



# THE THEMBISA TRUST

**Grassroots support  
in South Africa**

Newsletter no 32  
Summer 2017

**Thembisa has  
no political affiliation**

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**about us**



**join us**



**projects**



**funding**



**events**

## Focus Projects 2017: MNCP



## Chishawasha



**JOIN  
US**

**Thembisa Trust Walk and  
Barbecue, Sunday 30 July 2017**

All profits will go to support MNCP and Chishawasha  
(see p. 2 for more details)

# Never give up!

Tonia Cope Bowley,  
Thembisa Trust Co-Founder



Never give up! You never know what is around the next corner. You are special, unique and irreplaceable. Believe this. Fortunately my father, Frederick Cope, did. He never gave up, even when in the early 1940s he spent nine months in solitary confinement in China during the Japanese invasion; even when he nearly died at sea on the Tatuta Maru – the first diplomatic and prisoner exchange ship between Japan, England and America; even when our South African farm was burnt to the ground. And, here I am – alive – because he never gave up.

I have been writing stories since the age of ten and publishing since 1981. Earlier this year, 2017, after a seven-year long research journey with Stephen, and umpteen drafts, I published a biography on my father: *One Man Three Lives – The man who would never give up*. My motivation was two-fold – to honour my parents and to encourage anywhere-readers to never give up.

My husband, Stephen, provides us with a visible example of someone who never gives up. Normally dynamic, innovative and healthy, he is now in the midst of major health challenges. His positive attitude and determination to regain his vitality inspire all who know him. You will catch something of his vision for the future of Thembisa in his Chairman's Letter (page 8).

Then there are the peoples of Africa – that forgotten continent – where countless numbers never give up. Examples known to us in Thembisa are to be found in the projects we support. Read the accounts of our current focus projects: MNCP in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and Chishawasha in Zimbabwe.

This year we celebrate Thembisa's 29th anniversary. We plan to hold our annual Walk and Barbecue at Ferndale on 30 July 2017. Do come and meet old friends and new, and catch up with Thembisa's latest news.

**Special offer** *One Man Three Lives* will be on sale on the day. Normally available on line for £15.99, on the day there will be 30 copies on sale for just £12 each, providing an additional £360 towards Thembisa's projects. Why 30? Well, just a quick focus on the fact that next year, in 2018, Thembisa will turn 30!

## JOIN US Walk and Barbecue, Sunday 30 July

- ▶ Afternoon walk (approx. 3 miles) starts at 2:30 pm at Tiddington Village Hall, OX9 1AA. Finish at Ferndale.
- ▶ Barbecue from 4:00 to 8:00 pm at Ferndale, Albury View, Tiddington OX9 2LQ.
- ▶ Barbecue Tickets £12, children under 10 £6. Barbecue and soft drinks provided, donations towards beer and wine.

**RSVP** Grace 01865 766117 or [grace.townshend@ntlworld.com](mailto:grace.townshend@ntlworld.com)

**NB** Please provide your name and contact details when you reply.

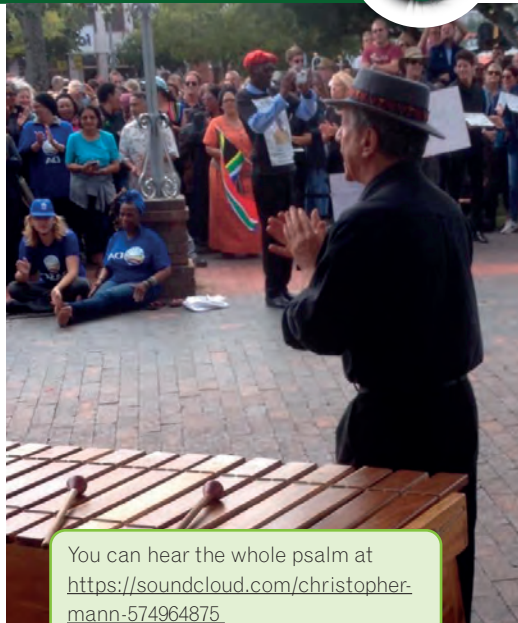


## A hip-hop psalm from Chris Mann

Chris Mann, Professor of English at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and a renowned poet, is our contact for the Masikhulisane Trust (see report p. 6). At a vigil on 7 April, organised by the Dean of Grahamstown to protest against President Zuma's irresponsible actions, Chris performed 'Culani Nonke – Sing-out-people' – a rap and-hip-hop psalm dedicated to Nelson Mandela, which he composed. There was a warm response to the poem, and also humour. 'Tyhini, uyarappa!' ('Gosh, he's rapping!') and 'Go, old man, go!'

*O Lord don't let the vision of Madiba fade away,  
Don't let the jackals of despair and hatred get  
their way.*

*Uproot apartheid's thorns, colonialism's sin,  
Emancipate the hurt, the rage that burns within.  
Your justice like an eagle soars above all wrong,  
O Lord, make strong your people's hearts in joyful  
prayer and song.*



You can hear the whole psalm at  
<https://soundcloud.com/christopher-mann-574964875>

### Cecillie Swaisland (1926–2016)

Cecillie's late husband Charles was key to the development of Thembisa. Cecillie was a constant support, from their marriage in 1949, through Colonial Service years in Nigeria and various secondments to Africa. Both were characterised by their love of people and desire to serve, which continued after they moved to Kennington near Oxford.

We thank Cecillie's daughters Alison and Ruth for requesting that donations in her memory be made to Thembisa through the **Charles and Cecillie Swaisland Memorial Fund**, which will remain open till the end of July 2017. Donations can be made by cheque sent to Thembisa or via the website.

### Heather Wilson (1932–2017)

Heather taught in Pietermaritzburg for some years in the 1960s and always maintained her great love for South Africa. In 1988 she was one of those who met with the Bowleys to explore the possibility of setting up Thembisa, and she remained an enthusiastic supporter, contributing towards the Trust in numerous ways. It was with sadness that we bade her farewell earlier this year, after a long illness.

### Raise funds when shopping online

Visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://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 more than £150 so far!



# Focus Projects 2017

## Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP)



The main focus of Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP) is caring for orphaned and neglected children and supporting their elderly grandmothers in informal settlements around Pietermaritzburg. One granny is looking after 18 grandchildren!

### **Educational and social activities**

The MNCP Centre (a donated, converted shipping container) provides a home for the pre-school, breakfast club, and for homework supervision and book clubs.

Sports clubs and cultural activities are organised to keep children occupied and off the streets. A three-day Easter Programme for the children at Ezinketheni included singing and games and teaching on topics such as drugs and alcohol, safety tips and bullying – and of course something to eat.

At Easter, MNCP organised an event for 40 grannies, with a talk on caring for their grandchildren and a hot meal.

Residents say that, as a result of MNCP's activities, the community feels like a safer place. Teen pregnancies and drug addiction problems have reduced.

### **Vegetable gardens**

For the granny with 18 children, MNCP has provided a properly fenced garden with overhead shade cloth, and each veggie

patch allocated to two children. Other residents are also being encouraged to start home veggie gardens. As the soil is not arable, MNCP brings in topsoil and manure and encourages planting in containers and old tyres.

MNCP is also helping community members to start and register poultry and gardening co-ops.

### **Animal welfare**

When life is so hard, animals can have a very tough time. MNCP has held several workshops teaching people how to care for their animals. In August 2016 MNCP encouraged residents to surrender their sickly and neglected animals to the local SPCA and subsequently held a vaccination clinic.

### **Disaster relief**

MNCP coordinates relief when disaster strikes – e.g. when shacks burn down, which happens all too often. There are only two full-time staff members, with much of the work done by volunteers.

### **Stop press – Bernwode News grant**

Thembisa is grateful to Bernwode News for a grant of £700 towards building hygienic pit toilets for the MNCP centre. Existing sanitation is very poor and the rocky ground requires machinery to dig deep enough pits.







## Chishawasha orphans' project, Zimbabwe

Grace Townshend, Thembisa Trustee



Zimbabweans have suffered great hardships over the past year. First a drought that forced most people in the towns to buy water, and those in rural areas to walk long distances. Then the conversion overnight of all bank accounts from US dollars to bond notes which are useable only in Zimbabwe, so businesses are unable to import fuel, food, etc.

The 'Perekedza orphans' project overseen by Maggie and Steve Norton continues to provide 90 children with food packs and lifeskills lessons at the fortnightly club. The need to give food has increased as it was such a bad rainy season. The project is now also providing 60 children's school fees, and uniforms when necessary (children are not allowed to attend school without them).

The club's meeting place has moved from the Nortons' property out to the Chishawasha area, where they are using borrowed land to teach the children to grow vegetables. The Nortons' son Mik, who studied agriculture, helped train the children in growing crops, composting,

- ▶ An open day on which caregivers and local chiefs were shown what the children had grown.
- ▶ Keith showing off his new uniform which has enabled him to go to school.
- ▶ Esnat, the child care worker, who has lent her land to the project.



and well digging, and next year they hope to start a chicken project. The local community are also involved and a local man oversees the land during the week. In order to teach the children that they must work if they are to continue to receive handouts, those who work on the farming project on Saturdays receive some of the produce.

Every week there are new cases of destitute families or individual children. There are sad outcomes sometimes, such as the recent death of a six-year-old girl from burns following a fire which destroyed her house.



## Project update

### Masikhulisane: A helping hand for determined students

The Masikhulisane Trust supports educational projects and job creation. Creating employment opportunities is quite challenging due to the extensive bureaucracy. However, education is supported at both 'ends' – early, through pre-school places, and late, through the GADRA Matric School (GMS). This provides one year of full-time classes to prepare students to re-write selected National Senior Certificate subjects, in order to improve their results and gain access to tertiary study. Since 1994, almost 2,000 disadvantaged young people have graduated from GMS with an improved Matric. In 2016, of the 161 students registered at GMS, 120 attained Bachelor-level passes, and 37 Diploma-level passes.

So many young people in South Africa have to endure hardship on many levels, and carry heavy emotional and financial burdens. Thembisa's grant to Masikhulisane will go towards funding bursaries for

students such as V, profiled below. Bursary recipients are all from very poor families but have demonstrated the determination and character to benefit from GMS.

V lives with his elderly grandparents aged 79 and 68 and his 11-year old cousin, as his father died and his mother abandoned him when she remarried. The family survives on two old-age state pensions. Even though V experiences feelings of rejection as a day-to-day part of life, he achieved a Diploma-level Matric pass and registered with GMS to upgrade his results in English, Business Studies and Mathematical Literacy. In February, V left the school because he could not pay the fees and wanted to avoid being expelled. Aware of the commitment of Masikhulisane Trustees, the manager decided to waive his fees and convinced him to return. GADRA will help him to access a loan for tertiary studies if he succeeds in getting a Degree-level pass.

### Cross Over's pop-up classroom now in use!

Cross Over's pop-up classroom (described in last year's newsletter) is in use and working well! Cross Over is a programme that helps vulnerable children in Zimbabwe who have missed out on education, working with small groups of up to 15 students plus a mentor who acts as teacher, role model and counsellor.

The pop-up is a steel cupboard on wheels with storage, that unfolds to provide display boards and working surfaces. It provides classroom facilities for use in any space available. Last year it was used outside and over the rainy season indoors in the church hall, working well in both settings and serving 15 students out of Cross Over's 83 total.



Deb Norton is currently working with the manufacturers to make two new units, incorporating a few improvements. Cross Over's main focus this year will be on developing the curriculum and resources that go into a pop-up, particularly the literacy resources.

# Project update



## Sweetwaters Bonginkosi self-help project

Carol Cassidy, a member of the Sweetwaters team, wrote as follows just before Easter to thank us for the grant:

'This is simply wonderful (and the pounds sterling have gone further because our currency has devalued). The country is in crisis. We have been declared 'junk status' which does not bode well for the future. We are so thrilled to have this money to help pay for the new cylinder-head for the truck we use to go into Sweetwaters,

carting all manner of food etc. for our people, as well as giving many lifts.

'Now, with Easter, we are preparing to take fresh eggs to about 90 people. Some eggs have been donated but they are never enough, and we supplement through kind donations such as yours. We hope to give each person six eggs which is a real treat for them as well as nourishing food. One woman said she had only had one egg this year.'



iThemba runs many projects in Sweetwaters, KwaZulu-Natal. The aim is to transform a generation of kids and teens through education and mentoring so that they can bring hope to their community. Thanking Thembisa for the grant, Stu Walker, Projects director, wrote that it is incredibly inspiring to him and his co-workers to receive support from people on the other side of the world who care about iThemba's community upliftment.

A community centre is currently under construction. The permaculture garden programme and seedling nursery that are run from the community centre site continue to do well. Seedlings are sold at a low cost to people in the community so they have access to nutritious vegetables.

The home-based Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme is

impacting 125 families every week, and assessment shows that parents' attitudes towards reading and playing with their children are starting to improve. For example, when Asimahle arrived at an iThemba crèche run by Gretta she was sickly and weak, and slept the whole day. Through her training from iThemba, Gretta realized this could be a malnourishment issue. She bought Asimahle vitamins with her own money, and started trying to educate the parents of children at the crèche on the importance of fruits and vegetables. Asimahle's teenage mother got connected to iThemba's ECD home-based mentoring programme and is being taught about nutrition and the importance of interacting with her daughter – who is now a bubbly, active child!



# Project funding April 2016 – March 2017

Project / Organisation	Location	Amount
<b>Masikhulisane Trust</b> Alleviation of poverty through job creation Includes <b>Pre-school Places</b> for needy children	Grahamstown, Eastern Cape	£2,000
<b>Bonginkosi Self-help Project</b> Creative skills support HIV orphans	Sweetwaters, KwaZulu-Natal	£1,000
<b>Chishawasha Orphans</b> Includes provision of care and teaching life skills	Zimbabwe	£2,635 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Cross Over</b> Educational programme	Zimbabwe	£2,009 <sup>a</sup>
<b>iThemba Community Projects</b> Life training, crèches, pre-schools, sustainable nutrition, employment opportunities	Mpumzuza, KwaZulu-Natal	£1,800
<b>Mama Ntombi's Community Projects (MNCP)</b> Supporting the community, in particular vulnerable children, in two informal settlements	Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal	£3,135 <sup>a</sup>
Admin funds come from membership dues (£15 p.a.). Donations are passed on in their entirety to projects.		<b>Total</b> £12,579

<sup>a</sup> Included donations earmarked for these projects

## Thembisa needs new blood!

**Stephen Bowley, Thembisa Trust Chairman and Co-founder**

I am writing from the Churchill Hospital in Oxford where I am having treatment for melanoma. It is clear that I can't continue in any leadership role in Thembisa so I will need to resign my chairmanship in the next few months. Rather than resign now, I am giving notice with the hope that others will come forward to take on this role, allowing for a reasonable handover.

My hope and vision is that by the time we celebrate Thembisa's 30th anniversary next year we will have, on our Team of Trustees, some who are (say) 30 years younger – with vision and vigour to carry the work of Thembisa into the next 30 year phase. If you are willing to raise funds for us or to become involved, let us know ([contact@thembisatrust.org](mailto:contact@thembisatrust.org)).



**moneygiving**

You can donate to Thembisa any time through Virgin Money Giving:  
<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving/>  
 Search for 'Thembisa' under 'Find a charity'.

### e-mail addresses please

Please send us your e-mail address if we don't already have it. We won't bombard you with e-mails but it will be useful and cost efficient for any urgent information. Thank you.