospitality, encouragement, finances and caring. Joy is a reward of giving, as is discovering who you are through the process. Winston Churchill put it this way:

“ You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. ”

You may not consider you've done very much, but according to Mother Teresa:

“ We know only too well, that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something. ”

For what you have invested in Thembisa, thank you on behalf of all who benefit. May you experience deep joy as a result.

Tonia's 80th birthday appeal for Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is struggling. About half of the adult population live outside of Zimbabwe for at least part of each year earning in order to put food on the table back home. To coincide with Tonia's 80th birthday, our vision is to raise £5,000 to support various projects in Zimbabwe – some already supported and possibly one or two innovative new ones.

This appeal ends 15 May 2024. No amount is too little – currently £1.00 translates into around USD 1.25 in Zimbabwe. An easy way to give is via the DONATE button on the website (www.thembisatrust.org), where you can claim Gift Aid. Or send a cheque, payable to 'Thembisa Trust', to 34 Trinity Road, Oxford, OX3 8LQ.

News

Date for your diary

Don't miss the Thembisa Braai on Sunday 9 June 2024!

Our annual braai is our main social event of the year, when we love to meet supporters. It's also a chance to raise funds for MNCP.

Time: 09 June 2024, 3:00 – 7:00 pm

Place: Ferndale, Albury View,
Tiddington, OX9 2LQ

Ticket costs will be announced in a reminder closer to the time. Tickets will cover food, drink and one ticket for a prize draw open only to attendees on the day.



Happy Birthday Tonia and Peter!



Congratulations to two of our trustees who have reached the significant milestone of 80 years! We are so grateful for both of them and wish them many years of good health ahead.

Tonia Cope Bowley, The Thembisa Trust co-founder, has over the past 35 years been a visionary driving force in promoting Thembisa far and wide, and in keeping us relevant and abreast of developments. Her dreams for Thembisa are grounded in her strong desire to help those who have very little.



Peter Braithwaite is our secretary and treasurer, keeping our accounts straight and offering wise input. Peter is very proactive in discerning opportunities and risks, making sure that ideas can be turned into reality.



Thank you Helen

We want to thank Helen Whiter, who has resigned as Trustee after serving Thembisa very ably since 2012. Helen will continue to support Thembisa but will now focus on her other charitable commitments. Helen lives near Warwick and has shown that it is possible to be an active Trustee even if not living in the Oxford area. Thank you so much, Helen, for your expert input into issues like safeguarding, and your successful applications to funding bodies on behalf of our projects!



New Project

Eluxolweni boys' shelter <https://eluxolwenicycc.co.za/>

'A place of safety and forgiveness'. That's what Eluxolweni means, and what the Eluxolweni Child and Youth Care Centre (EYCC) strives to provide. EYCC is a home for neglected and vulnerable boys from Makhanda (Grahamstown) and other parts of the Eastern Cape. The centre takes a holistic approach in order to meet the boys' physical, mental and emotional needs and to provide them with opportunities to flourish in life.

Currently, 20 boys aged 6–18 years of age are being cared for. Education is a cornerstone of the Shelter's work and all the boys have to attend school. One of Eluxolweni's boys was recently appointed head boy at Fikizolo Primary School! Those who leave at 18, who cannot return to their homes but have the potential to study further, are also helped. The boys participate in a range of activities, with the help of many



▶ Playing marimbas at a local shopping centre.



▶ Simamkele Tyuth, head boy.



BEFORE



AFTER

volunteers, including students from Rhodes University.

Thembisa funded Eluxolweni for a few years prior to 2010 but has not done so recently. Following an application in 2023, we provided a grant to enable new tiling of the floors in the boys' rooms, to make them homely and welcoming.

▶ New tiled floors in boys' dorms.



Project Update

Food4Futures <https://food4futures.co.za/>



The Eastern Cape has long been the province with the highest unemployment rate in South Africa. In June 2023, the official unemployment rate was 39.7%, and 52.4% for those aged 15–34 years (Eastern Cape Socio-economic Consultative Council 2023).

Food4Futures (F4F) works with people in Makhanda (previously Grahamstown) with little or no income. F4F's main objective is to provide families with grocery parcels. They currently distribute around 200 parcels twice a month, which provides food to 900 people. They make 720 peanut butter sandwiches every Monday, and give packs of two to anyone who comes to their door.

Extra food is supplied through an innovative project called Parking4Parcels. F4F sells booklets of vouchers to members of the public, who give them to parking attendants and to others asking for food help in town. (In South Africa, tips for keeping an eye on your car while you are shopping is the only source of income for many.) The recipients take the vouchers to F4F and exchange them for food parcels. This food is bought wholesale by F4F and packed at wholesale cost price.



In addition to food, F4F also:

- Pays the fee for ID documents, from a fund that is for this purpose only (donations given for food are not used for this). Having an ID can open many doors for the holder.
- Advises, and acts for, people struggling with the red-tape of applications for grants (e.g. disability and pensions).
- Collects and distributes used clothing, shoes, bedding, and household items.
- Assists families who cannot afford school supplies of stationery, books, shoes and uniforms.
- The Care4Community project provides essential items and games, books etc. to those who are lonely, housebound, or have special needs both physical and emotional. Visitors also spend time with the needy individuals.



Holistic community care

Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP) continues to do amazing work in two impoverished areas near Pietermaritzburg. Like many of the projects we support, MNCP is helping young people to acquire the tools and character traits they need to make a success of their lives. MNCP has been a focus project of Thembisa since 2012.

In our last newsletter we mentioned our desire to cover the salary of MNCP's social worker, Solomon Qadi. Thanks to our generous donors' support we've been able to do so – thank you! This is an on-going obligation that we intend to meet every year.

Sandra Pillay's (Chief Operations Officer) report

We are deeply grateful for Thembisa's financial support towards Solomon's salary costs. Solomon truly is like a 'Mother Teresa' in this community – reaching out to the helpless, being a voice to the voiceless and a father to the fatherless.

Mentorship programmes for boys

Children are our future, it is our responsibility to shape our future by shaping our youth! We do this through our mentorship programme, Men Moulding Men. Our young boys aged 7–16 are in a developing stage of their lives and very few are in homes with fathers. Through the programme, mentors share their experiences, knowledge, support and advice. The boys are introduced to new experiences and positive values that will increase their social and emotional development, and improve self-esteem. Our boys meet with their mentors on a weekly basis at the MNCP Centre. Some of the important principles that we teach are respect, kindness, self-discipline, courage and honesty. The organisation 'Single Moms Raising Sons' provides our mentors with training and sponsors some of our boys to go on weekend camps.

Likewise, Men Around The Fire is a programme directed at assisting young adults and older men. They meet, when possible around a fire, and discuss issues they face as men.

Mentorship programmes for girls

Teen Conversations is a programme for girls where we have guest speakers addressing the girls on important issues. Many of our girls (and boys) struggle with self-worth and identity due to being abandoned or rejected by their parents.



A proud moment for the preschoolers graduating.



Dr Zandile Makhaye talking about identity at the Teen Conversations Workshop.



Chris Pillay and Solomon Qadi.

Siyanda and his 21st birthday cake.

We also run a Weekly Mentorship Programme at the MNCP Centre for girls. At the last Mentorship programme when they were taught about Gender-Based Violence, some of the girls disclosed that they were being harassed by the security guard at the school and one male teacher. These incidents were reported to the school, which had no idea they were occurring.

We have also intervened in the cases of elder abuse reported to us. The MNCP centre certainly provides HOPE to the many who come to us for help.

Programmes supporting children's education

Our normal programmes of feeding 200 children every weekday morning with a highly nutritious porridge continues. The Homework and Reading Club helps children with their homework and with reading and comprehension of books in English.

We had 22 children aged 4 years attending our preschool this year and on Friday 10 November we held our Preschool Graduation. This was such a special time. Each child received a bag of wonderful gifts such as Lego blocks, colouring books, crayons, facecloth and sweet treat. Most of the children in our community don't have the luxury of educational toys or someone to keep them mentally stimulated, as they are very poor and live mostly with aged grandmothers. We do not charge school fees and we provide all the learning materials, as well as breakfast and lunch.

Our ECD Centre gives children a head start in life. Next year they go on to Grade R at the local Primary School. We are able to track their progress as we have a good relationship with the school, and the children have been encouraged to come to our Breakfast Club and attend our Homework and Reading Club.

We focus on teaching the children the English language at an early age. The local preschool teaches in Zulu up to Grade 3, and when the medium changes to English in Grade 4, the children struggle.

Other community outreach

Siyanda joined us at MNCP this year when he volunteered his services after completing school. He comes from a desperately poor family. We celebrated his 21st birthday and gave him a gift. However, he was more excited with the cake which had his name on it. He said that this was the first time ever that anyone celebrated his birthday! Through our contacts Siyanda is now enrolled in a six-month Internship Programme with Microsoft.



Project update



iThemba projects

iThemba projects work in the Sweetwaters area, focusing on enabling people in the community to help themselves. They do this through involving local people in initiatives in early childhood development, sustainable nutrition, youth mentoring, and construction, amongst other areas.

The theme for 2023 was 'SIYAHAMBA – we walk together'. Stu Walker, Director, wrote:

'In many ways, our journey with Sweetwaters is much like the roads here. It's a mixture of tar and dirt, all with unexpected turns, holes, and bumps. ... One thing we've learned is that in community development, it is imperative to move slowly. Challenges that slow us down also help us to engage with people where they are, rather than rushing ahead with our outside perspective. They help us hear the real stories from the real heroes, and move forward – together.'

'In this past year, we literally walked these roads with people. Whether it was the growth we saw on the journey from our Year of Your Life (YOYL) volunteers, a grandmother who would not give up, or a young parent finding new hope and spreading it – our community inspired us to keep walking.'

'I do this work because I want to learn! I also want to help my community to have a place of hope and to grow from the work I'm doing.'
Mxolisi, construction team.



'Aren't they beautiful? I'm planting them tomorrow.' Walter, who works in the preschool garden, with seedlings bought using money from selling produce.



Meeting desperate needs in Chishawasha

Zimbabwe is in a desperate state. After the rigged elections held in 2023, the country is facing another five years of tyranny, mismanagement, power cuts, hospitals without medicines, and schools without teachers. The poor are getting poorer and are in desperate need of help.

The Perekedza Kids' Club, which Thembisa has supported in the past, continues to meet regularly under the supervision of Nats Detering and others for life lessons and to receive food parcels. Some children have also learnt to grow their own food. Maggie Norton, our contact person, now uses the grants from Thembisa to support needy individuals in the Chishawasha area. Education and health care are not free, and many families cannot afford either. The needs are endless and Maggie needs great wisdom.

Many more children are now unable to go to school. Mrs Bhero, a lady with four children whom the project pays school fees for, was sent away by the headmaster. He

said the teachers aren't teaching as they are not being paid, so there's no point in the children attending!

Tanyaradzwa is a 20-year-old man who developed terrible pain in his hip and was unable to walk. It turned out that TB had eaten away his hip joint. He was treated for TB and Maggie and her colleagues raised the money for a new hip joint. Wonderful news – he had surgery in late November and is now walking with one crutch! He will now need a job as his grandmother looks after him and his brother Kuda, who has spina bifida and is in a wheelchair. But thanks to this intervention he can look forward to being a contributor rather than a drain on the family. Other examples of people who have been helped are:

- A lady, Josie, looks after her 91-year-old mother. Her hut burnt down after a fire started in the kitchen and nothing could be saved. Incidents like this leave people totally destitute.
- A little boy who needed X-rays.
- A girl with a facial tumour that needs to be removed.





Project Update

A new strategy for Cross Over

The mission of Cross Over has always been to reach vulnerable communities with learning that transforms the lives of under-privileged children in Zimbabwe. This was done through a school that served 90 children, with a syllabus tailored to their situation, and mentors who took a close interest in the children's lives.

In 2022 Deb Norton and her colleagues made the difficult decision to close the school. They realised that their strategy needed to change in order to be able to serve needy children more widely. Cross Over now focuses on making resources and training accessible to educational initiatives that want them, keeping the cost as low as possible whilst still generating enough profit to make the resources available for free to

the most vulnerable. The resources consist of scripted lesson plans with all the visual materials, flashcards and other resources needed to deliver the lesson, plus student activity packs and assessment packs. Wherever possible Cross Over also provides as much classroom equipment and stationery as they can. Such initiatives are needed more than ever, in view of the dire state of many schools in Zimbabwe.

As of September 2023, six small schools were using Cross Over resources in Harare and Bulawayo. These are being run by mentors from Cross Over or by people whom Cross Over trained. Despite the risks it poses to their sustainability, each of the startup schools is carrying a number of vulnerable children who cannot meet fee payments.



...a mentor at one of the schools, who attended Cross Over training

'The training was so fascinating to me as it presented a curriculum very different from conventional teaching methods. The Character Track really came out clearly as an important part of learning ... It spoke to our inner hearts. We loved the materials that support all lessons in enhancing learning. We learnt that the use of cards and games is very effective in keeping learners busy and interested. ... We also learnt that learning is about the student not the teacher just lecturing.'

...an ex-Cross Over mentor at one of the startup schools

'A builder was doing some work at the school and would hear the lessons taking place. A few days later he enrolled his three children into the school. Parents have already started telling us how their children are improving in their academics and character. It is easy to show new people what to do due to the resources that Cross Over provides.'



Bonginkosi Self-help project

For many years volunteers living in the Pietermaritzburg area have visited the impoverished community of Sweetwaters to distribute food and encourage sewing and vegetable growing. This work is now continuing under the auspices of African Enterprise. Each month a service is held, food is distributed, and the women who can sew are provided with fabrics. The members of this project are primarily grannies caring for orphaned children.

Linda Grant reported that, at the sewing group in October, the women were delighted with their sewing kits and ties to prepare for quilting. In November the ladies showed off the wonderful bags they'd made from this fabric. At the November meeting, several of the recipients had clubbed together and provided Christmas gifts for Sarah, Julian and Carol (the volunteers who kept this project going). Food parcels, books and further fabric packs were gratefully received.



Beautiful bags and ties prepared for quilting.

Help needed!

Few of our current trustees have social media and digital skills. We need help! Do you have a few hours a month available to support Thembisa with some activities, with possible occasional short periods of full-time support?

Do you have expertise and experience in one or more of the following: social media, publicity / marketing, fundraising, website development and support, or finances? Your role could include any of these. Offers of other help are also welcome. A knowledge of and/or a heart for Southern Africa would be an advantage.

We need your e-mail address!

Please let us have your email address if we don't already have it! Our address is contact@thembisatrust.org. Using email rather than post saves us a lot of money. We will still send the printed newsletter to you unless you ask not to receive a printed copy. We'll use email for interim mailings and/or reminders. We won't bombard you!

Letter from the Chair Frank Adam

Dear Thembisa Trust Family,

I'm thrilled to share both gratitude for your ongoing support and exciting news about our transformative journey. Your contributions have empowered countless lives in South Africa and Zimbabwe through skills and character development.

This year, to celebrate our co-founder's significant birthday, we're launching innovative projects that leverage new technologies to amplify our impact. To turn these plans into reality, we're embarking on a significant fundraising campaign.

Your generosity has been crucial, and we invite you to continue supporting our cause. Your contributions will directly fund our current projects and new initiatives.

Join us in fostering a future of boundless opportunities. Your support makes a tangible difference in empowering individuals and communities.

Thank you for being a cornerstone of our success.

Project funding 2021–2024 Our financial year runs 1 April – 31 March

| Project / Organisation | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP) Supporting the community in two informal settlements Pietermaritzburg | £5400 | £7800 ^a | £3000 |
| Sweetwaters Bonginkosi Self-help Project Income-generating projects, help as needed KwaZulu/Natal | £1000 | £500 | £1100 |
| iThemba Community Projects Community upliftment programmes KwaZulu/Natal | £500 | — | £500 |
| Food4Futures Emergency feeding scheme Makhanda (previously Grahamstown), Eastern Cape | £1000 | £1000 | £750 |
| Chishawasha Meeting needs in the community Zimbabwe | £500 | £1000 | £750 |
| Cross Over Educational programme Zimbabwe | £2037 ^b | £504 | £750 |
| Eluxolweni Boys' Home Care for neglected boys Makhanda (previously Grahamstown), Eastern Cape | — | — | £500 |
| African Enterprise Emergency appeal KwaZulu/Natal | £2000 ^c | — | — |
| | £12,437 | £10,804 | £7,350 |
| | Annual total | | Year to date |

^a Included £2400 raised specifically towards the cost of a generator.

^b Included earmarked £2000 donation from the Souter Trust.

^c Included donations given in response to emergency food appeal.

A small number of our supporters earmark part of their donations to be used for admin funds. All other donations are passed on in their entirety to projects.