

NEWS LETTER

At the beginning of 2016 allow me to share some highlights of 2015 at Phakamisa.

Gym

Every morning, thanks to Virgin Active gym instructor, Keletso (who volunteers his time and service) Phakamisa care givers had a chance to do physical training. The care givers really enjoy their physical training sessions. These are some of the comments made by them:

"I like the gym since I started doing it I no longer have knee problems".

"We've been motivated by the gym even if we are not at Phakamisa we continue with our group at home".

"In our area we have now started soccer teams and the idea was given to us by this young boy (instructor). It really helped us we are now fit and no longer have sicknesses".

Caregivers

Devotions are still seen as one of the most important aspects by our care-givers. They take place in the morning and help create a sense of belonging, whilst also building trust with one another - hence, it allows individuals from different groups to open up and share their stories much more easily.

Sometimes the stories are happy, however this year most of the stories that were shared were sad - rape within family members, illnesses, and death and lately towards the end of the year, five members from different groups experienced some suicide attempts within their families.

One lady shared this during devotions: *"I have lost 2 sons in the last 2 years and am left with*

only one son who is also very critical in hospital and he was the only person working as a taxi driver. Please remember me in your prayers" said the old lady.

Sadly her son didn't recover from his illness, and he passed on at the end November.

Early Childhood development

Child-Minder and Edu Care training was successfully completed in 2015. Over 175 teachers graduated. One of the graduating teachers told us; *"When I first came to train at Phakamisa I didn't have any experience at all, but I was looking after about 17 children. I completed my Child-Minder course and noticed some growth in my crèche. I was so motivated I came to train on the Edu Care course. Today I have 52 children in my school and I am now receiving funding from Social Development. Thank you Phakamisa without you I couldn't have been where I am today"*

Economic Empowerment Projects

Phakamisa's empowerment projects (sewing, beadwork, cooking and gardening) went very well during 2015. Thanks to our funders and donors who made these projects possible, the care givers have achieved great things. At the end of year party they modelled the outfits and beadwork they had made, and told us how they have managed to earn some income through selling the goods they learned to make at Phakamisa. The cooking ladies have been baking and selling to school children and at the taxi rank. The gardeners are able to eat their produce as well as selling to their neighbours and to Phakamisa and Pinetown

church staff. One care giver said *"When I first came to Phakamisa I was so scared, but I found the staff and other care givers very warm and welcoming. Since I have been coming my grandchildren and I haven't gone to bed without food. I have 2 gardens, one in my yard and one in the communal area. I do beadwork and sell at the pension points and to my neighbours as well. I thank God for such an organisation. I thank everyone who supports Phakamisa"*

Orphans and Vulnerable Children

There has been an increase in the number of children who attend our wandering schools. With the help of social work students from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, parenting groups have been formed with the care givers and parents of these children. This has led to a recommendation by the social worker to involve some of them into Phakamisa programmes.

Tholunthandu

The group grew enormously in 2015. The majority of group members were in and out of hospital throughout the year. We thank God for being with them throughout their trying times. We are trusting and praying for their health during 2016.

Poultry Project

This project is undertaken by our male group. It's very interesting to see them so committed and making sure that the project runs smoothly. They have selected their own committee, who meet at Phakamisa, to run the administration of the project. It was good hearing one of the men saying: *"You know, at the beginning I wasn't too sure where this was going but now I can see if we work hard in 2016 we will be floating with this project"* The

group has started selling chicken to the community and the Phakamisa staff as well.

Special Events that took place in 2015

Thursday in Black - joint prayer with all the groups remembering all those women who were/are abused, physically, emotionally and economically. Awareness of domestic violence is raised on this day

Child Protection Week - a social worker from Child Line visited our wandering school to do child abuse awareness with care givers and children

Woman's Day Celebration - Awareness and information was given regarding reporting and dealing with cases of abuse.

Heritage Day - celebrated by all groups jointly. Discussions regarding different cultural beliefs.

Christmas Parties:

The Christmas party is one of the events that the care givers wouldn't miss. They sing and dance together. About 400 care givers attended the party. It was very touching to hear one of the care givers saying:

"This year hasn't been a good year for me but I thank Phakamisa for everything, especially for this Christmas Party - even if I don't have anything at home for Christmas at least I have enjoyed this day so much"

The children and Tholuthando had their own Christmas parties. There was lots of happiness and laughter.

Conclusion

I would like to thank everyone who supported us financially, physically and spiritually. We could have not survived the challenges of 2015 without you all. May our Father God grant you all and your loved ones a healthy and happy year. God Bless, Thokozani.