

mpower

people • opportunities • relationships

Mpower works with vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth, mainly from adolescent and youth-headed households in Cato Crest (Durban) and Etete, Hambanathi and Nkobongo (KZN North Coast) with the aim of empowering young people by helping them to develop their life skills and by encouraging them to have a greater sense of agency and responsibility.

Casework: Individuals and Families

“Get out there...No one else is going to do it for you!”

by Amfana

My name is Khanyelihle Mazanga but many people call me Amfana. I've been on a life-changing journey with my Life Coach from Mpower. It all started when my Mom and I were worried about the fact that I was sitting at home, not going to school and not working. I tried looking for jobs and sometimes I would get temporary jobs but that wasn't enough. I wanted to study further. I wanted to be able to provide for my mother who has been there all my life and who sacrificed a lot for me. After passing my Matric my Mom couldn't afford to pay for my tertiary fees. I wanted to study IT but I also had other dreams. I wanted to do work that would serve the community, like being a Police Man, A Soldier, Fire-fighter or a Paramedic. During our sessions with my Life Coach we discussed different options and she gave me homework to go and research the things I wanted to do. Doing this wasn't always easy. Sometimes this research led to more disappointment. At one point I found a Fire-fighter school but it was too expensive and there was no way my Mom would be able to pay for it. But I didn't give up. I went to speak to my previous teacher about opportunities to volunteer while I was looking for more long-term career opportunities. I ended up sharing my dream of becoming a Fire-fighter with him and he told me about a Fire-fighter school in Umhlathuze Municipality that was far cheaper. Even though this opportunity was cheaper my Mom still had to come up with money to pay for it plus pay for my accommodation and food. My Mom doesn't have a high paying job. She went from one bank to another asking for a loan.

All the banks she went to turned her down. Then she asked her employers at Thumbtribe and they agreed to lend her the money for me to attend Fire-fighter school in Umhlathuze. I was happy and nervous at the same time. I knew I had to study very hard and as soon as I got there I made sure I mixed with other young people who had the same goal and we started a study group. We had to do 2 levels and my hard work paid off. I passed both levels with flying colours. My journey hasn't ended yet as I am still looking for a job and in the mean time I am volunteering my skills to get experience. I would like to thank my Mom who never gave up on me. I know she sacrificed a lot for me to be where I am. I would also like to thank my Mom's employers, Thumbtribe, who trusted my Mom with a loan for my training. They also connected me with Mpower and that is how I got to have a Life Coach. I wish more young people could have the opportunity to have a Life Coach; someone to sit down and talk to about their dreams and plan towards their goals because I know how this has helped me.

A few weeks ago I had an opportunity to share my story in Hambanathi during a Behaviour Change Workshop that was hosted by Mpower. My message to the young people there was:

“Work hard, research what you want to do, and most of all don't waste opportunities that come your way. Get out there and find something to do until you reach your goal. No one else is going to do it for you.”

I was greatly humbled by this experience of talking to them. This was my way of paying it forward.

Community Projects

Children's Afterschool Club.

This Children's afternoon Club continues to be a place where 80 children come together every Monday to have fun while learning. Our highlight this term has been the amazing help we received from the Methodist Church's Women's Auxiliary (WA) members. The WA chose Mpower as their project this year so they have been supporting us in different ways. Some of the young people received beanies and jerseys in the colder months. We have also received a steady supply of sandwich fillers and craft materials for the educational activities we do with the children. Support like this encourages us to do even more because we see the difference that some of these simple items make in these young people's lives. So a very sincere thank you to the Methodist Church's WA!

We also had a closing party that was supported by several individuals and companies. The young people had great fun and it is always very humbling to witness their gratitude and happy faces.

They then surprised us by asking if they could perform a Zulu dance and some songs for us. It was wonderful to witness the growth in confidence of these young people. We thank our friends of Mpower for the support. We greatly appreciate your contributions to the spirit of joy to be found in our Children's Club this year.



Teenagers empowerment groups - Etete and Nkobongo

This term we finished the Hero Book journey, through which each young person in our groups had the opportunity to be the author and illustrator of their own story about their goals, the obstacles standing in their way and their special knowledges and skills for overcoming them. When the Hero Books were completed we held a party in celebration and our young heroes had an opportunity to share parts of their Hero Book if they wanted to. Some invited people who had supported them in some way in their lives to hear their stories too.

After hearing the stories, listeners were asked to affirm the story tellers by sharing how the stories had touched them. In one of the groups I facilitated I noticed that after one of the young girls shared her story everyone in the group had tears in their eyes. At first I thought it was because her story related some painful experiences, but when the listeners shared how her story had touched them I realised that they were moved because they were so inspired by her strength and resilience and her determination to move forward with her life and make something beautiful out of it. I was especially moved by the response that other young people gave her and how they encouraged her to go on.

Some of the Hero Book authors have decided to publish their stories so that others can read them, learn from them and be inspired to work towards overcoming problems in their own lives.

Siyakudumisa Group

reported by Bongiwe Mthembu

(This group is sponsored by St Thomas Church, Musgrave)

This is a group of girls that meet every Friday afternoon. This year the girls received blankets from Adapt IT, beanies from the Methodist Church WA and new school uniforms from St Thomas Church. These girls do not only struggle academically but they also face difficulties in their personal lives. Therefore witnessing these young girls' excitement at receiving something to make their lives a little better was a very happy moment for me too! The blankets and beanies came at the right time when it was cold and they kept these young girls warm. The new uniforms helped to bring back a sense of pride in their appearance at school and a greater feeling of self confidence. Thank you to all who sponsored these wonderful gifts.

To the girls' delight the Siyakudumisa group were treated to KFC and party packs at their closing party. They also each received a toiletry hamper as a gift to take home. Thank you to St Thomas Church and an anonymous donor for making these gifts that were so appreciated.



Community Projects (cont.)



Beading Group

Mpower Beading Group commissioned by Cato Crest Primary School to create pieces for Heritage Day

Reported by Phumzile Mkhize

The Mpower Beading group was commissioned to craft some pieces for the Cato Crest Primary School's Heritage Celebration. The school bought their own beads and the young members of the beading group offered their skills for free. As their teacher I am so proud of what they did and I could see how proud they were too when their creations made their fellow learners shine during the cultural activities with other schools.



Hambanathi Group

reported by Nonny Mpuku

Cleaning Campaign

I love my community very much and when I realised we had a problem with litter I decided to do something about it. I invited the young people I work with and some others from the community to participate in a cleaning campaign and it was a success! The Ethekwini Municipality came with a big truck, they had prizes for the children and they taught them about taking care of the environment. We planted trees as well. Phelo Muyanga, our Mpower programme co-ordinator was our guest speaker and she spoke to the community about making a difference in whatever small way you can. She also mentioned that no matter how young or old you are you can do your part in making a difference by joining forces with others. The event ended in dancing and celebrating. A member of Umhlali Methodist church donated cold drinks for after the event. I am grateful to everyone who supported and encouraged me.



Connecting Communities:

Family Soccer Day.

It has been Mpower's goal to connect young people from different communities and one of the Mpower Community Workers came up with an idea to do this in the form of a Soccer Day. We wrote a proposal and asked Khanya Africa to sponsor us. They were happy to help and the hard work started. Our soccer players were ready and waiting at the Mandeni grounds when the visitors arrived to join in the fun and the soccer games began! After some fun matches all the children who participated received chocolate medals and we had a picnic while being entertained with some traditional Zulu and gumboot dancing put on for us by Phumzile's dance group. It was wonderful to have representatives from Thumb-tribe, Khanya Africa, Umhlali Methodist Church and Manning Road Methodist Church to enjoy this special day with us. We thank you for your support. Some friendships were forged between the children visiting from Ballito and the children from the beneficiary families that Mpower supports. We hope it is not too long before we can host another event to bring people together in this way again.

Team Development



In November our team attended training in Narrative Theatre.

These training opportunities are always great for the team as this is where we have the opportunity to network with others who are using narrative practices to inspire hope and encourage positive change. During the course of the training we had the opportunity to work together in our team to plan an intervention for one of our teenage groups for February next year. It was very encouraging to know that we will be implementing the skills we learned on the training in practice in the very near future. Some of the other participants in the training invited us to attend the interventions they had planned and to share our facilitation skills. This was a humbling moment because it affirmed the skills of our Mpower facilitators. We thank our Director, Jeanne Haley, who is always looking for new ways to develop and grow our team's skills.



Christmas Greetings

From all of us at Mpower we would like to wish our friends and supporters a very happy Christmas!

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."
Desmond Tutu.

Consider giving a gift with meaning in this season of hope!

These gift cards, featuring portraits sketched by local artists, of Mpower's community workers and their stories, were inspired by their passion and their work. If you would like to purchase one or more of these gift cards, and thereby contribute to their valuable work spreading hope in the lives of vulnerable children and youth in their communities, please e-mail Jeanne at jeanne@mpowersa.mobi for more information.

