

UTHANDO PROJECT PARTNERS' REPORTS



for Uthando Dolls Inc

covering the period September 2018 to August 2019

Exactly a year ago I was on my way to Australia for one of the most engaging experiences in my life. Uthando had invited me to visit their doll making groups to get a glimpse into their hearts and to explain to members how their toys enhance the programmes of the Family Literacy Project. As we visited the different centres, including the fascinating group in Cygnet Tasmania, I began to understand how it is that each doll that pops out of the zip bags in Underburg is so unique; how it is that each toy reflects the skill and expertise of its maker and embodies so much love that is carried across the oceans. I saw that while we in 'lightness' and joy, open the bags that arrive at our centre, there have been many hours of finishing, fundraising, packing and paper-work behind the scenes in Head Office.



It was my privilege to engage with these dedicated people. I was even asked to put forward a 'wish list' to Uthando! As a result of this 'wish list' we are already receiving Reading Prizes and Book Bags to encourage our Underberg children to love books.

This little 'struggler', along with his fellow strugglers was given a ball after the word game and made to feel so special.

The Therapy Room and the Home Visitors are already receiving tie-up bags with a detailed Family Member in each pocket. The Doll's Clothes and Blankets in the Libraries are being replenished.

There was another request which is, I know, creating work for Uthando but helping FLP so very much. The zip bags from Uthando are now arriving with

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numbers which correspond to a list of contents.

This means that depending on whether we need Doll families, Doll children, Bags, Blankets or Balls we know exactly which zip bag to extract from the pile!

We do enjoy the fact that the members of Uthando suggest and create new ideas all the time and we are looking forward to our colourful Reading Mats which we hear are 'in the making'.



One of our new programmes this year is called Suitcase Therapy. Our Social Worker makes herself available in the school yard for any child who needs to talk. The suitcase is always equipped with toys Uthando. In this picture three



from
brothers
Worker to

were referred to the Social talk about 'difficult things'. It is impossible to say which of the Uthando gifts enhances our project the most, but I do know that last Christmas was a time of great joy! We were able to give each child on our programmes their very own doll or toy. What rejoicing there was in every village!

Thank you Uthando for your dedication, skill and generosity. I am proud to say: "I know you!"

JILL FROW

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Report to Uthando Dolls

The purpose of our project is to involve parents, caregivers and duty bearers in consciously creating circles of support which include people (i.e. relationships), places (physical and emotional spaces) and practices which facilitate the realisation of children's rights to parenting, play and protection. The start of a responsive network for children begins at home. Our processes aim to rebuild broken relationships. Further capacity building of parents, caregivers and other community stakeholder's results in action to protect and provide a responsive environment for children to have their rights to Play, Parenting and Protection realised.

In 2016 **dlalanathi** entered Mpumuza, a peri-urban community just outside of Pietermaritzburg. Mpumuza is a community seriously affected by socio-economic issues associated with dense population, poor housing, the lack of services like water, sanitation and refuse removal. Alcohol and drug abuse, migrant labour, high level of deaths related to TB and Aids result in loss or absence of parents at home. It is within this context that **dlalanathi** has served for the past 3.5 years and we are currently in the process of preparing to exit at the end of this year. In this time we have established a dynamic and deeply committed group of 40 AB's (Abaduduzi Bezengane meaning comforters of children in isiZulu), women who are skilled and responsive to the needs of children and families in their community.

In this project the total reach from 2016 – 2108 has been;

CHILDREN	PARENTS/CAREGIVERS	ADULT TRAINING
7572	962	977

Of this number AB's have reached 4527 children independently following receiving capacity building from dlalanathi.

Play4Communication, our 3 day doll making process remains core in all of our work. This gentle creative process introduces play, listening and

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communication to parents and caregivers as a way of inviting them into a new and more responsive relationship with their children. Out of this comes change for children directly in the home, and also as outreach into the community. Currently in Mpumuza there are bereavement groups for children and Gogo's being run by AB's, weekly Kids Clubs and Play Days, Child Participation Groups looking at issues related to child protection with children and Holiday Programmes.

dlalanathi is currently working with the Department of Health in the Western Cape. We have been invited to train their Community Health Care Workers in "Ibhayi Lengane" (which means the baby's blanket in isiZulu), a home visiting programme we designed to support very vulnerable pregnant moms and moms with young babies in the 1st 1000 days. The baby's blankets is used as a metaphor of warmth, welcome, support and care. The key message from the home visitor to mom is "you are your baby's blanket of support and I am here as your blanket of support". A young mom who is part of this programme shared that on the day that she met her home visitor she had been planning to kill her baby and then kill herself. She said that the caring, none judgement support helped her feel like she was not alone and feel like she could care for her baby.

We love our partnership with **Uthando Dolls**. We feel like we are surrounded by a stadium of loving hearts. The dolls that you send us quickly find their way into the arms of boys and girls the community and in every **Play4Communication** and Family Support Group your doll-making kits are used to teach women how to make a doll. This contribution is deeply valued and we feel that you are with us every time we see a new doll take shape and form by a women in Mpumuza.

recent email from Robyn

Hi Uthando friends,

The latest bags of dolls and other goodies arrived late yesterday and I sorted them out early this morning.

Just in time for 3 x play for communication trainings that will run next week. Your doll kits are just the best.

As I unpacked the bags I feel so close to all of you....and I feel so humbled by the incredible generosity and care that goes into each stitch, every knitted item, every doll kit.....you truly are an example of what it means to really partner another in a way that is really meaningful and of great value. We have 6 bereavement groups with children all coming to a close in the next 2 weeks and so these dolls will not hang around in our office for very long and will soon be in the arms of a child we have worked with.

And finally, last night I attended gala fund raising event held by 4 women how are about to climb Mount Kilimanjaro and who are raising money for dlalanathi and Singakwenza (the organization that we partner with in the Play Mat Process) through their climb. I asked if they would carry a teeny tiny doll to the top of the mountain and have a photo taken of it. I so hope this works....I would love to be able to share with all of you one of your dolls at the highest point in Africa.

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UThando Dolls Picture Report

"My baby doll needs to stay warm."



**kisses* "I love my beautiful doll"*

Playing with dolls is teaching children how to love and care about their doll, themselves and others.

"I can't wait to show my mama my doll"



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Dolls can be incorporated into all play areas.

"yam yam, it's feeding time"

"Thank you for giving me such a lovely doll"

Uthando dolls are helping to cross gender stereotypes. Boys can also have fun playing with dolls.

"My doll is going on a trip in his cool car"



Fantasy play with dolls, is helping to create nurturing adults.

"I need to wash my babies beautiful hair"

Conclusion

The organisation would like to thank all the beautiful women that contribute with their time and resources to design the incredible educational resources that are versatile. The dolls are stimulating the children in all age groups from birth. The legacy you are making in the early childhood development space is invaluable. TREE is grateful for this continued collaboration.

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