

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

March 2016



Ubunye started the year with a focus on enhancing integrated working between our programmes and ensuring that this is reflected in how we engage with our community partners. It has hardly been a full three months since our 2016 operations began, but the dedication of staff and community members has meant that much has been achieved in this short time. Read more about the exciting work that has been done throughout our programmes!

Teaching and practising financial resilience at an early age

Ubunye aims to enhance financial resilience in rural communities through the SaveAct model of Savings and Credit Groups (SCGs) accompanied by Financial Education for more effective management of personal and household finances.



When we think of finances, budgeting and savings we tend to focus on adults who have started earning an income and have responsibilities that need to be taken care of on a daily and monthly basis. However, in January this year the young children of Fort Brown, Brandeston and Kransdrift villages decided to take money matters into their own hands by starting their own savings groups, with training and support from one of our Community Champions, Noluvo Njadayi. The parents of the first group of children that started saving in Brandeston have been part of an SCG themselves for at least one year and their children copied the idea and approached Mama Noluvo to assist them in starting their own group in January 2016. The three children's groups are using the same model as the adult SCGs, (they have their own formal structure, allocated responsibilities amongst the members of the group, a constitution that they all abide by, and a shared vision to save some of their monthly allowance). The only difference is that the children's groups do not have the same credit system as the original SCG model, meaning that they are not able to take loans from the group at this stage.

The important financial lesson of 'delayed gratification' (or saving in order to buy what you want) is a difficult discipline for people of all ages but these young members are using the savings group as a way of practicing this important life skill (perhaps even better than their parents at times!). The children aged 10 – 18 years have wisely made the choice not to allow the loan system in their savings groups, but rather to save and wait to buy what they want over the Christmas holidays. Some children know what they are savings towards and some of them keep adding to their list.

As Mama Noluvo says:

The children in these groups are very intelligent and ask relevant questions when they are being trained about savings - maybe they can teach the older groups a thing or two!

The children are proving that it's never too early to learn financial discipline. In partnership with their parents and communities, our hope is to nurture these children (and others) in the positive direction that they have chosen for themselves by providing them with practical financial education that will enable them to better navigate their lives as adults.

Developing the Livelihoods Programme



Ubunye has started off the year with exciting activities for our Livelihoods Programme which aims to enable rural people to access or create sustainable livelihoods opportunities.

We welcome the women of Masakhane income generation group to the programme. The group has been specialising in sewing since 2014 and joined Ubunye earlier this year to produce dolls for the Uthando doll

brand. The eight members of Masakhane are all from Gwalana Village near Peddie and have a shared passion for sewing and a vision of making an income from their skills. The members of this group have all been trained in cutting out the doll pattern, sewing and stuffing a doll, creating hairstyles and clothing and moulding and painting their faces. The group has started producing Ranger, Shwe-Shwe and Traditional isiXhosa style dolls and has just completed an order of 23 dolls for Kwandwe Private Game Reserve's curio shop. Lime Badu, Livelihoods Coordinator, says that these women are one of the most dedicated groups she has worked with and their work is very neat and impressive, especially for a group who have just learnt the new skill of doll-making.

Our livelihoods programme also provides life skills training, particularly for youth, which deals with three elements of life: self, work, and community. The Thabiso Life Skills (TLS) training programme was devised by the Catholic Institute of Education and our staff were fortunate to be trained at the Salesian Institute in Cape Town in August 2015.

At the end of 2015 Ubunye had trained and graduated 13 participants all of whom are hungry for new opportunities and experiences that can lead to a brighter future. We have been working with Kwandwe Private Game Reserve to enable successful participants to gain practical experience in the world of work and are very pleased to have successfully developed a work experience programme with Kwandwe for the TLS graduates. This programme aims to provide Kwandwe with an effective recruitment mechanism and rural youth with an opportunity to gain work experience and put into practice the skills that they have learnt in the life skills training.



Two of the successful participants, Thabisa Mbunge and Lumka Mani, are the first two candidates who have been selected to be part of the programme and will be at Kwandwe gaining experience in a variety of different hospitality roles for a period of six months. Throughout the duration of the programme Ubunye will work closely with Kwandwe to ensure that these candidates are fully supported and mentored to provide them with the best possible work experience that will hopefully open up other work opportunities within or outside of Kwandwe. We wish both the young candidates all the very best in this new and exciting chapter of their lives!

Natural Farming for better health



Ubunye's Health Programme recently held a natural farming learning visit to villages in Cala, Eastern Cape. As Programme Coordinator Kathryn Court explains:

We felt it was important to start the year by providing our community partners with an experience of success, particularly in the current drought that the whole of South Africa is facing.

Thirteen community partners from Ndwayana, Ndlambe and Glenmore villages visited some of the 12 villages that were trained and supported in natural farming methods by Japan International Volunteer Centre (JIVC) over ten years ago. Even though the members of the villages said they could feel the effects of drought it was not evident in the nutritious looking food that they were producing in their home gardens.

Mrs Tyandela, a very elderly member of Roma Village in Cala, said she eats the healthy food that she produces organically and as a result she is not on any kind of medication. In her community of Rebelskloof, Mrs Meyi has transferred her natural farming knowledge to her local school which is now producing enough vegetables to supply the school's nutrition programme. The visit was an eye-



opening experience for our community partners and has filled them with excitement to put their experience into practice and also to share with the members of their communities.

Eye care for rural children Ubunye has been working with Dr Davies Optometrist in Grahamstown to provide free eye tests to rural children in some of the communities in which we work. This year over 100 children from Kransdrift, Brandeston and Fort Brown received eye tests in the lead up to World Glaucoma Awareness Week which contributes to the elimination of glaucoma blindness by encouraging people to have regular eye tests and optic nerve checks. We highly appreciate Dr Davies' team's generosity and passion for better eye care that they have demonstrated through their work with rural children.



Ukongela Abantwana Project



Supported by Innovation Edge, our pilot project, *Ukongela Abantwana* (meaning 'to nurture children' in isiXhosa) works through savings groups to empower parents and primary caregivers with a meaningful understanding of 'why' and 'how' to engage with their children in order to support healthy brain development. We began 2016 ready to implement the five short, fun and practical

sessions, (each 30-45 minutes in duration), which we developed through an appreciative inquiry research process in partnership with Gauteng-based Expressive Promotions in 2015.

We have recruited 14 'Early Childhood Development (ECD) Champions' in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, who are responsible for facilitating the sessions with groups at their monthly savings meetings. We preceded the five 'input sessions' with a preparatory meeting with the group Chairpersons as well as an introductory meeting with each group in January and February.

The first session, titled 'How the Brain Grows', took place at March savings meetings and there was a lot of interest and participation from the members. Participants were keen to share their own experiences of how they see the children in their own households developing and how they have used the practical educational incentives they receive as part of the project with their children at home. We are looking forward to working with the members of these SCGs in the next five months of the project and to sharing our learnings from this innovative new approach to communicating practical ECD messaging with parents and caregivers.



We look forward to another quarter of progress and growth in community development. Thank you for your support!

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