

## PRESS RELEASE

### INSPIRING THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR MANDELA DAY ON 18 JULY 2016

Nocawe Mdoda, a young South African and the principal of an Early Learning Centre (ELC) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, is a role model and an inspiration to the youth in her community. Mdoda is not only addressing the needs of early learners, but also seeking to inspire the lives of young people who have little or no hope and who might be vulnerable to deadening this reality with substance abuse, which then feeds the cycle of crime.

Mdoda is Principal of Ikhayaletu Educare in Khayelitsha. Together with a group of youth co-leaders she has assembled from the community of Khayelitsha, some of whom still attend school, Mdoda meets on Saturday afternoons with 20 young people to inspire, motivate and guide them to further their education and to work towards a future of hope rather than hopelessness. On Mandela Day on 18 July 2016, Mdoda has a special event planned for them – but this is not all that she plans to do.

#### **Background**

Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network, in collaboration with AfriCAN Charity, has been actively training Early Childhood Development (ECD) principals and practitioners from 15 community Early Learning Centres (ELCs) in Khayelitsha, Langa and Philippi East townships of Cape Town since May 2015. To ensure sustainability of the training, support groups were formed that meet regularly to journey alongside the practitioners, providing mentorship and assistance. The practitioners have grown in confidence and skills, while the quality of the service and learning programmes provided by the ELCs has been enhanced.

Mdoda, one of the principals who attended the training, has been a particular inspiration to the other practitioners and has proved herself to be a leader. She assists in the facilitation of workshops and in monitoring and evaluation processes. Mdoda has a Level 5 qualification in Early Childhood Development and is currently studying Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) through the University of South Africa (UNISA).

### **Mandela Day 2015**

The training that Mdoda received last year inspired her to give back to her community on Mandela Day 2015 by providing an afternoon of fun and learning for the children in her community. The training encouraged the ECD practitioners to use their creativity and resources at hand, such as recyclable items, to enhance their ECDs. For the Mandela Day 2015 event, Mdoda used only recycled resources and inspired the parents to interact with their children.

During the course of this year, 2016, Mdoda has been the victim of a number of attacks and robberies whilst waiting for transport close to her home in Khayelitsha. This has highlighted for her the fact that many youth in her community, who left the school system early with little or no chance of employment, have joined gangs and are involved in drug-related activities.

### **Mandela Day 2016**

Using her initiative and passion to work towards a safer community, Mdoda identified 20 young people in her community between the ages of 16 and 20 and is planning an afternoon event for them on Mandela Day 2016, to inspire them, bring them hope and help them to realise that there is an alternative lifestyle to work towards.

The programme for her Mandela Day event will be motivational and will feature a variety of speakers. One of them will be a youth from Mdoda's community who will speak from the experience of turning around his own life for the better. Now a lifeguard at the community swimming pool in Philippi, he is motivating young people to stay at school and to realise their dreams.

Mdoda does not intend to stop at the Mandela Day event, but, using her ABET training, has plans to open a centre in the evenings that will provide an opportunity for the 20 young people to strive to further their education and to complete their matric qualifications, so igniting their hopes of reaching their dreams.

The Mandela Day 2016 event will therefore be the start of a process whereby Mdoda hopes to provide these first 20 young people with the opportunity of a new start. “HOPE is what inspires and lights the dreams of young people. This is what Mdoda, with few resources, is passionately striving for,” said Mhlanzi Gindi Trustee and educationist, Joan Wright. “Let us acknowledge the passion and drive of these young people and encourage others to take up the baton and follow suit.”

### **Growing up in poverty**

“I’m 28 years of age and I love working with children all ages, gender and race. Growing up in Khayelitsha has made me strong and I realised the importance of having my own Early Childhood Development centre and starting a youth group called *Sisonke* (together),” said Mdoda. “Growing up in poverty and a community that is exposed to many criminal activities such as drugs, robbery and full of children dropping out of school and falling pregnant has made me realise the need for an ECD of my own and a youth group to motivate young people to change and achieve positive things.

“I’ve been a victim of crime three times in a year and I also had kids at an early age (of) 16 years so I’ve realised that the youth of Khayelitsha is lost and have nowhere to go and find a home to empower them for the future. They don’t deserve to be locked in jail or beaten and killed but they need someone to help them for the journey of life and the challenges that affect growing up.”

### **Passion**

Nocawe’s passion for children started at an early age, when she was a dance teacher in Khayelitsha. “I learnt how to communicate with children and became a ‘mother’ to many, young as I was.

“As a result of this, I went back to study Early Childhood Development at Cape Town College. I am currently studying ABET part-time through UNISA,” she said.

### **Building a strong foundation**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a special focus of the Social Responsibility initiatives of Mhani Gingi, in line with the organisation's belief in building a strong foundation for tomorrow's society. In the 2015/2016 financial year, Mhani Gingi worked with 14 ECD centres and 57 ECD practitioners in Nyanga, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Philippi, impacting on 600 children and their families.

### **Closing the gap through innovation and inclusivity**

Many issues affecting the youth, including teen suicide, substance abuse, single parenting, disability and mental health, will be explored when Mhani Gingi together with the 1.6 Million Club South Africa and Akeso Specialised Psychiatric Clinics launch a series of Health Events in Bonteheuwel, Cravenby Estate-Ravensmead, Nyanga-Philippi and Retreat communities of Cape Town during July and August 2016. The theme of the Health Events will be "Closing the Health Gap through Innovation and Inclusivity".

The first of the Health Events will be a seminar to be hosted on 16 July 2016 by Akeso Specialised Psychiatric Clinics for the eight ECD principals trained last year. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, SADAG, will provide speakers on health issues while The Light and Healing Centre will supply two therapists to provide massages for the principals. African Extracts, makers of rooibos skincare products, will donate gifts for them.

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#### HEALTH EVENTS IN JULY AND AUGUST 2016

Mhani Gingi Social Entrepreneurial Network together with the 1.6 Million Club South Africa will launch Health Events in various communities of Cape Town in July and August 2016 to honour Youth Month in June and Women's Month in August. The Health Events to be held in Bonteheuwel, Cravenby-Ravensmead, Nyanga-Philippi and Retreat will explore the theme of "Closing the Health Gap through Innovation and Inclusivity" and are a continuation of the successful interactive Women's Health Seminars held in 2015.

The Western Cape Department of Health will make Health Professionals available for screening and referrals while the South African Depression and Anxiety Group, SADAG, will make speakers available. African Extracts will donate products for the ECD practitioners.

#### **The topics that will be covered in the health seminars include the following:**

1. **Teen Suicide:** How this accounts for more than nine percent of teen deaths, according to SADAG, and is on the rise in South Africa as youth are subjected to increasing pressures.
2. **Substance Abuse:** The cause of multiple problems in communities.
3. **Single Parenting:** The stresses leading to mental ill health for single parents and the elderly who are looking after their grandchildren when parents have passed on prematurely.
4. **Disability and Skills Development:** The importance of economic freedom in counteracting ill health.
5. **Mental Health and Disability:** Understanding mental problems and addressing stigma.

#### **Planned Health Events 2016:**

1. **16 July 2016:** Eight Early Learning Centre Principals will attend a Health Seminar hosted by Akeso Psychiatric Clinic, Kenilworth.
2. **23 July 2016:** A Health Event in association with **The Mentally Disabled - Schools & Training Centres healthcare organisation's Blouvlei School** in Retreat will focus on the various mental health stresses and challenges surrounding inclusivity for people with disabilities. In collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, Mhani Gingi and an abled supervisor from the 1.6 Million Club South Africa will be working with four affected individuals from the institution in 2016.
3. **20 August 2016:** A Health Event in the Cravenby-Ravensmead area will focus on Mental Health, Disability and Substance Abuse.
4. **27 August 2016:** A culminating Health Event in collaboration with the Bonteheuwel Walking Ladies group will focus on Health and Human Rights.