

## Progress Report 30 March 2017

### Introduction

Thuto Yokuthuthuka.org is a registered youth development non-profit organization. It was established to improve education outcomes for learners in poor and underperforming schools and to provide socio-economic empowerment to post-secondary school youths. The project engages young people as equal partners in decision making. We believe that empowering youth to identify and respond to community needs helps them become responsible individuals. This programme is a shift from traditional models of viewing youth as liabilities, to one that captures youth talents and abilities and help them with positive dreams.

### About Astonishment Mapurisa

My parents were teenagers when my mother conceived in a rural community in Zimbabwe. I was brought up by my maternal family: grandmother and later my uncle. I delayed schooling due to poverty and only enrolled in grade 2 at the age of 13. I had no reading and writing skills, but with support from my patient grade 2 teacher I caught up with my peers by year-end.

I almost dropped out of school in form 1 (grade 8) but I was fostered by my primary school principal who financed my secondary education. I passed form 4 well and was enrolled to teach in the same high school. A year later I enrolled for Diploma in Social Work course with the University of Zimbabwe. I also graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work in 1997 and a Master's Degree in Policy Studies in 2003. I am currently pursuing my doctorate studies in social work with the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa.

I joined civil service as a Social Welfare Officer in 1993, and later appointed Social Worker in UNHCR. I also worked for Penal Reform International as Regional Community Service Officer seconded to Ministry of Justice in Zimbabwe, before I moved to become Matthew Rusike Children's Home, Superintendent, and later National Childcare Director for the Methodist Church children's organization. I moved to South Africa in 2012 to work as Development and Fundraising Officer for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa children's organization. Child protection, youth development, project development and fundraising have been dominant in my career over the years. I have also consulted new and upcoming organizations in programme development, management policies and, systems and organizational leadership development. I am currently contracted to the Witwatersrand University where I supervise fourth year social work students on field placements

## About Thuto [Yokuthuthuka.org](http://Yokuthuthuka.org)

Having worked in South Africa for five years I have witnessed unprecedented levels of learning barriers in poor townships and rural schools that include substance abuse by learners, bullying, gangsterism, violence, high dropout rates worsened by teen pregnancies and general lack of motivation to achieve. In 2016, in Matlosana Local Municipality violence killed the most learners than any other cause and, over 3000 girls were reported to have dropped out of school due to teen pregnancies. High youth unemployment levels have also complicated learner motivation as university graduates and those who have simply passed grade 12 are seen roaming the streets. High crime rate is now being attributed to poor education achievements and youth unemployment.

These young people are poor and unemployed yet, well groomed, they are a community resource. Motivated by the need to make sustainable social transformation, I started a youth development organization in 2015, **Thuto [Yokuthuthuka.org](http://Yokuthuthuka.org)** and formally registered it to train unemployed youth into Community Development practitioners. Unemployed young men and women aged 18-25 who have completed grade 12 are trained in Community Development Practice; an accredited level 5 qualification certificate, that equips them with skills for employment and enterprise development. The training influences positive character development in youth and gives them behavioural and moral competence to deal with community challenges as caring change makers. It is also effective in fighting HIV/AIDS among youth.

These young trainee people are equipped for pro-social contribution to community development through behavioral and academic support for learners in struggling schools. The trainees work alongside educators in mentoring and coaching of secondary school learners to remain in schools and complete their grades. The learners are mainly supported to pass the critical maths and science subjects. With the help of these peer mentors we also follow up on girls who are on maternity leave and support them to return to school upon delivery. This two-pronged programme equips unemployed youth with vocational and life skills as well as enabling them to support learners to succeed in their education. Working in schools supporting learners, credits these young people with one-year's work experience plus a certificate relevant for career development.

### **Organizational Structure**

A multi-disciplinary board of governors was established comprising of people from business, social work, information and communication, psychology, human resources management, clergy, accountancy, police and legal practitioner backgrounds. The nine-member board is very motivated and provides management support. The board of governors meets at least once every quarter.

Our implementation team comprises of four hardworking and highly motivated social workers and one educator. These are the course facilitators and we outsource assessment and moderation for quality assurance. The trainees attend seven days of formal contact sessions quarterly and work in schools three days per week. A school-based mentor who is an educator completes the trainee attendance register at school and logs on trainee activities on our web-based information system. This enables us real-time access to project activities for instant monitoring and reduces staffing costs and is an efficient monitoring system.

### **Implementation Progress**

The Service Level Agreement was signed by the North West Department of Education & Sports Development to legitimize project implementation. The project has enrolled one hundred young people for training and is supporting 32 schools in the North West Province. We have also enrolled 20 youths in Soweto and supporting 9 schools. We have met with all critical stakeholders who include area managers in the Department of Education, Quality Learning and Teaching Coordinators, Ward Councilors, and school principals. The major thrust of our programming is to **provide a platform for communities and broader society to actively and constructively become involved in youth development.**

## **Project Support**

The project is implemented cost-effectively through collaboration with the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the Department of Basic Education. We use existing school facilities for our training sessions and mobilize our volunteers from the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The money we raise pays for direct project training expenses such as training materials, transport to project sites and facilitation fees.

The organization has just qualified to receive the necessary government grants but, the application process may take some time to complete. Donations from the Qantas Cabin Crew Team; Susy James in particular, and seed funding from Dawn Asset Management (Pty) Ltd have been handy in seeing this project off the ground. The British Methodist Church has also agreed to fund our youth skills development programme.

## **Sustainability**

We have established and developed relevant linkages with the local community leadership, and other local Non-Governmental Organizations. We are deliberate about skills transfer and community empowerment so that local people own the development process rather than being subjects of charity. The community should own the change process. Schools should be safe places of child development. Young people should dream prosperity and be respected as they grow into community assets.