

The work of the dolls: feedback from KZN: Lifeline, Family Literacy Project, and TREE

1. Lifeline: *Debbie Harrison sent these reports:*

2010: Each child that comes to the crisis centre gets a doll. We have a variety of dolls, the locally knitted ones are either the little dolls or teddies. Obviously your Uthando dolls are unique and rather more special. We supply Kokstad, Ixopo, Centocow, Appelsbosch and Northdale when we have spares, after we have made sure we have enough dolls at Edendale, Msinga and Madadeni, where we have full time staff. We are currently expanding into the Estcourt area too.

The general consensus is that the dolls are great, the children especially like the extra goodies (blanket, jersey, bag) that come with the doll.

Thanks for the continued support, it is greatly appreciated. I know we don't send you pictures or personal stories but I think you do know we give them to sexually abused children (and some adults, even one very distressed man held onto his doll very tightly).

2011: The dolls have been given to the coordinators of Msinga, Estcourt and Madadeni Hospitals and of course to the local TCC (one stop at Edendale) – there have been two particular remarks to date:

- the notes from the children that make the dolls seem to touch the hearts of the children here – of course the staff have to read and translate but they say the local children are especially pleased to have a note of goodwill from the giver.
- the little elephants and other animals are especially good for the abused boys. We are not sure if we are having increased reporting or increased incidents. But certainly we are getting in more little boys.

Thanks a million to all involved.

2. Family Literacy Project: *Lynn Stefano wrote this when she got the news of the latest doll arrivals.*

We are so thrilled to be receiving more dolls. Thank you again for your tremendous support! This year we are extending our babies and young children home visiting programme to all our groups in the **15 villages** we work in. The home visitors are focusing on 0-5 year olds, and aim to support parents to promote early literacy, language and learning.

We have a wonderful new DVD which shows the kinds of activities that parents can engage in with their young children and babies, and the dolls are included in the toy kits that we prepare for our learners to use in these homes.

3. TREE: *Pam Picken, then CEO of TREE, wrote as a response to our newsletter:*

My goodness – who would have thought when we first met you, how Uthando would grow & blossom! I spent another 3 days in a different project last week – and once again saw the dolls bringing such joy and meaning into young children’s lives.

I was visiting our playgroup project in a deep rural area in Umzimkhulu. We have 10 Playgroup Facilitators running 40 playgroups and reaching over 300 young children under age 5. Every playgroup had its Uthando dolls, that were way and ahead the most popular play items! They were feeding them, dressing them or nursing them as sick patients. They just love all the accessories, especially the covers that enable them to strap their ‘babies’ to their backs just like their mothers do.

I went on to visit some community based crèches/pre-schools. There too the dolls are SO popular with the children in ECD facilities that are so desperately short of toys and learning materials. It was wonderful to watch the children so involved in group play and hear the rich language use that the imaginative play around dolls had stimulated.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU, Uthando Dolls!