

Uthando Teachers' Workbook Notes

Context of Uthando Project



Tying doll as baby on back

- Two thirds of South Africa's children live in poverty.
- KwaZulu-Natal province has 2.5 million Zulu children whose mothers are HIV+ve
- 1000 people die each DAY in South Africa as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- We invite you to make dolls to send to thousands of these children at risk.

Uthando means "love" in the isiZulu language of the Zulu people in the province of KwaZulu Natal (KZN), South Africa. (It is pronounced 'u-tan-do'.)

Our motto is *"Touching the hearts of carers and children through play."*

Website www.uthandoproject.org

PLEASE SHARE THIS INFORMATION

Anyone can use Uthando's ideas and our basic patterns, to apply to their region, country or culture of interest. If you would like to make dolls to send to a project that you are supporting, we wish you all the best with it.

YOU WILL FIND AN A3 SHEET WITH PATTERNS AND TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON OUR WEBSITE: [Get involved > Resources for Teachers](#)

Information and ideas for teachers

Many schools have made hundreds of dolls for this project with wonderful, fulfilling results:

- Young dollmakers learn traditional skills with fabric, design and sewing
- Human values communicated and explored
- Compassion extended for those less fortunate in the basics of family security, food, nutrition and education.

What are the advantages of dollmaking to a school?

- CURRICULUM: Schools choose the depth of integration of the project into their curricula; e.g. Arts, Society and Environment, Geography, Literature, Values and Ethics, Music, etc.
- ART CLASSES: Art programmes can design fabric and accessories for the doll's clothing using textile techniques, eg block printing, resist and other dyeing or painting techniques, weaving and knitting.
- RESOURCES: Great potential for being "GREEN AND GLOBAL" through your choice of recycled, natural materials, hand skills training and better understanding of humanity.
- DISCUSSION: An insightful discussion topic is "How would an African child make a doll compared to my resources. What are my resources?"

The dolls

Our priority is to provide children in Kwazulu Natal (KZN) with a **girl/woman or boy/man doll** which encourages direct expression through play. However if you prefer to make **African animal toys or hand puppets**, they are welcome too.

Specific Cultural Details

Uthando dolls are made specifically to suit KwaZulu Natal. African children appreciate receiving dolls that look like them, or that relate to their culture. This means:

- brown not black skin. Usually only 'white' dolls are available **for sale in** shops and they cost precious money. We don't send white dolls (except by KZN request).
- no blue eyes as they may suggest TB.
- no teddy bears or secondhand dolls.

Student involvement: Encourage the students to:

- **Think** about PLAY at every stage of their design and creation.
- **Imagine** the different ways the child may play with their new doll ... not just as their only possession, but as something to share their secrets with.

- **Discuss** how they would feel if they had lost their mother or other family members or young friends and how the doll could help them through such sadness.
- How big or small could their doll be?
- How about soft textures, bright colours? How would it feel?
- Can the child's fingers plait or stroke the hair? Could the hair be rainbow colours?
- How is it a joyful and compassionate experience to make a doll for another person.

Parent or community help in the classroom

- Please invite parents/adults into the classroom to assist. This is becoming an almost essential part of the project's success and makes a big difference to the quality of the finished doll.
- Sometimes the teacher has limited sewing skills, and parents and other adults can offer practical design, knowledge and skills.

Special comments for teachers

- It is a good idea for the teacher to make a doll first and to contact us at schools@uthandoproject.org to share ideas and practicalities.
- The body of the doll could be hand-sewn by the student, but it takes A LONG TIME. Better to have the body machine sewn by an adult or supervised student. It is more likely to last through years of play. We want to avoid our volunteers having to "fix up" school dolls where stuffing shows through, the doll is too thin and other dangers.
- It is not a speedy project, as virtually each step takes one lesson time.
- For quick students, there is ample scope for creativity in making accessories for the doll which will encourage PLAY, eg a baby wrapped in a shawl, shoulder bag, back pack, wrap, scarf or beanie, small toy, extra clothes etc.
- With good preparation and parental support, this project may suit school camps and 40 Hour Famine Weekends.

Quality Control

Please make sure that each doll is checked by an adult before it is sent to Uthando Project. We want to avoid our volunteers having to 'fix up' school dolls where the hair comes loose, the clothes might be sewn to the body, or bits and pieces come off.

Remember, the doll is for expressive play, so it needs to be sturdy. Through PLAY, ideas and feelings can be expressed. This applies to the student dollmakers as well.

Why is play important?

It is a basic human need to be able to communicate our deeper emotions. Play is fundamental to the balanced growth of children. It opens up for them cultural understanding, physical and mental development, being part of a group or team, role playing and interacting with peers and adults.

These are the valuable, serious aspects of play which are not always recognised. **This is the underlying motivation of the Uthando Project.**

Read more about the essentials of play in our About Us > Why Dolls? section of the website.

Where do the school dolls go?

- All dolls made by school and college students are distributed among 47 primary schools in the Pietermaritzburg district in KZN. Members of staff from these schools meet for mutual psychological support and referral guidance for their students. The group is called Sizabantwana.
- The Sizabantwana focus is on better understanding of and caring for the emotional needs of the children who live in a bleak landscape of poverty, insecurity, disease and unemployment heightened by the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- Uthando volunteers have visited some of these schools and have spoken to staff who confirm the value of the dolls and the comfort and excitement that they bring.

Who pays the freight?

Uthando Project volunteers and schools raise the freight costs, approx.\$6000 AUD annually. It costs \$2 to send each doll.

Would your school or group like to raise funds to send YOUR dolls? How could you raise this money?

- How about a doll exhibition or Send off?
- Special Day for Africa?
- Parents and Helpers Celebration?
- Sell any Uthando items which we have in our online shop?

Resources for student awareness

- Go to About Us > Awareness Resources on our website to choose appropriate material
- Create an African environment in class or art room with posters, maps, artefacts, masks, stuffed jungle animals, plants, flowers, etc.
- Play CDs of African music.
- Uthando Project has produced a brilliant **10 minute DVD called "Goodness and Happiness"**, which describes a day in the lives of two recently bereaved sisters and the power of a doll. Available from our [online shop](#) for \$10 plus P & P.
- Invite African guests to speak with your students.
- Start collecting the **Tools and Materials** listed.

Contact us before you start

Let us know if you are intending to embark on this project in your school. Our schools coordinators are very willing to talk through any ideas, quantities, deliveries, worries and timing.

SCHOOLS: schools@uthandoproject.org

NEWSLETTER: subscribe on our website: www.uthandoproject.org

INFORMATION: info@uthandoproject.org .

FUNDRAISING: fundraising@uthandoproject.org

FACEBOOK: Find us on Facebook at "Uthando Project Inc". Please join us and post photos of your students' dolls, that they can share with friends and family. You might even like to create a YouTube presentation.

Refer to our website for posters and photographs of KZN children and dolls. You'll find the schools doll pattern sheet in the Get Involved > Resources for Teachers, or you can go to Dolls > Patterns > Classic Sewn Doll for a standard pattern. In Dolls > Gallery you'll see a wide range of sewn and knitted dolls.

Tools and materials: short cuts

- To make the process easy, we have Doll Making Kits for \$5 each. This includes the doll's body. We try to include a pair of small scissors in each school pack. Each pack is unique in fabric selection and has EVERYTHING (but not stuffing) needed to make a doll. Available from our [online shop](#) or please order through fundraising@uthandoproject.org giving school order number. .
- If in Western Australia, schools can collect FREE doll stuffing from Gooseberry Hill. Email: info@uthandoproject.org

Tools and materials: Alternatively, you will need:

- **Fabric for doll body:** Choose soft brown material for the body. Polar fleece (smooth side out), other stretch material and plain cotton material are good. (Avoid brown felt. Even though it may look suitable for students, it becomes rough and pilled after a lot of handling. We used to recommend felt but this has changed.)
- **Fabrics for doll clothing.** May be printed /dyed/painted by student. Recycled T shirts, recycled bright socks, sleeves of knitted sweaters, dressmaking off-cuts , stretch knit fabrics, faux fur, jungle animal prints, African-style geometric prints.

The easiest fabrics for students to use are brightly patterned stretch knits or lycra as these don't require hemming and won't fray. When you look at the Doll Pattern in the Uthando Project for Teachers, there are sketches for clothes with minimal or no sewing needed.

- **Doll filling;** polyester, Tontine, Filwell are all light and easy to work with. Avoid cut up clothing or wool or cotton waste as the doll gets too heavy for freight and play. Some factories have polyester filling to give away. Bags of cushion filling can be bought at textile warehouses. If you wish to recycle, cushions and pillows can be put through your washing machine, dried and teased out.
- **Sewing machines:** beg and borrow as many as possible – simple stitch capacity only.

You will also need the following items:

- Sharp **fabric scissors** available when needed
- Small **sewing scissors**
- Brown, black and white **sewing reels of threads** (polyester or cotton)
- Strong line or hat **elastic** for threading beads
- **Elastic** for waist bands
- **Chalk**, or non smudge pen for outlining patterns
- **Needles** for different threads or yarns.
 - Chenille needles have a large eye and sharp point. Size 22 is ideal.
 - Ordinary sewing needles.
 - Large darning needles if you want to "model" the details of the body form.
 - Blunt tapestry needles won't go through fabric, but work well with knitted dolls.

- **Pins** best with bead heads. SAFETY TIP: Work out a way of students keeping track of their needles and pins, eg pin cushion, needle book, piece of coloured felt or polystyrene block. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT NO PINS OR NEEDLES ARE LEFT IN A DOLL – SO HAVING A 'PIN AND NEEDLE COUNT' WILL HELP WITH THIS.
- As many **sewing machines** as possible
- **Paper** for drawing on and cutting out patterns, perhaps tracing paper too.
- **Photocopies** of the Classic Pattern if the doll body is not already cut out.
- Optional materials: stranded **embroidery thread**, crochet cotton (very good), pearl cotton.
- **Wool for hair**: could be different textured wools, black or other creative colours. Cut up narrow strips of black panty hose to make strong hair. If the hair is a knitted wig or hair piece, then **knitting needles** are needed.
- **Fastenings**: Buttons, ribbons, cords, or sewn on pieces of Velcro (not glued). Learning how to put on clothes is fun for all children.
- **Decorations**; braids, beads, ribbons, fringes, tassels, jewellery, sparkly things.
- Choice of **different fabrics**. may be printed /dyed/painted by student. Recycled Tee shirts, sleeves of knitted sweaters, dressmaking off cuts , stretch knit fabrics, faux fur, Jungle animal prints, African style geometric prints.
- **Odd socks**: If each student brings one long brightly coloured sock (in as-new condition), a whole outfit can be made by judicious cutting.
- **Stretch and no-sew**: The easiest fabric for students to use which don't require hemming are brightly patterned stretch knits or lycra. When you look at the Classic Sewn Doll Pattern, there are sketches for clothes with minimal or no sewing needed.

KNITTED DOLLS: If students have knitting skills, or you plan to teach them, and you wish to knit our most popular doll, please go to Dolls > Patterns > Alusa Knitted Doll. You will also find patterns for a beginner's knitted doll (Sunshine), a cheeky monkey, a crocheted lion, hand puppets and simple knitted balls.

How to make a doll step by step

These notes were written for students and adult dollmakers. The photos of dolls on our website have often been made by adults. Therefore the dolls made by students may vary greatly according to their levels of accomplishment. Please use our Basic Pattern as a starting point for later variations in proportion and appearance.

Download or photocopy the **Uthando Project for Teachers** pattern (Get involved > Resources for Teachers). You can also find our basic pattern in Dolls > Patterns > Classic Sewn Doll.

Step 1. Paper pattern

You may wish to use the pattern in this website or design a different basic shape. Make the height approx 35cms or fitting on to A3 paper. Add feet, hand details, ears, if you wish. Laying and pinning it out needs awareness of saving materials and the demands of the design. This paper pattern may be re-used later to design the face and the clothing. IDEA: Each student could have their own named plastic bag for all the bits and pieces.

Step 2. Cutting out

Before laying down the pattern and cutting out, fold the material at the feet to keep the front and back joined together. Lay out the pattern, pin on, draw around the pattern, unpin to remove the pattern and then cut out body.

Step 3. Sewing skills to be taught

TIP: Before you begin the dollmaking, it's helpful for students to practise their sewing on a piece of scrap doll body fabric.

- a. **Running Stitch:** Hand sew a simple running stitch, beginning with 3 strong oversews (rather than a knot) and finishing (before the thread runs out) with another 3 strong oversews. ***This is essential teaching and cannot be avoided.*** The whole doll can be made with this running stitch if sewing machines are not available. However it may be very time consuming in class, and must be done well, as the durability of the doll depends on the stitching. Running stitch can be used to join two pieces of fabric together or to sew on appliquéd eyes and mouth.
- b. **Oversew Stitch:** Oversew stitch is similarly useful, but needs to be closely stitched if used around the dolls' body or joining the ends of elastic, sewing on a button, or attaching the ends of ribbons or cords.
- c. **Machine Sewing:** Machine sewing has the advantage of durability. It will help to have other adults present to help with this task, threading the machine etc.
- d. **Embroidery Stitches:** If it suits the abilities of the students, teach some embroidery stitches for the face which can be applied in many ways for eyes, nose and mouth. • *stem stitch*, • *satin stitch*, • *blanket stitch* and • *chain stitch* Thick crochet thread works well. Stranded embroidery thread is more complicated for young sewers. Pearl thread is good too. Fine wool eventually weakens and breaks if pulled through the fabric a number of times.

Step 4. Sewing the body

If the fabric is stretch knit, use small zigzag machine stitching around the

edge, joining the front and back of the body, otherwise use straight machine stitch. Try starting at the left hand armpit, continue around the arm and head and right around the body to the top of the left hip. This leaves an opening for stuffing.

Most dollmakers turn all sewn dolls inside out after doing the seam. Non-stretch fabric must be turned inside out after sewing.

Step 5: Filling

Some factories have polyester filling to give away. Bags of cushion filling can be bought at textile warehouses. Cushions and pillows can be put through your washing machine, dried and teased out. (In Western Australia we can supply doll filling FREE if picked up, as noted above.)

Tear or pull the filling into small pieces. Insert small pieces at a time or make rolls which fill the limbs in one go. Fill the feet first (a chopstick is ideal for pushing and manipulating). Then fill the legs and sew across the top of the legs with a running stitch so the legs can swing forwards and backwards. (You may prefer to sew a running stitch later across the top of the legs and arms when the doll's body is finished.)

Fill the arms and the head. Carefully shape the head to give it a good round 3D form. **IMPORTANT POINT– NB! – DANGER!!!** *If the doll is made of soft material, or has a heavy hair style, often the **head flops**, so there must be reinforcement linking the inside of the head, through the neck and down into the chest. Roll a left over piece of felt or thick fabric, not card, wood or plastic. Make it about 8 - 10 cms long, like a large finger. Then roll it again in enough filling so that it fills the whole of the neck. Insert into head and down to the heart.*

Fill the torso so the doll feels snugly firm, not too hard and not underfed. Sew up the gap with small top sewing stitches.

Step 6: Hair

Hair gives character to a doll. Make it interesting. Have a generous range of wools and other yarns, or black nubby knit fabric or black tights for making hair pieces, plaits, dreadlocks or tiny plaits with beads. Hair might be brightly coloured wools or yarns other than black as many Zulu women use hairpieces and weaves.

Techniques:

- Finger knitting
- French knitting through a cotton reel
- Single chain crochet

- Plaiting: Try plaiting using 12 strands of wool divided into 3 groups. Many plaits can be made (knot the ends) and stitched firmly on to the head in different patterns.
- Knitting a wig (add plaits or beads as you go): Knit, using large needles and thick wool, a rectangle or semi circle in any stitch to fit from ear to ear. Pin on and sew around the edge on to the head. (Try casting on 20 stitches, gradually decreasing at both ends to 10 stitches and cast off. Ribbing or moss stitch looks great. For extra effect, plaits hung with beads can be knotted into the bottom edge.)
- Machine sewing zigzag down the centre of 40 lengths of wool on to a finger sized piece of brown fabric. This holds the wool firmly. Stitch around the fabric on to the head.

TIP: Avoid sewing on a bunch of hair at top centre. It looks bald around it. Always knot the centre of the wool to stitch it directly through the knot into the head. The hair must be strongly attached to the head or it will be disappointing for the child.

DON'T USE GLUE ANYWHERE ON THE DOLL. IT HARDENS AND DOESN'T LAST.

Step 7. Face

Draw the eyes, nose and mouth on to the paper pattern. Include eyebrows and eyelashes if wished. Search online for "African faces". It is helpful to look at facial proportions, eg eyes halfway down the head. The image then has to be translated into embroidery or appliqué. Consider making a happy, friendly face as the child may have this doll for many years and would like to feel comfortable with it and comforted by it. Try the corners of the mouth turned slightly up.

Avoid making the eyes blue as it suggests TB. Avoid the white of the eye going all the way around the iris. It makes the dolls scary. Look in the mirror and see how the eye lids cover the top and bottom of the iris. Do you want to add ears and a nose? Face painting works well on smooth fabrics, but does not usually last, especially on knitted fabrics. **Avoid paints which harden on fabric.**

Step 8. Clothing

Imagine the child who will play with the doll enjoying the bright colours, the softness or strength of the materials and the feel, the texture of the clothing. How will they cope with the challenge of buttons and ribbons?

Choose material that won't fray or show your students how to make a hem or do oversew or blanket stitch over the edge or use pinking shears. Offcuts, socks, sleeves and old clothing are good to use. Make the Uthando Project as "GREEN" as possible.

Using bright, clean socks you will discover that many items can be made from socks and sleeves of garments. It requires NO SEWING, ONLY CUTTING to make these up into undershirts, underpants, crew neck top, beanies, crop top, skirt (short or long), even trousers (some sewing), back packs, bags and boots. (See illustrations on the side of the doll pattern.)

To make a No-sew coat using polar fleece or stretch knit fabric, go to Dolls > Patterns > No-sew clothing. This can be worn top or bottom and needs only a button or ribbon tie. Many designs, such as this one, have been invented by young students and then shared with other dollmakers. We also have Minimum-Sew clothing in our Patterns section.

How to make your own designs.

Draw the clothing designs on to the paper pattern, enlarge the side seams and bottom hem by at least 1 cm to fit on to the doll and add seam allowance of 1cm. Add 2 cms for elastic waist casing. Emphasize that the clothes need to be easy to put on and take off. **Avoid sewing the clothing to the doll!** Dressing up the doll is wonderfully satisfying for repeated play. (Repetition of behaviour is one of the valuable aspects of PLAY).

Examples of clothing details

Students need lessons and considerable assistance if creating their own designs for their doll's clothing, but it can be rewarding. The key thing is that clothes should be removable, not sewn to the doll.

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Examples of clothing details: Show students how to make a waist hem (casing) and insert elastic with a safety pin. Make use of selvages instead of hemming. Add pockets, buttons, trimmings, pieces of fur, earrings, anklets, necklaces, beanies etc.

ALL dolls need underwear. Use the piece of lycra or stretch knit fabric to make undies. Cut a strip long enough to go firmly around the hips of the doll. (There's no elastic used.) Stitch the narrow ends together, turn inside out and fold so that you continue to join the centre front and centre back together with oversews making two leg openings. Voila! Pants!

Step 9. Extras for play

Allow time in the classroom for dressing the doll. It is part of the creative process for the maker, no matter how old or young. Some classes add a photograph of the dollmaker on a label, or write a little about their life (although English may not be known to the child who receives it). The KZN children love reading these personalised messages.

With play potential in mind, further items of clothing may be made. Why not design and make:

- a shoulder bag/back pack large enough for spare "things", eg more clothing
- a beanie
- a shawl or wrap for a baby doll
- some jewellery
- a tiny toy
- a baby for the doll
- a soft wrap for the doll, 45 x 30cms, which is very nurturing
- or (and this is HUGE PLAY) a wrap for the CHILD to tie a doll on their back, 130cms x 40-50cms

Step 10. Zulu names

If you search online, you'll find many lists of Zulu names and their meanings to use. Students find it fascinating to choose a name that suits the character of their doll. One example of a name site is: namesforafrica.wordpress.com where you can look at Zulu boy and girl names.

Step 11. Final checking by adult

Please check the dolls so that you are sure that:

- the body is firmly filled
- the filling is not escaping from the seams
- the hair is firmly attached.
- each doll has underpants.
- the clothes are removable for play and not sewn to the body.

GIVE LOVING ENERGY TO THE DOLLS BEFORE SAYING GOODBYE AND SENDING OFF TO THE CHILDREN IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA.

Step 12: Displaying, Farewelling and Delivery

It is a great idea to have an Exhibition of the Dolls and invite families, your community and the media. Appoint an 'official' photographer to take a picture of each child with their doll, for them to remember. You might like to send us a photo of the class with their dolls for our Album. You may also like to post doll photos on

our Uthando Project Facebook page or create a YouTube presentation (being conscious of privacy issues if any children are visible in the photos, as our Facebook page is an open one).

A formal farewell to the dolls at an assembly or a morning tea for parents can be important. It can be quite a wrench for a student to give up their doll. The ritual of an official hand-over gives them confidence to do this.

(An 'event' can also be a fund-raising opportunity, as each doll costs \$2 to send to KZN and it is wonderful if schools can contribute towards the sending of their own dolls.)

Deliver to your local collection point, if there is one. Go to our Contact page for either delivery or to post the finished dolls. You might like to send us a photo of the class with their dolls for our Album.

Please request a special Certificate of Appreciation by emailing exact details to schools@uthandoproject.org

Please pass on to the students our deepest admiration for their creativity and perseverance. Their generosity will make a huge difference to children they may never meet. We realise and appreciate that love is embedded in these dolls with intentions for the best possible outcomes for the children's lives. It is an unforgettable project.

Now we invite you to share the project with other schools...