

touching hearts & bringing play to life



November 2015 Newsletter

Superb visit to Australia by Claudie Munyai and Robyn Hemmens from dlananathi, Pietermaritzburg, Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa.

Nearly all the regional group leaders across Australia were able to make valuable personal contact with Robyn Hemmens and Claudie Munyai during July 2015. Robyn has years of experience with dlananathi's work in KwaZulu Natal in training other NGO's and facilitating wide community change in caring for children's emotional development and the ways in which children are raised within safer communities. Consider how the young persons find themselves bewildered, full of grief and at risk in a region where over 800 die each day from HIV/AIDS related illnesses. The world still hasn't come to grips with this situation.



Robyn at The Meeting Place in Fremantle with a photographic display of dlananathi's work behind her.

Claudie is an amazing multilingual South African psychologist who opened up for us the new field of how dlananathi has been designing new programmes and implementing them with teenaged youth. Particularly relevant is their focus on young pregnant girls, often those who have not been parented themselves, they are still at school and finding their ways through the barriers of stigma and lack of knowledge about pregnancies, birthing and parenting.



Photo; Claudie wraps Naomi Nicholson, Sorrento, Victoria in the "group made" blanket at the Serpentine Retreat in the bush south of Perth. Each square, originally knitted by Janette for the Sorrento group in WA, was embroidered with an empowering word or image suitable for a young pregnant mother to be. Naomi patiently joined up all the squares. It is now at dlanthi's office in Pietermaritzburg.

RETREAT AT SERPENTINE July 11 - 13.

This was the first time that the leaders of Tasmania, Victoria, Albany, Bunbury, Sorrento and Gooseberry Hill have had the delight of spending time together with the bonus of learning directly from Robyn and Claudie from KZN. We are hugely grateful to Mil and Leeann for providing delicious food.

This newsletter will now provide the updated requirements for the type of dolls, accessories and play items which better suit each of the five not-for-profit organisations in KZN. Claudie and Robyn were constantly bombarded with questions about "Are Uthando dolls really suiting the specific needs?" eg "What do married women wear?" "Are rural children's needs different from city children?" Both of our visitors expressed delighted amazement at the deep commitment from all the dollmakers EVERYWHERE to truly consider the needs of the KZN children. It isn't just to make a toy!

We will look at each NGO's needs and expand on new information.

Our website, uthandoproject.org, contains many details already known. Go to Home Page/Dolls/types of dolls, then the specific NGO's needs described.

TREE, Training and Resources in Early Education

Bertha Magoge, Director, writes; "Children are in under-resourced communities where play and educational resources are worn out; and in most cases, not enough or non-existent for a number of children enrolled in preschool sites. Over 31 years, we have learned that children learn better while playing and having fun. Uthando dolls give substance to what is meant by education through play. Stimulation for children should start in the households and be strengthened in the classrooms. TREE wants to bring parents in for briefing on playful ways to use the dolls within the households. "

Bertha also mentions that they have been able to provide dolls for children in Refugee Camps and distant rural areas. They are grateful that they can see the smiles of the children receiving the dolls. Sign on to their TREE Facebook page to get updates on their impressive, professional and heartfelt work.

(Something has just occurred to either slow me down a bit or even stop me in my tracks. Firstly, cricking my back while taking a break from writing this to harvest herbs in the garden. Then, hearing the phone ring and to learn that the Lombok volcano has caused definite cancellation of our flight to Bali tomorrow! I think this version of the

newsletter now will be very brief. Sorry. However I did check the doll design details on our website and it has been updated, so I will only give essential changes).

TREE would like some groups of **families of dolls packed in lightweight, strong carry bags** for the Family Facilitators who walk long distances carrying the items for play. What is a family? Much discussion with Claudie and Robyn brought the following answer; baby, girl, boy, mother, father, adult other female (aunty or neighbour) and adult other male, grandmother and grandfather. Married women wear a head covering (scarf, beanie or hat), long socks under a fullish long skirt and have sleeves to the elbows.

LIFELINE and DLALANATHI would also use specific culturally different families, eg black, white, Indian and Muslim. It is very informative to Google "Different South African cultures" to see their cultural styles (clothing and hair). Please pack families in separate marked bags, rather than loose in the bag.

HAND PUPPETS; Make a set of hand puppets with clear facial expressions of happy, sad, crying, angry and worried. Make them of adult and child sizes. May be finger puppets too, in adult and child sizes.

KNITTED AND CROCHETED BALLS; Can be all sizes, colours, patterns. They are great for filling in the packing gaps and suit all ages.

ANIMALS; It is suggested that animals be made in their natural colours, i.e. not pink elephants or floral zebras. Please still send any more imaginative coloured animals, but spread the word to have them made more natural-looking in the future.

SIZE OF DOLLS; It has made a positive difference to the cost of shipping by packing many more dolls in the bags if they are the Simple dolls or are not taller than 30cms. It also helps if the Child Wraps (140 x 35 cms) are rolled together and put into the top of the bag rather than tied on to separate dolls. As it costs Uthando approx \$2500 per shipment, any way of packing more dolls in really helps.

BOYS; Thanks go to everyone sending in boy dolls. We need about 40% to be boys. Young boys wear shorts, older boys, long pants. Girls in school uniforms wear white blouse, sometimes with tie, and dark coloured blue or black pleated skirt.

MATERNITY BLANKETS; This is a new arena for dlalanathi, much needed in KZN. Many teenage girls become pregnant while still at school. Their lives are in a turmoil of stigma, unknown futures, physiological mysteries and self worth diminishment. UNICEF has promoted the "First Thousand Days" campaign as being of prime (supreme) importance in the development of all children beginning with conception to the end of the second year. Dlalanathi's "First 1000 Day" programme makes use of dolls which look pregnant and in the symbolic and practical use of a large blanket. These blankets are made of knitted squares and the young mothers-to-be can embroider words or symbols of empowerment and protection. The mother is the "blanket" for the unborn child, and the blanket is nurturing and useful at all stages. The blanket needs to be **140 x 60cms**. We have used squares of 20cms, in three rows of seven squares, with a crocheted edge. It can be made though in other modules which end up as the same blanket size. Being knitted, it is quite stretchy and needs to be knotted by the mother above and below the breasts with the baby safely on her back.



We need about 20 blankets for the NEXT SHIPMENT which will go end of January 2016.

.The final delivery date for dolls and blankets is Friday 22 January 2016.

To avoid confusion, the Child Wrap used by the child to tie the doll on their back, is 140 x 35 cms, made of a light, strong, easily tied fabric length. Raw edges are acceptable, or overlocked or of non-fray fabric.

SEWING KITS; A few years ago we sent (and carried) hundreds of sewing hold alls for the KZN women to be able to make their own dolls. If you would like to make some, please note the following guidelines.

Use a rectangle of fabric, 20 x 30cms. Fold to make a large pocket in the lower two thirds, (sew side seams) and a flap to tie over the front with the top third. Sew a piece of felt in the centre, inside the flap to be a "needle book". Put a selection of needles, pins, safety pin, wool needle in the needle book. In the pocket put a selection of sewing threads, elastic, buttons, lace, cord, clothes fabric pieces, etc. There needs to be included a piece of brown fabric for a doll skin, wool or black fabric for hair, scissors and the paper pattern. If needed, we can add these items at Gooseberry Hill.

The women take great pride in these sewing kits, so design them with lovely material, button and/or ribbon to tie. I had the thought that many of us have unfinished embroidery pieces or other precious materials. Why not use such pieces as appliqué or make the kit of it?

I apologise for not including in this Newsletter mention of all the wonderful events which Uthando created or participated in during the last three months, right across Australia in twelve regular dollmaking groups. Everyone is so uplifted by all our events, that it seems absolutely miserable of me not to be able to describe them properly. I am so sorry.

In brief, Tasmania hosted Robyn Hemmens wonderfully, they keep posting many many dolls and will soon have a "Blessing of the Dolls" in the church they use as their meeting place.

TightKnit World in Melbourne maintain their independent posting of dolls through out the year.

Queensland keeps on sending really strong, play ready dolls.

Albany is a non stop bundle of fun with events, market stalls, exhibitions and taking up every opportunity to teach dollmaking and raise funds, always exploring ways of creating beautiful dolls.

Bunbury 's recent Garden Party in a local Gallery was spectacular and their group maintains a high standard of dollmaking. Being together over a few years with any group proves itself in the output and quality.

Fremantle group make really lovely character dolls and are always willing to support other group events.

Leederville consistently send lovely dolls fully prepared for play.

Sorrento has added film making to it's extraordinary list of activities across libraries and multicultural, schools and senior's groups.

Gooseberry Hill continues to be the firm foundation of the whole project, taking on workshops with other organisations, presentations, doll storage, packing, kit making and working with many schools and colleges. And is the "communication and fund raising centre":

Underlying all this group activity stands the hundreds of individual dollmakers who post or deliver their dolls. It never loses its excitement to open a new parcel to see the original dolls made with love and care.

We have achieved our 2015 fundraising target of 200,000 South African rand for dlalanathi to employ a gifted Zulu speaking psychologist, (approx \$22,000 AUD).

We have saved funds for shipping the dolls next January and have made arrangements to receive two rolls of a **SPECIAL DYE ORDER** to be the best doll skin colour ,100% cotton knit fabric we can work with.....a warm golden brown. It will be available, mainly for groups, but for individuals too, @ \$7 per metre.

If possible, we will have the various exciting reports from each of the Australian Uthando groups on our website. Check this out in December..

ALERT FOR CROWD FUNDING PROCESS FOR DLALANATHI COMING SOON.

There will be another email coming your way, giving you the opportunity to join in the Uthando crowd funding and to pass on the invitation to many of your friends and family for them to contribute. There will be a way of using the crowd funding donation as being a Christmas present too. The purpose will be explained in more detail then, but know that it is to support the training work (creation, implementation and assessment) which dlalanathi carry out as exceptional leaders in the field of bringing change within communities, centred around sensitive, gentle upbringing of all children. Many people want to support Uthando Project and its principles, are unable to make dolls but can contribute financially at many levels. This crowd funding may suit them perfectly.

To finish, I can't resist including a detail of a doll's little coat, whole doll sewn by hand, with ricrac braid and sequins firmly sewn on. Photo taken of doll lying down.

Thank you to each and every dollmaker who has sent dolls either to 2 Healey Place, Gooseberry Hill, WA 6076 or directly to KZN as part of group postage. I'm sure you will be keen to know that our running total of dolls sent now is 51,130 dolls over nearly 11 years.

With love and gratitude, Georgia and all the Uthando teams

