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THE UTHANDO PROJECT *Newsletter*

JUNE 2013

Hello Uthando Dollmakers and Friends,

Thank you to everyone who has kept needles busy to send in about 700 lovely sturdy dolls during May and June.

It would be excellent to receive another 700 by **early August** for the next shipment. The group of nine Uthando women from Victoria and WA (Perth and Albany) who travelled many hundreds of kilometres in Kwa Zulu Natal in May were humbled by the generosity of the airlines who spontaneously gave free freight to 600 dolls carried as luggage.



On our arrival in Durban, TREE (Training Resources in Early Education) one of our main partners who receive Uthando dolls, then handled all 15 cases of dolls with aplomb, to arrive at our **first ever joint meeting of our five partner non government organisations (NGOs)** in Pietermaritzburg.

FIVE PARTNERS MEET AT LIFELINE

This was an historic Uthando meeting as all 5 KZN partners had never met together before. Such a buzz in the air which settled for intense listening as Robyn Hemmens of **dlalanathi** established the HIV/AIDS context for KZN and the impact this has on everyone's work. I cannot forget the facts that now there is an unprecedented loss for so many children in their teens to be without mothers. 30 - 40% antenatal women are HIV+ve and 30% of South Africa's 3.82 million orphans are in KZN. Note; Orphans may denote children who have lost one parent. And clearly in Uthando's doll context, all children are affected by the pandemic, not only orphans.



Photo; Georgia (Uthando), Celeste and Sinikiwe (Lifeline) and Rachel (dlalanathi) at this meeting.

We learnt how differently each organisation makes use of the Uthando dolls. I'll try to give these details with each of the meetings and workshops as it will clarify for YOU how your doll is likely to be used.

Dolls for **Lifeline** are each given to individual children who have been referred for support in all of the stages following rape, abandonment and abuse. Their dolls need to be kind looking, softly firm, with textures that would give comfort through stroking. The doll could

represent any age, eg baby to granny. There needs to be the potential for rich and enduring play. Make several extra clothes to go in the doll's shoulder bag, perhaps put it in a larger bag to suit a boy or girl. Add a doll wrap which will nurture the child as he or she nurtures the doll. Some pale skinned dolls are needed too. These are dolls to be made with your highest talents and deepest compassion.

Lifeline counsellors would make good use of family groups of dolls, especially those with uncles and brothers, as observing how the child arranges the family can give insight into who may be the perpetrator and lead to protection of other family members too. There is also a role for counsellors to use dolls with different expressions, eg anger, sadness, crying, worry. These could also be hand or finger puppets.

FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT, UNDERBERG

Lynn Stefano and one of her main facilitators, Phume, led us out along the beautiful rural valley to Centacow, where over 20 women enrolled in literacy studies, from 2 communities, awaited us in their extremely well set up library. We had just a few hours for each to make a small handsized doll to gain the principles of making a larger doll from one of the kits which so many Uthando supporters had generously made. (Note; our target was 500 kits, we took 600! Instead of 100 large carry bags, we ended up with 200 spectacular bags enabling us to provide one for every participant over three weeks. Huge thank you to everyone across Australia who made these kits and bags. They are superb and enable independent dollmaking.)



Photo; Chris from Albany WA at one of four workshop tables.

In response to the joyful dollmaking, we were able to provide a grant which enabled 8 women from **FLP** to attend the three day workshops in Pietermaritzburg (accommodation and transport). This is a good example of the synergy which brought these women, committed to literacy, their children and communities, to become close to **dlalanathi's** work.

The dolls which best suit **Family Literacy Project's** work are ready for play by young and old in each of their "library" centres. Dolls can suit the very young, all preschoolers and families in general. If you would like to make a doll family, or mother and baby, this would suit. Animals, puppets and balls too. Everything needs to be robust as these dolls stay in the libraries or boxes for home visits.

SHWESHWE FABRIC AND OTHER MATERIALS

Traditional Zulu dresses, skirts or aprons may be made of a cotton fabric with a very fine dotted, geometrical pattern. Often further decorated with ricrac and other braids, or panels designed to make a flared skirt. The Australian group happily roamed over a very large fabric emporium in Pietermaritzburg to select local fabric for the workshops. Eventually we had cut up into smaller strips over 200 metres of dolls' clothes fabrics!

DLALANATHI AT SWAYIMANE



Swayimane is one of two communities where **dlalanathi's** Zulu speaking staff facilitate changes that can lead to safer communities and deeper sensitivity with children and their caregivers enduring grief and loss. Their Play 4 Communication training applies both culturally and universally. It uses experiential processes for Listening, Observing and Being with Children and often Coping with Loss.

It was so good to see our travelling exhibition of "100 Dolls, Countless Hearts" again. Over 70 women from the self help economic and social empowerment organisation, Zimele, (and one remarkable man) set to in small groups, working on our laps, to make small dolls and to shyly show the dolls which many had made in Play4Communication workshops previously with **dlalanathi**. It seemed like chaos, but terrific little dolls emerged. Language and cultural barriers can dissolve when dollmaking together.

Photo; A Zulu grandmother (gogo) holds her nearly finished little doll. Behind her is a small part of our travelling 100 DOLLS exhibition.

Working on our laps

The mini kits brought from Australia inspired all of us to create small dolls and be together.

Many of these women, under the guidance of **dlalanathi**, have made their own dolls which supports their self sufficiency. **Dlalanathi** is then free to use their dolls from Uthando in working with other NGOs and at other meetings and conferences. **The types of dolls sent to them include extraordinary character dolls which encourage conversations or story telling. Dolls with different facial expressions are useful. We send lots of hand puppets for counselling work and for immediate use in trainings and conferences.**

DLALANATHI'S PLAY FOR COMMUNICATION THREE DAY WORKSHOPS IN PIETERMARITZBURG



In all, the Australian group had the real privilege of working with **dlalanathi** with 5 groups of people of all ages and backgrounds who work with children at risk. Because the impact of HIV/AIDS is seriously endemic this includes all people working with children and teenagers. This workshop is designed to bring to the surface each person's own childhood and lifetime experiences through their own story, traditional stories, games and dollmaking. It uses the processes of introspection and reflection, paired sharing, group discussions and hilarious songs and games. To hear another person's pivotal life experiences is often rare and gives each of us precious insights and understandings of how the Uthando dolls can have such positive outcomes. **dlalanathi**'s staff are totally inclusive, patient and courageous. This is work of transformation in relationships...the very essence of cultural change.



It is for this work that Uthando pledges to raise \$30,000 each year. So far we have reached \$10,000. If there is any way you would like to raise / contribute funds, please do so. We have lots of ideas! Please read further on our major fundraising event...an exhibition of Uthando dolls, October 10 - 20th in Kalamunda, Western Australia.

More workshop photos

*Workshop leaders from **dlalanathi**, Sylvia and Nonto with one of the participants from Centacow.*



and more

Rachel, CEO. **dlalanathi**, shows her delight in making her doll while facilitating one of the three day workshops.

It was with synchronicity that the Australian team could also be part of their AGM where we could meet many of their local supporters and donors. You know that **dlalanathi** is in

good hands.

TREE, WORKSHOP AND VISIT TO CRECHE



Bertha Magoge, Director of TREE, had arranged for all the Australian women to meet at their Durban centre to see the well set up environment for extensive training in early childhood education. It was also arranged for Beryl and Amber to facilitate a two session dollmaking class with many of the staff, (with Bertha as champion dollmaker!) Then for Beryl, Amber and Lynne to visit a creche later on at the time of the distribution of the dolls. This was a golden and rare opportunity for any Uthando person to witness. The children were in raptures, investigating their own doll, the extra clothes and anything in the shoulder bags. Then to top it all off, Julie, from Victoria, had prepared many strips of red fabric to use as the "shawl" that those carrying a baby tie around themselves while the baby balances on the bent over back. This was an immediate hit, so applicable to their special culture.

Dolls for young ones at TREE

TREE trains women to manage daycare centres, creches and other early childhood facilities. The children are preschoolers, 0 - 5yrs old and there are 1.5 million children under 6yrs in KwaZulu Natal. An unending need for dolls.

Dolls for TREE are often knitted, (for softness and strength) with one item of removable clothing and a doll wrap. Sewn dolls can suit the older ones where shoulder bags and more clothes are added. The long "Child Wrap" (at least 130cms long) is valuable, made of soft fabric or knit fabric, easily knotted by a child. TREE also appreciates lots of knitted balls, animals and hand puppets. TREE definitely needs more boy dolls, in a 60:40 ratio of girls:boys. Monkeys are popular, old men, footballers in green and gold or black and white uniforms, lots of accessories.

SIZABANTWANA PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN PIETERMARITZBURG



In all schools in KZN there is need for emotional support, referrals and counselling, not just for the students (learners), but for the teachers (educators) as well. No one is spared the daily burden of grief, disappointment, loss, bewilderment and family disintegration and deaths caused by the double impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty. Under the guidance of staff from the psychology department of the University of KwaZulu Natal, staff representatives from 47 schools meet for mutual support and inspiration. Several of the Australian team visited two primary schools for first hand experience of daily life and to teach (even the very young ones) how to make a small doll. This took great adaptability and was hugely successful.

Throughout Australia, and some schools in USA and UK, school students take on the creative work of making a doll to be given away to a child they may never meet. Students (preferably 10 years and over), learn how to sew! This is quite a revolution. And, after weeks of work, they say goodbye to their doll for the next part of its journey which may change a child's life.

School dolls are often sewn from a handy Uthando dollmaking kit (\$5 each). There is real need for supporting adults/parents/friends in the classroom as the skill level needs to produce sturdy dolls where the hair stays on and without recourse to unreliable glue or paint. Dolls made by a child for a child are often very creative in fashion and use of fabrics....delightful. Teachers intending to take on this wonderful classroom project are encouraged to talk with Lynne Tognolini to evade pitfalls and maximise opportunities.
lynnetognolini@bigpond.com

COMMUNITY SEWING ENTERPRISES

One of the enduring benefits of visiting other countries is the making of friendships. All Uthando visitors to KZN have spoken of the difference it makes to their commitment to actually meet people working with the children or communities. One of my special friends is Mabongi Mtshali who welcomed the Australian team to a morning tea with a group of local women who use their beautiful sewing skills to create some income. They immediately made us feel at home and regaled us with stories and scones and sandwiches. The idea of making dolls may take root there. Meeting women on their home ground is a privilege for travellers.



I estimated that we met over 250 people, many Zulu, of widely differing backgrounds, and all wanting a more solid future for their children. Some meetings were fleeting, other poignant and unforgettable.

Our final days were spent with Mabongi at the Ithala Wildlife Reserve with fabulous animals and unbelievably untrustworthy monkeys.

Even on our return trip to King Shaka airport we were able to touch base with a consistent partner to Uthando, Dr Tamsen Rochat at The Africa Centre. Her practical research work is designed to encourage HIV+ve mothers to have the courage and the means to disclose their HIV status to one of their 7 - 10 year old children. This can be heartbreakingly difficult but the research structure provided creative solutions. Dolls are required for her work too, although there is local support.

I can't finish this very brief description of 20 days in KZN without showing a revealing image of the daily consideration for those who are HIV+ve. We visited a ceramics gallery of extraordinary pottery...alive with animals, flowers and people inhabiting new clay landscapes of pots and bowls. This pottery business, Ardmore, employs people with AIDS and these lines of portraits (there were more again on the other wall) honour the memory of those who have worked there and have died.

MAJOR UTHANDO EXHIBITION IN OCTOBER, KALAMUNDA, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

You are enthusiastically invited to be part of our major event for 2013. **Would you like to make a doll which suits one of the categories of an exhibition to be held at the Zigzag Gallery, Kalamunda, October 10 - 20?**

This invitation is open to everyone and there is room for all.

All dolls are to be EITHER designed for energetic **play by children** , especially appropriate for African children if they are not sold here

OR the doll (human, animal, legendary) has such a character which **invites story telling**. It may be from a traditional story or legend or be a figment of your imagination. Families of dolls could be seen as one exhibit.

1. ARTIST'S DOLLS are made by individuals or a group with high textile or craft or dollmaking skills, but perhaps may not be previous dollmakers. Dolls are likely to be sold between \$75 - \$250. If any dollmaker prefers to receive a proportion of a successful sale, please discuss this with Georgia Efford otherwise all dolls will be considered as a whole and generous donation to Uthando, gratefully received.

2. TYPICAL UTHANDO DOLLS for exhibition which are made according to our usual Uthando style, ie. brown skin, about 30cms high, with fully removable clothing. All other details are left to the maker's invention and creativity. Likely price range \$50 - \$100.

3. GROUP MADE DOLLS for the nature of a Family Group to be considered, eg. a family group of 6 dolls representing 3 generations in a family. Really any group anywhere can create a Family of Dolls, and this invitation is especially directed to Uthando groups in the Shire of Kalamunda, Albany, Bunbury, Sorrento, Fremantle, Leederville, Mosman Park, Melbourne, Tasmania.

Individual dollmakers can also choose to present a family of dolls. There may be organisations who have made Uthando dolls in the past who are keen to contribute in this way.

Uthando dolls which are for sale at the exhibition/s are specifically made for that purpose. Dolls intended for KZN are never sold. All dolls made by school students are sent to KZN and are NOT for sale.

There are many people in Victoria who receive this newsletter. If you would like to know of any dollmakers living near you, please email georgia1@iinet.net.au with your address and any ideas for meeting others.

4. DOLLS FOR IMMEDIATE SALE which are Uthando inspired and suit the general public. Price range \$20 - \$40

There are plans afoot to have the core of this exhibition be shown in other cities in Western Australia, late October, November. This means that buyers will have to wait to collect ARTIST'S DOLLS until after the last exhibition, but there will be a stack of Uthando dolls for immediate sale as part of the display.

Any unsold dolls will be sent to Pietermaritzburg to the organisation called **dlalanathi** to use in their community work. Funds raised will go to them as well as part of our annual funding pledge and to cover freight costs of all dolls to KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN SENDING DOLLS FOR EXHIBITION. Email georgia1@iinet.net.au or phone 08 9293 2363 so we can keep in touch and we know we have a confident base for an exhibition.

Dolls need to be at 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill WA 6076 by Tuesday Oct 1st, 2013.

Please forward this invitation to potential exhibition dollmakers.

CONSTANT UTHANDO ACTIVITY

This newsletter has its focus on two themes; **the Australian team's visit to KwaZulu Natal** deepening the vital personal connection with our partner organisations there and on opening up the invitations to everyone to participate in the **October Zigzag Exhibition**.

In the meantime we see work done by volunteers everywhere which results in more dolls and more funds for Uthando. The seven member Uthando Board is always up to something, more schools send ever better dolls, the postman/lady leaves fascinating doll parcels at my door, new groups begin, reports come in of events and ideas for new patterns, our book sells and our magic Classic Uthando Dollmaking kits earn their keep and have fabulous results with new dollmakers. We are decidedly on track and are keen to respond to ideas and welcome more dollmakers. Our new website will be active soon where you will find much more detail than this newsletter can provide.

On behalf of everyone in Uthando Project, we say thank you. Please give yourself a big hug and give some thought to "what's next? ". Love and gratitude from Georgia and the good Friday women

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