



USIZO News

Usizo = Zulu for aid

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Welcome to USAID South Africa's newsletter, "Usizo"—Zulu for "aid". This publication reports important and timely news about USAID's activities in South Africa.

Zama Goes To School Positively

Ten-year-old South African schoolgirl, Zama, confronts her tough life with a shy smile. The child faces her education and health challenges courageously, thanks to loving care and constant support from her mentor named Thoko Goba.



Photo: R. Zurba, USAID/SA

Maths is particularly difficult because Zama got a late start at school since she was frequently sick. Patient coaching from Thoko is paying off as Zama progresses through her lessons. "English is my favorite subject," explains Zama, "because the

language is used throughout the world."

The little girl chooses her words thoughtfully and says, "I want to be a doctor when I grow up, because I have been sick often and know many people who are sick. I want to help them." Then she reverts back to her home language, Zulu, and says, "Thoko is [like] my mother...my sister...she helps me a lot. I learn from her. They [the project] give us food to [take home and] eat...they give us spinach to plant at home."

Thoko's mentoring goes beyond schoolbooks, medical discipline and HIV/AIDS education. As part of the positive influence on Zama's life, she teaches other activities that are useful every day. Zama enjoys the new skills she is acquiring in agriculture, sewing and cooking. "I especially like preparing spaghetti," she smiles.

"Thoko is [like] my mother...my sister...she helps me a lot. I learn from her. They [the project] give us food to [take home and] eat...they give us spinach to plant at home."

Mentors and girls thrive within support groups that meet several times each week. Girls also benefit from existing Children and Youth Clubs at the Child Aid Project.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its implementing partner, Winrock International, make the mentorship possible for Zama and nearly 1,500 South African girls through funding from President Bush's African Education Initiative. Dubbed the "Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program," mentoring for primary school girls has been organized in all nine provinces.

Both Zama and Thoko are part of the heart of Soweto's Child Aid project, a multifaceted community-based initiative organized by Humana People to People. The US Government specifically assists vulnerable girls like Zama who pursue their potential by going to school.

Zama and Thoko are both living positively with HIV. Zama is learning how to take her antiretroviral medication twice a day with Thoko's help. Thoko models the importance of taking the right amount of medicine on time as she completes her own treatment for Tuberculosis.

Thoko, like all mentors participating in the Child Aid program, went through intensive training to make her an effective counselor, role model, friend and big sister. Zama's face lights up when she sees Thoko every day after school. Zama eagerly shows Thoko her school assignments then begins her academic coaching and tutoring sessions.



From left: Thoko and Zama



Thoko shows Zama how to plant nutritious vegetables

Alliances for Economic Growth and Job Creation

On March 9-10, 2006, USAID held a two-day forum entitled "Alliances for Economic Growth and Job Creation" in Johannesburg. The forum brought together 90 private sector prospects interested in joint programs with USAID South Africa. The private sector partners included local and international companies, foundations, universities and other relevant participants.

USAID highlighted program areas where the mission is working, emphasizing opportunities for partnership. USAID showcased its unique Global Development Alliance (GDA) model to the private sector and promoted its benefits and challenges. The forum has already strengthened the Mission's network of new potential partners, apart from traditional USAID partners, and initiated a series of discussions on tentative areas for building alliances. The USAID Washington GDA Secretariat assisted in arranging the forum that was covered by Business Report at this link: <http://www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=561&fArticleId=3148899>.

The forum was launched at the Consul General's reception in Johannesburg on March 8, 2006. At the reception, attended by over 30 heads of South African and multinational corporations, the Chargé d'Affaires Donald Teitelbaum, outlined U.S. Government development priorities in South Africa. Mr. Teitelbaum noted that, "While government and foreign donors can play an important role in promoting job creation and economic growth, our success



From left: USAID Mission Director, Carleene Dei, with Department of Trade and Industry Deputy Minister, Elizabeth Thabethe

depends in large part on South Africa's private sector."

USAID South Africa has already achieved results with support from the GDA Secretariat in restructuring courts and reducing caseloads; boosting teachers' knowledge and capabilities in math, science and technology; and protecting intellectual property rights. USAID South Africa also supports two new GDA partnerships. One of these, with the United Nations Association of the United States of America, constructs classrooms and provides psycho-social support for HIV/AIDS-affected children in South Africa, Namibia and Ethiopia. The second alliance is a high profile GDA with City Year South Africa encouraging civic leadership and national service among South Africans while developing their job market skills. In addition, USAID South Africa continues to fund public-private partnerships which, while not technically qualifying as a GDA, leverage significant private sector resources for development programs.

For additional details on these events, please contact Zema Semunegus at zsemunegus@usaid.gov or by telephone at +27-12-452-2268

The Birth of a "South African Economic Think Tank"

South Africa will never have to rely on foreign expertise to determine its economic future. Unlike most African countries, South Africa now has significant economic capacity and expertise within Government, and its universities continue to produce high quality graduates. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has made a significant contribution towards building economic capacity in South Africa and the Mandela Economics Scholars Program (MESP) Programs have been at the forefront of this campaign.

"A worthwhile effort", pronounced Thabo Chauke, a recent MESP graduate. Thabo completed a Master's of Commerce Degree in Economics at the University of Cape Town. He is now the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Deputy Director representing the Americas in the International Trade and Economic Development Division. He manages relations and facilitates trade and investment between South Africa and North America.

Dr. Neil Cohen, USAID's Economist, has been responsible for the MESP since 1998. He asserts, "MESP graduates, like Thabo, are able to provide appropriate advice to Government because so many of them also come from

poor communities and understand the economic conditions and needs of South Africans."

Prior to independence in 1994, math and science education was weak and largely unavailable to the majority of South Africa's population. This contributed to a serious shortage of black economists in and outside of Government. Recognizing this deficit and the important role of economists in policymaking, the United States and South African Governments established the USAID MESP Program in 1996. USAID has spent more than US\$3 million on training 146 black-South African economic professionals.

"A worthwhile effort"

The first group of (MESP I) students pursued Ph.D. and Masters Degrees at various Universities in the United States. Almost all of these scholars have returned to work for South African government departments. In 2001, funding was made available to assist three South African universities to upgrade their economics curricula and to attract and train qualified economists from previously disadvantaged groups. USAID enabled these Universities to

The Birth of a “South African Economic Think Tank”

develop courses and provide 76 scholarships in the areas of labor economics, trade and regulatory policy and resource/environmental economics.

Thabo Chauke is one of the students who received a MESP Scholarship. He is convinced that if it was not for the support he received from USAID, he would not have achieved as much as he has in life and in work today. Thabo comes from a poor and single parent family in Hammanskraal, a rural town that was previously part of the Apartheid ‘independent state’ of Bophuthatswana. Thabo’s aunts and uncles scraped together enough money to get him through a Bachelor’s Degree in Commerce, but this was not enough for him to further his studies in economics. He even tried selling vegetables and sweets to raise the necessary funds.



MESP Graduate, Thabo Chauke

Industry in 1995 and held a number of junior positions. He was determined to find a way to improve his knowledge and position. Thabo heard about the MESP program from a previous MESP scholar. He heeded the advice of his friend and applied for the scholarship. Soon thereafter he was enrolled as a Mandela Economics Scholar at the University of Cape Town, where he successfully completed a Master’s Degree in Economics in 2005.

Ms. Miyelani Mashimbye, another MESP scholar, works as a Budget Analyst in the National Treasury. For her, the MESP program “made my dreams come true”. Similar sentiments are echoed by Basu Sangqu (Vanderbilt, MA 1999) who is Ambassador to The African Union and Sehloko (Francis) Moloi (Harvard LL 2002) who is now the High Commissioner to India.

MESP Scholars such as Thabo, Miyelani and Selebogo are already having an impact on the design and implementation of economic policies in South Africa. They form part of a large and increasingly influential “South African Economic Think Tank” that was born out of MESP and will continue to play an important role in the development of South Africa.

Thabo was offered a job at the Department of Trade and

“Put The Children First”



Phyllis Malope (center) cares for the welfare of children

Phyllis Malope is passionate about vulnerable children whose parents have died from AIDS. She cares for 1,200 orphans (including 43 child-headed families) as Director of Philani Community Development serving Westonaria communities, 40 kilometers west of Johannesburg.

The former farmland is overgrown and overpopulated by 6,000 tenants left behind by white commercial farmers who pulled out in 1989. Most residents are jobless; their families suffer poverty and illiteracy. One school serves the community. Classes stop after 9th grade. Youngsters don’t have train fare to reach the closest high school 35 kilometers away.

“Challenges remain, but we have opportunities to expand and build Philani’s capacity.”

Phyllis is a teacher and has lectured at a South African university. Her community career began in the 1980s when she started a kindergarten class for toddlers whose parents worked on local farms. She worried about uneducated young people struggling to find jobs. Phyllis volunteered

her services to a local group, Philani Community Development. Philani had no offices or funding, relying on volunteers to help youth survive their harsh conditions.

Phyllis yearned to improve the children’s lives. She asked friends in the development sector about assistance sources and heard about USAID funding for IDASA to train organizations to participate effectively in local governance.



Photo: R. Zurba, USAID/SA



Photo: R. Zurba, USAID/SA

Phyllis learned how local officials work and lobbied councilors and ward committees to assist Philani’s HIV/AIDS efforts. She secured office space and equipment. Philani became partners with the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the local municipality which provides food parcels. DSD also funds a social worker’s salary. Philani caregivers help orphans obtain identity documents and access government grants. American T.V. Personality, Oprah Winfrey, donated school uniforms

“Put The Children First”

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Phyllis Malope explains the achievements of Philani

made by Philani skills trainees.

Today, Phyllis represents West Rand District Municipality in the Local Aids Council, implementing a civil society-local government Joint AIDS Strategy. Phyllis modestly

attributes Philani's achievements to USAID and her training from IDASA.

Phyllis wiped tears from her cheeks when describing one of many heartbreaking experiences: “A lady arrived with her 4-year-old son on her back and holding her 6-year-old boy's hand. They were all sickly. The mother said, ‘I'm

going to hospital. I don't know what to do with my children. My family don't want us. I live in a basement. I've heard about you—may I leave my children here? If I come back, I'll take the kids. If I don't, please don't let them be apart.” Phyllis said, “The mother died of AIDS...the boys stay with me now.”

That was three years ago. She adopted the brothers and, with her own son, is the proud mother of three. One of her new sons is HIV positive and takes antiretroviral medicine. Phyllis speaks fondly of the boy who obviously adores her. He dreams of working one day because “I want to buy a Mercedes Benz for Mom.”

Phyllis says: “Challenges remain, but we have opportunities to expand and build Philani's capacity.”

(“Philani” is Zulu for “be alive”)

HIGHLIGHTS



South African Mothers visit White House



Washington, D.C.: First Lady, Laura Bush, was so impressed by the remarkable mothers she met living positively with HIV in Cape Town last year, she invited the moms for tea and brunch at the White House. Six

South African women from the Mothers to Mothers-To-Be project that USAID supports with President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funding accepted the First Lady's invitation and spent a week in America in March.

Mrs. Bush said at the White House reception for the mothers, “When I was in South Africa, I visited a Mothers-To-Be clinic in a township called Khayelitsha, which means ‘new home’. South African women who are pregnant and HIV-positive have found a new home of sorts in the Mothers to Mothers-To-Be program at the Khayelitsha Maternity Unit...I met the unit's senior site coordinator, Babalwa Mbono.”

Mbono told how she learned she was HIV positive in 2002. Married and pregnant with her second child, Mbono tested for HIV. She now manages her HIV infection with help from Mothers to Mothers-To-Be, and she has a beautiful, healthy baby who is HIV-negative. Today she uses her experience to help change the lives of HIV-positive mothers-to-be who seek comfort and courage during their pregnancies.

The First Lady said, “Mothers to Mothers help mend broken hearts following a diagnosis of HIV infection. Pregnant women learn how to live well in spite of infection. Once they learn to live with HIV, they can fulfill their dreams of seeing their children grow up healthy and strong. The program helps break the stigma of HIV and AIDS by teaching, training and befriending the expectant mothers who have tested positive.”

HIV/AIDS is a crisis of epidemic proportions that hits African women and children the hardest. In South Africa, 370,000 people die from AIDS each year and millions of orphans are left behind.

Beyond hospitality, Mrs. Bush structured important meetings for the mothers with health and educational professionals in the United States, including a symposium at Georgetown University and visits to USAID and other agencies and institutions involved in HIV and AIDS research, education, prevention, treatment, and care.

USAID South Africa's Senior Technical Advisor for HIV/AIDS, Dr. Melinda Wilson, accompanied the mothers to the States and arranged special briefings at USAID's Washington premises. “I'm so proud of how brave these mothers are,” said Dr. Wilson. “We will never forget one moment of our time spent at the White House hosted by the First lady.”

In the last two years, PEPFAR has provided \$238.7 million to South Africa. President Bush's 2006 budget includes an additional \$221.5 million. Mothers-to-Mothers benefits from this partnership, as do many other organizations.

The U.S. Agency for International Development provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance worldwide. USAID supports people's efforts to develop themselves and their countries. USAID programs in South Africa move the country closer to its goal of equality and a better life for all. USAID programs aim to strengthen South Africa politically, socially and economically. Historically disadvantaged South Africans are assisted to improve their abilities in six key areas:

◆ Democracy and Good Governance ◆ Education ◆ HIV/AIDS and Health ◆ Economic Analysis ◆ Sustainable Employment ◆ Housing and Local Government Services

Americans working with South Africans for South Africans