

**You don't have to be rich to make a difference in someone's life. You just need to share the little that you have to enable them to dream again**

***By Xabrina-Michel'li Thompson***

When I grew up I learnt that I originated from two generations of orphans and a lineage of poverty. When I started achieving certain goals in my life, I realized that I needed to break the cycle of poverty. Poverty is inherited from generation to generation and thanks to my adoptive parent's intervention in my life, I am one ginormous step closer to having been successfully disinherited.

At a very early age I was adopted by the Thompson's. I am the youngest of the Thompson's two biological and three adopted children. My adoptive father is a 75-year-old retired estate agent and my mother is a 72-year-old retired teacher.

My adoptive parents took me out of a never ending cycle of poverty when they were already in their fifties, and together with their two biological children and two other adopted children, showered me with love and gave me the very best private school education - vital in my country - that money can buy. And it's not like they are rich. Quite the opposite.

The International Association for Community Development help people all over the world to take their future into their own hands and as this is my first article as the IACD's Youth Correspondent for South Africa, I thought it would be best if I start with a Non-profit organization who work with orphaned and vulnerable children, where it all began for me.

***Mama Ntombi's Community Projects***

Mama Ntombi's Community Projects is a relief and development organization based in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, that seeks to holistically raise the most destitute out of debilitating poverty. Their current programs aim to change the present status and self-esteem of vulnerable children so they become achievers in life and offer hope and support to the wider community.

Mama Ntombi's Community Projects has been working in the Jika Joe and Ezinketheni informal settlements since 2007. Since December 2014 they started working in a poor area in Northdale. Their focus is on children as they are the most vulnerable members of society, but also offer support to the rest of the community. Most of the children are orphaned and living with aged grandmothers, other caregivers and some are in child-headed households. Their main objective is to provide hope for a brighter future for the children they work with.



### ***Grandmothers become mothers again***

During my time spent in Ezinketheni, I was taken to the home of an elderly woman, her home a structure made of mud and sticks, with a tin roof. A grandmother, who has mothered twenty-two orphaned children in her life, with the little that she had. Even hosting hundreds of children in her backyard for Sunday school during the early days of Mama Ntombi's Community Projects. This grandmother is the epitome of selflessness, who took on the role of mother with the belief that families come first and should stay together at all costs. A true South African hero and advocate for Ubuntu.



The Mama Ntombi's Community Projects manager Ms. Sandra Pillay was in absolute awe of how she had assisted her project and was able to raise funds to build her a house. Yet the grandmother still gives up her room in the house built for her, which she gives to her grandson.

### ***A brighter future for orphaned and vulnerable children***

Mama Ntombi's Community Projects key focus areas are health, community development, sports and culture, and education. As there are no preschools in Ezinketheni, Mama Ntombi's Community Projects run an early childhood education program for orphaned and disadvantaged children, ages three to four. The program includes a preschool, reading group, and feeding scheme (probably the only meal they will receive for the day).

I was fortunate enough to partake in the program and spend time with the children. It was an incredibly humbling experience for me, because I saw my grandmothers and mothers faces in theirs and was so glad to be a part of a program giving orphaned and vulnerable children opportunities for a brighter future through education and skills. Unlike my grandmother who was both an orphan and illiterate, these children are being given the foundation for literacy and numeracy which is pivotal for their future. It is only through education that they will break their family's generational curses, just as I did, thanks to my adoptive parents providing me with an education.



Mama Ntombi's Community Projects have many opportunities and programs that allow you to change orphaned and vulnerable children's lives, give them hope and enable them to dream again. By giving back to a disadvantaged child, you are making a significant difference in the lives of the children, their family's and as a result, their community, so they may see a better tomorrow.

We are all inheritors of colonial legacy's, at birth some of us benefit from those legacy's and others remain oppressed by them. It is only through education and community development that we can break down these colonial barriers that divide us.

Our purpose as people on this planet is very simple. Our purpose is to love each other. If we could learn to fulfill our responsibility to God, we wouldn't have all the problems in the world today. We would just have love, just as it was meant to be.

