

UTHANDO PROJECT INC AUGUST 2014 NEWSLETTER

Dear Dollmakers and Uthando Friends,

We are in the midst of celebrating a Decade of Dollmaking, 2014, with many wonderful events already behind us.

SUPERB VISIT TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA BY LEADERS IN KWAZULU NATAL IN MAY

Bertha Magoge, CEO, TREE (Training Resources in Early Education) in KZN, centred in Durban and Rachel Rozentals-Thresher, CEO, *dlalanathi*, Pietermaritzburg gave of their absolute best wherever they met with Uthando groups, workshop participants and other organisations. We were all brought face to face with the everyday stamina and sensitivity needed in KZN to bring change and support not only to the children and youth, but to the wider communities as well.

Their presence and openness brought everyone into their world. Many dollmakers felt it was the first time they saw how a doll, or making a doll, or playing between a granny and a child could make such a difference.



For more photos from this fabulous event, please take a look at the website <http://uthandoproject.org/news/uthando-events-gallery/>

For me, the greatest insight was into the dreadful prevalence of poverty which underlies the HIV/AIDS pandemic there. My previous focus had been on the effects of sickness and death and the disturbance at all levels of society with the loss of family and cultural cohesion and the uncertainties for children.

Bertha sent a link to the Bulletin of the Centre for Early Childhood Development, Early Years, Vol 20, No 04 with serious implications especially for South African black children. (See full publication at http://cecd.org.za/images/early_years/EARLY%20YEARS%20May%202014.pdf).

Two thirds of South African children live below the poverty line and 35 percent live in households where no adults are employed. There has only been a small decrease in unemployment since 1994. Only 27 percent of African children live in homes with piped water, compared with over 90 percent for white and Indian households. Still poor access to safe water and sanitation. Where significant positive changes show up are in the public health services, with reduction of child mortality, availability of maternal and child health services and improved take-up of HIV prevention and treatment programmes.

Rachel reported that the DAILY deaths across South Africa from HIV/AIDS related diseases had reduced from over 1000 per day to over 800. Still appalling.

We can only glimpse the enormity of the situation in KZN, but for Bertha and Rachel it infiltrates management of their families, their work and their own health. Bertha, slowed down by knee replacement surgery, described walking several kilometres up to a remote family in dire need of help, where the wind whistled through broken walls. Community help was enlisted and I expect that TREE's follow-up was with the regular visits by a Family Facilitator using equipment from their nearest (?) Toy Library. We learned that with these friendly Toy Libraries, people of all ages could also get vital help

with health and government programmes, information and access. These were simple rooms or buildings or a container, managed by local women trained by TREE, providing much more than toys.

Here are two links for those wanting more depth about HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS_in_South_African_townships

<http://www.avert.org/hiv-aids-south-africa.htm>

Rachel and Bertha expressed wanting their organisations to work more closely in future. On their return to KZN they rejoiced in being selected to work together in a major joint pilot programme involving many communities under a government contract.

In Rachel's words "we have been identified as a key partner to keep play at the centre & to look at strengthening moms through play and stimulation of their children in a Maternal Mental health support program."

Now is an opportune moment to look more deeply into the work of *dlalanathi* as they are the recipient of Uthando's fundraising for KZN, as all other NGO's receive Uthando dolls, but not funds.

In preparing for the visit to Western Australia, Rachel wrote the following to provide context for her presentations about their ground breaking organisation.

Our vision for dlalanathi is for.....safe, loving spaces created and held by every member of the community where children are given full permission to be children and play.

Our mission is to..... bring hope and healing to children affected by loss, their caregivers, families and other caring community members. We use play to strengthen communication and relationships of care.

Our overall goal in Swayimane (a rural community which is about 45 minutes outside of Pietermaritzburg. It has a population of about 40 000 people.) **-i.e. (what we want to see achieved through our work)**..... strengthened circles of support around families in great difficulty (those affected by death, loss and poverty in a context of HIV and AIDS). Families better able to sustain their children's well-being both physically and emotionally, through everyday practices of care.

How do we do this? – 3 pronged strategy:

- PLAY – increase access to safe places for children to play, connect with others and ask for help;
- PARENTING – increase access to safe, responsive relationships for children. Strengthening relationships between adults with children and adults working with children;
- PROTECTION – reduction of risk through targeting neglect (linked to play and parenting above); awareness and training of key local agents in strengthening local referral systems and facilitating response to cases identified.

WHAT ARE DLALANATHI'S PROGRAMMES FOR THIS STRATEGY?

Facilitating five programmes which develop strong connected relationships with children and their safety, particularly after trauma and loss, in South Africa where there are more than 5.3 million people living with HIV. Care contexts for children are complicated. Even of those who have a living parent, 83% live with someone other than their birth parent.

In 2013 dlalanathi touched the lives of 2328 children, 356 families and 344 youth.

- **Work with and train other organisations** in South Africa and other African countries about strengthening communities.
- **"Play4Communication"** uses dollmaking, story telling and play with eg 225 adults in one community, visited daily for 2 years.
- **"Play for Healing"** develops robust groups of women in practice and mentoring to be "comforters of children" across the whole community
- **Childcare Forum** with teachers, other organisations and those trained locally, meeting bi-weekly.
- **Youth support** with focus on emotional and developmental needs, including parenting training when so many were not well parented themselves. Many are HIV+, out of school and out of work, with poor self esteem and high levels of domestic violence. Many young girls become pregnant and urgently need a fresh understanding of themselves. July – Sept 2013 this programme enabled **self empowerment for 63 young men and 49 girls where 43% have lost mothers and 81% have lost fathers.**

Part of Bertha and Rachel's visit was to meet dollmakers and public in Albany and Bunbury. In Albany, Rachel met up with Sandy Laurens who was one of the original founders in Pietermaritzburg of the Rob Smetherham Bereavement Services for Children, which later became *dlalanathi*. After hearing Rachel and Bertha speak at the Western Australian Museum – Albany, Sandy, remembering her earlier life, offered a poem about seeing the Uthando dolls there. The poem takes the form of beginning each line with the next letter of the alphabet

A LETTER

A letter
Born from deep pain
Child of man, Child of God.
Dear Doll
Emotions well inside
Fears are waging war
Giants I am facing
Heroes unsung near and far
I try to hide
"Jabulile (she is happy), come look"
Kindly hands hold you out
Linduthando (waiting to be loved) is your name

Mine?

Naked walls, naked floors
Overwhelmed, I hug you once, twice
Passion surges
Quietly trembling
Remember her? Remember him?
Straining hard, I close my eyes
Tears streaming
Uthando. Touching hearts. Healing. Hope
Vivid memories flooding back
Warm arms hold me close
Xolile. Made happy.
Yellow daisies where there were none
Zulu Nation. Rise to dance again.

26 May 2014

By Sandy Laurens
Inspired by Uthando Project, *dlalanathi* and TREE

UTHANDO TOUR;

Chapters could be written about the different, fulfilling events with Rachel and Bertha. They were welcomed in Albany and Bunbury by Uthando groups; in Guildford by the Darling Range Soroptimists; in Cottesloe by the West Coast Learning Centre; in Brentwood with the Children's Support Unit staff, the Community Services of the City of Melville and the Uthando group which meets in The Meeting Place in Fremantle; in Mirrabooka through the Community Services of the City of Stirling and the Sorrento and Leederville Uthando groups; the Perth College theatre for a Public Presentation and at Gooseberry Hill with open house for Uthando dollmakers everywhere.

SERPENTINE RETREAT

The Retreat held in Serpentine (simple accommodation in a bush setting) brought 40 dollmakers from all corners of Australia together for the first time. Tears and laughter, wild dollmaking and serious listening, all with wonderful meals prepared by Mil Dare. This brought such depth and reality to our dollmaking that it may turn out to be an inaugural event to be repeated.

FINETUNING OF DOLL PATTERNS

When Bertha spoke of being in touch with nearly 50,000 young children each year, it looks as if the 3,000 Uthando dolls p.a. normally provided, needs a new target and possibly a more simple, lighter, smaller doll. With KZN children going to school at 5 years, (although sometimes their reduced physical development through malnutrition doesn't encourage the mothers to let them go) we could send thousands more TREE dolls. Groups could set up an assembly line with a target for the day.

Would you like to design and make some sample dolls which could be 23 – 28cms high, which is a bit smaller than our Classic Doll, and therefore fitting many more into the freight bags?

The body could have pants, shorts, dress or skirt sewn in as a permanent part of the body, with the face and a minimum proportion being brown. One item of simple clothing could be on the doll for play.



Adaptation of Antoinette Cely baby (28cms) with polar fleece pants and little, short top



Simple, smaller doll (28cms) dress as part of body, separate feet.



Alusa, back seam knitted doll with two crocheted squares making main part of dress.

TREE would prefer a Child Wrap included for each doll, (140cms x 35cms approx) which many can be bundled together to take less space. These need to be of lightweight, easily tied fabric.

If cut out of knit fabric there is no need for hemmed edges. Simply cut your fabric into strips.

These Child Wraps hold the doll tied around the child's back, just like Mother.

As these dolls are for the very young, please DO NOT use buttons or beads or anything which may be swallowed., Stretch knit strips of fabric make ideal belts easy for a child to manage and can be easier than ribbons which are a bit difficult to tie. Decorate with felt jewellery or extra embroidery.

Also the young children respond to the dolls looking like them, with black hair. We need lots of boy dolls, wearing shorts, not long pants, and with black hair.

For inspiration on boys and their faces, visit the website : <http://uthandoproject.org/2014/08/26/boy-dolls-and-faces/>

If you would like a pattern sent to you either for knitting or sewing, please request it. Or use our website, [www.uthandoproject.org/Dolls/ Patterns](http://www.uthandoproject.org/Dolls/Patterns), to print out. Please don't worry if the dolls you prefer to make are glamorous, with coloured hair, jewellery and lots of clothes, beanies, bags etc. Please continue to do so, as they will be sent to the other agencies.

DR JULIE STONE IN KZN FOR PIETERMARITZBURG MEETINGS AND DURBAN CONFERENCE

In August, our founder Director, Dr Julie Stone, strengthened our valuable partnership with meetings with dlanathi, old and new staff, in Pietermaritzburg. Julie then presented her paper at the International Association for Child Psychiatrists and Allied Professionals (IACAPAP) 21st Conference in Durban in conjunction with dlanathi staff.

Her paper gives a brilliant description of the founding and purpose of the Uthando Project which is essential reading for all dollmakers <http://uthandoproject.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Dr-Julie-Stone-KZN-Report-August-2014-International-Association-for-Child-Psychiatrists-and-Allied-Professionals-IACAPAP-21st-Conference.pdf>

Julie has also written an insightful Report on the Conference, which can be read here <http://uthandoproject.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Letter-from-Dr-Julie-Stone-KZN-August-2014.pdf>

DONATIONS FOR DOLLMAKING KITS

There is enormous popularity and income in selling ready cut out doll skins with all the tools and materials for doll making in kits for schools, colleges, church and craft groups, at festivals and other events. Please go to our website shop to see and order some at \$5 each. Excellent value.

You may have extra items to donate for these kits.

- We need fine line or thread or elastic that will go through small beads and be firmly tied.
- Also crochet thread for doll's face embroidery, Size 8, in gloss black, white or different reds or red/browns.
- We can use heaps of different types of wool / acrylic or other yarns. Black wool for hair is in demand and brown wool for the doll's bodies.
- The ideal fabrics for schools are those that don't need hemming. Therefore knit fabrics (ideally in cotton, but lycra is really good for undies and faux fur and faux suede for jackets). These fabrics are best in bright colours, patterned, striped. Avoid pastel colours, black or white and slippery materials.

Donations can be left any time at 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill, WA 6076 but also phone Georgia Efford, 9293 2363 to see if any Uthando dollmakers live near you to pick up your donations.

UTHANDO DOLLMAKER GROUPS

Sometimes it is hard to gauge the longevity of groups in countries other than Australia.

Certainly dolls are sent directly to TREE in Durban (**PO Box 35173, Northway, 4065 South Africa**) with an email to dhevani@tree-ecd.co.za letting her know sender's details and date.

Other Uthando groups in Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland, (Albany too) are raising their own postage costs independently and creating direct communications with the appropriate agencies in KZN. Otherwise we are delighted to receive dolls from anywhere/everywhere at the above Gooseberry Hill address to be included in the shipped freight to KZN.

Freight costs are around \$6,000 p.a. so please consider sending financial contributions towards this. It would be wonderful to have major donors cover this cost. Keep in mind that each doll might cost \$2 to send, and can change a child's life!

Would you like to form your own Uthando group? Some meet weekly, others once a month.

Great fun and sharing of ideas with a good doll production and new friendships resulting.

Our Facebook address is [facebook.com/uthandoprojectinc](https://www.facebook.com/uthandoprojectinc) and we would love comments and photos of your dolls included. This may seem daunting (for me, certainly...much to learn), but we can do it.

HAPPENINGS

Many schools embrace the Uthando Project because of the many layers of benefits for the young dollmakers. The quality of school dolls is enchanting, with better technical results too. Many thanks to the teachers, families and students who make dolls for the students in Pietermaritzburg.

Recently Uthando had a most successful display and sales at the Wood and Craft Show at the Claremont Showgrounds. The public responds to our dolls and our purpose. Welcome to new subscribers from that event.

Often there are Craft or Church groups or holiday dollmaking sessions with adults and children as at Joondalup and Woodvale, with Duncraig and Whitfords to come. These give us opportunities to present the focus on children's emotional needs and the joy of playful relationships, plus the bonus of lots more dolls. Please let us know if you are part of such a group who would like to make dolls. Uthando Project is completely inclusive and adaptable.

If you are a knitter, please look at the **Alusa, Back Seam Doll Pattern** on the website. We could send thousands of this ideal doll. Consider incorporating the clothes into the doll by changing colours for pants and top.

FUTURE EVENTS

For all Uthando dollmakers and friends in Perth, you are warmly invited to a

Uthando Garden Party, Sunday October 12th, 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill from 1.30 – 5pm. \$10 entry, children \$2, which includes home baked Devonshire teas/coffee, entertainment for young and old. We will have a Uthando table with our new Greeting Cards, books, patterns and if you would like to make a special doll or two to sell, that would be a great contribution. **Bring along any dolls to go to KZN for packing and sending the following week.**

If you have any items for a Treasure or Junk table (white elephant) please bring along and be prepared to buy something from someone else as well. No escape. Garden plants to bring and for sale too. Please RSVP to Georgia, see above address and we do hope you can come.

Uthando Project will provide lots of fun, sales, encouragement to make dolls and information at the annual **ZigZag Festival in Stirk Park, Kalamunda, Sunday October 26th**. The theme is "Fiesta" which means we will create some free children's activities around doll dressups and doll exhibition. If you would like to be on the roster for this happy day, please contact info@uthandoproject.org

I write this newsletter with full gratitude for all the hours of sewing and knitting that are given wholeheartedly by so many people.

We sent 2000 dolls after Rachel and Bertha's visit and they have arrived safely for distribution.

Everyone appreciates the nature, skills and purpose of Uthando dolls.

We are all in good company and in our imagination can see the children playing.

With love from Georgia, the Uthando Board and the Friday dollmakers