

Mhani Gingi team a finalist in the University Startup World Cup 2015

Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network was one of 50 top teams from around the world who were selected to be finalists in the University Startup World Cup 2015 competition with its unique Rose Geranium Farming proposal. The competition took place from September 14 to 18 2015 in Copenhagen where teams gathered to present their ideas, meet investors and other finalists, and compete to be voted the best student startup in the world. Each finalist gained access to a development programme offering knowledge and services to help them to move forward with their bright ideas.

The Rose Geranium Farming proposal that earned Mhani Gingi a place in the finals of the University Startup World Cup 2015 — out of 250 000 students from 4 000 universities — is an extension of Mhani Gingi's environmental work under its Flagship Programme. Mhani Gingi Founding Director, Lillian Masebenza, and Ian Kosasa, a student from Michigan University in the United States of America who volunteered as an intern at Mhani Gingi in South Africa in 2015, travelled to Copenhagen to take part in the competition.

Organic Rose Geranium Farm

Mhani Gingi aims to employ disabled and handicapped workers by developing an organic Rose Geranium Farm in one of the most disadvantaged communities outside of Cape Town. The proposed Rose Geranium oil production farm, initially to be developed at Atlantis on the West Coast, will be used as an incubation model, not only for Rose Geranium farming, but also for organic compost production and to create Rose Geranium products such as soap. One of the objectives of the Rose Geranium Farm is to employ both able and disabled workers while also stimulating the local economy in an area where the incidence of unemployment, poverty and other social problems is high.



Mhani Gingi plans to establish a 30-hectare Rose Geranium farm that will incorporate a wheelchair ramp to enable wheelchair-bound individuals, despite their disability, to work comfortably and efficiently on the hanging vertical gardens. The aim is to employ four wheelchair-bound women for the first number of years, and to increase this representation as the Rose Geranium Farm expands.

South Africa offers conditions that are well suited to growing the Rose Geranium organically. Weather conditions are optimal for the highest quality produce while the country already has infrastructure for selling internationally.

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Ian Kosasa (left), from Michigan University in the United States of America, and Lillian Masebenza, Founding Director of Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network in South Africa, were chosen from among 2 500 000 students and 4 000 universities to take part in the University Startup World Cup 2015 in Copenhagen.

Rose Geranium Farm

Mhani Gingi's Rose Geranium Farm will empower disabled women

The Rose Geranium Farm that Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network plans to establish, originally intended for Atlantis on the West Coast outside of Cape Town, aims to make a significant impact on the empowerment of disabled people. The proposed Rose Geranium Farm will provide disabled workers with access to agriculture and farming, skills and livelihoods, income and human wealth.

"There are almost three million disabled people in South Africa. Mhani Gingi will empower those who have been put into society at a disadvantage, in an environment that does not grant them equal opportunity," said Ian Kosasa, student from Michigan University in the United States of America and volunteer at Mhani Gingi, when the Rose Geranium Farm business plan was presented in Copenhagen at the finals of the University Startup World Cup 2015. "There is low labour market absorption of persons with disabilities, with 27,5% of the working age people being unemployed.



"Disabled females are more marginalised in terms of employment compared to disabled males. The World Health Survey showed employment rates of 52,2% for men with disabilities, but only 19,6% for women. Evidence (suggests) that women with disabilities seem to suffer from multiple discrimination in terms of working opportunities, and this is yet another proof that the Rose Geranium Farm will empower these women in more than one way," Kosasa said.

Alleviating poverty

Atlantis suffers from very high rates of unemployment and related social problems that include crime, gangsterism and drug abuse. These are some of the factors that contribute to very high levels of poverty in Atlantis and to social depression. "Atlantis and the individuals living there need to be empowered and uplifted from poverty in a sustainable way. And this is what Mhani Gingi wants and will do through the Rose Geranium Farm," said another student volunteer working on the Rose Geranium Farm business plan, Alice Larsson, from Malmö University in Sweden.

The Rose Geranium Farm falls within Mhani Gingi's mission to eradicate unemployment leading to chronic poverty. Mhani Gingi empowers people to become creators of wealth and shareholders in their own businesses by providing them with innovative and sustainable business solutions that contribute towards alleviating poverty in local communities. The Mhani Gingi mission aligns it with both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the South African National Development Plan.

Millennium Development Goals

"We cannot overlook the disturbing link between disabled people and poverty any longer," says the Rose Geranium Farm business plan. "Disabled individuals remain largely invisible in the work regarding the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and it is estimated that over 426 million individuals with disabilities are living under the poverty line in developing countries."

The United Nations report, "Disability and the Millennium Development Goals", said in 2011 of the omission of disabled people from the 8 Goals and the targets of the MDGs: "This absence is of particular concern because a growing consensus of disability advocates, experts and researchers find that the most pressing issue faced globally by persons with disabilities is not their specific disability, but rather their lack of equitable access to resources such as education, employment, health care and the social and legal support systems, resulting in persons with disabilities having disproportionately high rates of poverty."

COMMUNITY UPLIFTMENT

"We want to include individuals living with disabilities in the Millenium Development Goals through this project, because they remain largely invisible in the work regarding the implementation of these goals. We are operating in accordance with this statement: A person's disability has nothing to do with that person's ability," said the Mhani Gingi team in Copenhagen.

"We want to empower, uplift and remove individuals from poverty in a sustainable way. We want to produce organic Rose Geranium oil to counteract enviromental destruction. Mhani Gingi wants to empower wheelchair-bound people through this project, which makes it a unique and one-of-a-kind idea, because there is no farm like this."

- For more about the University Startup World Cup see: www.venturecup.dk and www.universityworldcup.com
- For more about Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial network see: www.mhanigingi.co.za



Collaboration



TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOPS DEVELOP ECD CENTRES



A six-week series of Mhani Gingi Teacher-Training Workshops funded by Afri-CAN Charity inspired and developed Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners from 10 ECD centres situated in Philippi, Crossroads and Khayelitsha townships in Cape Town to use their potential — and resources at hand — to develop their centres and their learning programmes for the children.

Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network Trustee, Joan Wright, helped Afri-CAN Charity to launch the workshop programme. It was attended by a group of 12 ECD practitioners consisting of head teachers and their assistants from the 10 ECD learning centres. The workshops encouraged the participants not to wait for 'hand-outs' but rather to use their own potential and resources such as recyclable waste materials “to create a functional ECD of which they could be proud”, said Wright.

The workshops were delivered on alternate Saturdays at Philippi Business Park and aimed to enhance and enrich the skills and knowledge of the teachers running the ECD learning centres. At a follow-up session held a few weeks later, Wright was inspired by how the women had implemented the training. “What an inspirational morning (it was) and wonderful to see just how the use of recyclable items has been embraced!” Wright said. The women had “many inspirational stories” to relate, she added.



Collaboration between Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network, Proud2B ME and Afri-CAN Charity is helping to develop Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Cape Town by training teachers. Here ECD principals who participated in the programme are seen with Mhani Gingi Trustee, Joan Wright (far left), who presented training workshops and Founder of Proud2B ME, Adele Grosse (back, centre).

The practitioners who received certificates are: Elize Fortuin; Nonceba Hlwatika; Nocawe Mdoda; Vuyiswa Mgedezi; Sindiswa Moboza; Sindiswa Nkole; Nokothula Omari; Monica Swelindawo; Onele Tambo; and Linsiwe Xaso. Each practitioner received a book by Lighton Education, *Let's Get Ready*, along with their certificate. Lighton Education has collaborated with Mhani Gingi on a number of initiatives.

As a result of the success of the Mhani Gingi Teacher-Training Workshops, a support group has been formed and the practitioners are undergoing a new series of five workshops delivered by Mhani Gingi in collaboration with Proud 2B Me at the organisation's Centre 4 Change. Meanwhile, the next set of workshops to be delivered in collaboration with Afri-CAN Charity is in the pipeline. The series of workshops completed also covered daily structure and weekly themed programmes. A second series of workshops will continue with this initial group in 2016 focusing on school readiness, literacy and financial management. The vision is to ensure that the women have their own sustainable businesses. The ECD practitioners will also start with the workshop 1 series in January 2016.

Stars of Tomorrow

'STARS OF TOMORROW' SHINES BRIGHTLY IN BETTER LIFE

"To reach Stars of Tomorrow one has to navigate a warren of informal dwellings. In the midst of this, the bright blue of the new Afri-CAN Charity-sponsored Early Childhood Development (ECD) structure stands out like a beacon of hope."

These are the words of Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network Trustee, Joan Wright, after visiting the ECD learning centre, Stars of Tomorrow, run by Vuyiswa Mgedezi in Better Life. Together with her colleague, Monica Swelindawo, Mgedezi attended the six-week ECD training series delivered at Philippi Business Park in collaboration with Afri-CAN Charity, who funded the programme.

"These inspired ladies have a well-organised, well-run ECD, providing the young children in their care with a foundation for future success. Using what they have – mostly recyclable items – they have created a warm, nurturing learning environment and are truly proud, and justifiably so, of their wonderful learning space. The warmth and care provided by these practitioners is tangible as one steps inside!" said Wright.

"Well done to real change-makers and leaders! You are an inspiration to all," she added. Stars of Tomorrow care for about 40 children and recently acquired a new structure from Afri-CAN Charity.



A beacon of hope and excellence.



Crates and cardboard cartons serve as well-organised storage space.



Cereal boxes have been collected for use in art activities.



Children engaged in an activity.



ECD teachers in training.



Flagship Projects

VEGETABLE GARDEN WILL BOOST FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Mhani Gingi's Flagship Programme is establishing new vegetable gardens at South African Red Cross Society premises in Langa as part of its efforts to alleviate poverty. The Flagship Programme is home of Mhani Gingi's own Vegetable Seedling Nursery as well as a Community Garden that trains community gardeners.

Assisting Mhani Gingi presently is Horticultural student Zandile Maninjwa, from Cape Peninsula University of Technology, currently doing in-service training at Mhani Gingi where she assists the organisation with how to look after and cater for the needs of different plants.



Lillian Masebenza.

1.6 Million Club



Karin Eriksson, Programme Co-ordinator of the 1.6 Million Club South Africa.



1.6 MILLION CLUB BIDS FAREWELL TO KARIN ERIKSSON

Mhani Gngi Social Entrepreneurial Network said farewell to the Programme Co-ordinator of the 1.6 Million Club South Africa, Karin Eriksson, at the end of November. Since the launch of the 1.6 Million Club SA in February 2015, Eriksson has been a dynamic force organising events and spreading information related to the improvement of women's health and well-being. The 1.6 Million Club SA was launched in South Africa in collaboration with Mhani Gingi and is a South African sister organisation to the international women's health promotion organisation, the 1.6 Million Club.

Eriksson began her association with Mhani Gingi as a volunteer student. Lillian Masebenza, Founding Director of Mhani Gingi, wished Eriksson well and thanked her for her efforts. Masebenza said: "We will miss your contribution to 1.6 Million Club South Africa. We wish you well as you start a new chapter in your life back home in Sweden — *bon voyage.*"



Lillian Masebenza and Karin Eriksson.

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1.6 Million Club

To bid farewell to Eriksson, 1.6 Million Club South Africa Trustee and Human Resources Manager of Sanlam Investments, Ramona Francis, hosted a generous farewell luncheon for Eriksson at Sanlam, while an office party was held for her at Mhani Gingi's premises at Old Mutual Business Park "It has been absolutely wonderful!!" said Eriksson.

She described her departure as "bittersweet": "I have lived in South Africa for six years, I have both studied and worked here. It has been the best time of my life. It truly has. My time with Mhani Gingi and the 1.6 Million Club South Africa has been a very big part of this lovely experience. And these organisations would be nothing without the people who work and volunteer for them..." she said.

She would "definitely" continue her work for girls and women's empowerment back in Sweden. She is also likely to still be involved in 1.6 Million Club activities from time to time.



Soroptimist Gloria White and her husband, Tim, with Lillian Masebenza on a recent visit to Langa Cheshire Home for Disabled/Adults.

Soroptimist funding helps to support vertical gardens in Cape Town

Since 2015, Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network has been fortunate to receive donations from Soroptimist International Stratford on Avon Club, London, organised by Christine Boyland and Gloria White, to promote the erection of vertical gardens which will make it possible for the disabled individuals at Langa Cheshire Home for Disabled Adults to participate in gardening. A further donation was also received from Soroptimist International Rhyll and District Club, England, organised by Joyce Evans, to assist with installation of irrigation systems for some of the Mhani Gingi community gardens. Logistics had to be sorted out and the projects are expected to be fully implemented in the new year. "THANK YOU TO THESE CLUBS FOR THEIR GENEROSITY!" said Mhani Gingi Founding Director, Lillian Masebenza.

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