



A STORY OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THE SMALL TOWN OF HOFMEYR

Transforming the small Eastern Cape town of Hofmeyr by focusing on
what is **STRONG** in the community and not what is **WRONG**

Moving from Charity and Welfare to Development

**Written by: Bernie Dolley (Director, Ikhala Trust) and
Teresa Opperman (Manager, Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope)**



*"If you want to go fast, travel alone;
if you want to go far, travel together" - African Proverb*

INTRODUCTION

Hofmeyr is a small Karoo town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, 20km west of the Bamboesberg mountain range. It lies 64km north-east of Cradock at an altitude of 1 252 meters.

According to the 2011 census, the population of Hofmeyr proper is about 326 persons and the neighbouring township of Luxolweni is about 3 354. In former times it lay at the center of a flourishing sheep-farming district and managed the Teviot salt pans 10km to its west.

Founded in 1873, the town was initially named Maraisburg. To avoid confusion with the Gauteng area of Maraisburg it was renamed Hofmeyr in 1911 in honour of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr (Onze Jan), a campaigner for the equal treatment of Afrikaans and English and a prominent figure in the Eerste Taalbeweging.

The Hofmeyr Skull, belonging to a 36 000 year old anatomically modern human, was found in 1952 in the dry wash of the Vlekpoort River just outside Hofmeyr.



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE TOWN

The town of Hofmeyr once had two attorneys, two banks, a chemist, two doctors and a large school and hostel in town. The town started dwindling when the tar road to Cradock was completed and the folk started to travel to Cradock, sending their

children to school there and then also did all their business in Cradock. Currently there are seven bus services that transport most of the government pensioners to Cradock to do their shopping. This has a knock-on effect for the town as the money is spent elsewhere and not contributing to the local economy of Hofmeyr.

The Sunday School (where the current community centre is now situated) once had 70 children on a Sunday. These days they are lucky if there are six children, hence the church made the building available to Hugs of Hope.

Hunting takes place in the surrounding areas during the winter months and also during the December breaks. Accordingly there are at least five hunting lodges located around Hofmeyr that create a big tourist



attraction.

Merino sheep farming on the northern and north eastern side of the town, cattle farming up in the mountains and lucerne, potatoes and vegetable farming generates an income for many farm labourers in the area with a large proportion of the district receiving water from the Orange/Fish River scheme.

Hofmeyr and the surrounding towns have four schools. In total about 4 500 learners are transported to schools in the area. Most of the children are from families who

work on the farms.

Hofmeyr has a thriving Farmers Association, Women's Agricultural Association and the different church groups are all involved in uplifting the community of Hofmeyr. It has a large municipal clinic with good qualified staff members. The local South African Police services travel from Cradock to assist in Hofmeyr.



HOFMEYR HUGS OF HOPE: HOW IT ALL STARTED

The project was the initiative of Teresa Opperman (a farmer's wife). Teresa has suffered Type 1 Diabetes for the past 50 years and was becoming very frail and brittle over the last few years. By the Grace of God she was referred to Dr. G Podgorski in Port Elizabeth and her life changed for good. Through the positive changes that took place in her own life, Teresa wanted to pay it forward and assist others in her community to experience positive life changes. Says Teresa "when you are in a bad emotional

or physical shape, a HUG can make a huge difference", hence Hugs of Hope was birthed.

Teresa took to the streets, gathered all the people that were hungry, those facing social and economic challenges, the sick and the poor and they met in the local church hall. 35 people arrived for the first gathering.

Teresa rallied some volunteers who had all experienced hardships at some time through their lives, prepared a sumptuous

meal for the 35 people who were present and shared her vision of uplifting and empowering people from Hofmeyr.

She explained to people present that Hugs of Hope was not just about handing out goods to the poor but to involve them in programmes that would uplift their spirits, teach them basic sewing and cooking skills and assist them in thinking about and planning for their futures despite the conditions they find themselves in.

She approached two ladies, Sanet Coetzer (a cancer survivor) and Obre van Heerden (who had a near-death experience during childbirth) and works with them in crafting solutions for the socio-economic challenges in Hofmeyr.

Between them they visited different communities, introduced themselves and explained the purpose of Hugs of Hope. These were either members of the community who required assistance and wanted to transform their lives, or members of the community who felt that they could contribute by way of using their skills, gifts and talents.

“When you are in a bad emotional or physical shape, a HUG can make a huge difference”

They not only visited the community where they lived, but Teresa also visited surrounding communities, especially the small towns in the 100 km radius around Hofmeyr.

In Teresa's words *“I attended an Asset-Based Community Development Workshop in Tarkastad in December 2017 and I returned to Hofmeyr with big dreams, ambition and the project took off from there.”*



WHAT THEY ARE PROUD OF

Hugs of Hope was started with no external funding. Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope had no money. By tapping into local networks and resourceful people they were able to get so many things off the ground in record timing. To highlight just a few of their achievements - they have so many:

- Zettie Jordaan manages the Hugs of Hope Horse Riding Academy for children and adults with disabilities.
- They knitted 45 jerseys in five days for comedian Schalk Bezuidenhout's launch of his new book 'Truitjie Roer My Nie'. He handed out the jerseys at his book launches countrywide.
- They employ a Social Worker for 10 hours per month.
- They lobbied for Veterinary Services and now have a service on the last Tuesday of every month. All that is required from them is to provide meals to the Vets. 68 pets were sterilized and 117 tended to for skin conditions, deworming and other conditions in one session.



- They are determined to become a plastic-free town and, to this end and through a donation from Ikhala Trust, are making shopping bags which they sell at a small fee and lobbying the local shop owners to join them in the campaign. The local church minister has taken charge of getting the youth to assist him in cleaning the main streets of the town and they are provided with an incentive to do this. The establishment of a recycling project is the next step for the youth.



- They have an impressive network of resource people who provide them with all sorts of in-kind donations from venison donations to vegetables, clothing, office equipment, materials for sewing, wool for knitting and the list just goes on and on and on.
- Depot managers were appointed by Teresa, through her network of friends and family who collect and store donations until it gets too much, and then plans are made to courier it to Hofmeyr. This is often done by the Depot Managers themselves, or by good hearted people who want to contribute to Hugs. In this way, bakkie loads of stuff land at Hugs at regular intervals. Nothing ever goes to waste. If you cannot use it anymore, there is certainly somewhere out there who's been praying for exactly what you are throwing out. Torn and tattered clothes do not end up on a dump; they are recycled, repaired and restored and given to someone who loves them dearly.
- Teresa is a networker and gapper of note and once she puts her shoulder to the wheel there is no stopping her.



With 1 090 people on her WhatsApp list, only ten are friends. The rest of them count as her network. How many people can you load onto your own network?

- Hugs presented Pearl Lombard and Dadda de Jager with an over-locker and three sewing machines, and they have started a sewing project in Middelburg and Schoombee.
- Hugs was given permission to use the Community Centre every day of the six-week school holidays in 2019. They collected cereal boxes and rusk boxes, which were used to keep school learners entertained. They also collected roll-on bottles which they filled with liquid paint to keep the children occupied and stimulated. This allowed each child to take a large work of art to their parent's home for Christmas.
- Pearl Lombard and her husband Johan, (she was an estate agent in PE at Remax), has joined our team. She is motivated. Together they acquired a brand new Grace Quilting Machine for use by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope, to give our Quilts a professional finish.

The evolution of the Hofmeyr Hugs for Hope logo



STIMULATING THE LOCAL ECONOMY OF SMALL TOWNS

Small towns in the Eastern Cape are characterised by a number of factors, not excluding the following:

- Almost all of them are farming communities (albeit sheep, cattle or goats).
- The ongoing drought has had negative effects on all the farmers, which inadvertently affects the farm workers.
- Populations are poor, small and are mostly made up of older people and children.
- The cost of living is expensive as there are no major shopping malls or major stores.
- The quality of goods available for purchase is often inferior.
- Transport costs to the closest towns are expensive.
- 95% of people who live in these towns rely on social grants and are hugely in debt to loan sharks.
- There is hardly any formal employment so people leave the small towns for bigger towns.
- Youth over the age of 17 that could not finish school end up unemployed, and totally dependent on their relatives for food and shelter.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES THAT COULD HELP TO KEEP THE MONEY CIRCULATING IN THESE TOWNS?

- Grow local produce i.e. vegetables and fruit.
- Start a poultry farming project.
- Turning manure (any manure) and garden waste into fertilizer.
- Establish a second-hand clothing and furniture store.
- Run skills training projects.
- Baking: rusks, biscuits, cakes, pastries and breads on order.
- Approach the local bakery to start a baking incentive in collaboration with Southbakels, to give the staff ample training.
- Bottling and preserving: fruit syrups, jams, salads, pickles and salad dressings.
- Drying: herbs and spices produced in people's own gardens.



- Promote tourism - find the gems in the town and promote those on social media.
- Work closely with local government departments to seek out opportunities for job creation.
- Seek out collaborations with other external stakeholders including the Dept. of Social Development for the placement of students, learnerships and internships.
- Keep the youth occupied during school holidays.
- Host an Annual Hofmeyr Festival that involves everyone from the town: Hugs joined the local Karoo Gardens festival on 16 November 2019, and attracted interest from far and wide. They had a brilliant sales day.
- Hugs visits art and craft markets, advertises and networks relentlessly to attract interest in our products, and find this way of marketing to be very effective.

**WE OURSELVES FEEL
THAT WHAT WE ARE
DOING IS JUST A
drop
IN THE OCEAN.**

**BUT THE OCEAN WOULD
BE LESS BECAUSE OF
THAT MISSING DROP.**

- MOTHER TERESA -



FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE COLLECTIVE: A PARADIGM SHIFT - AN EXTRACT FROM PETRA KUENKEL

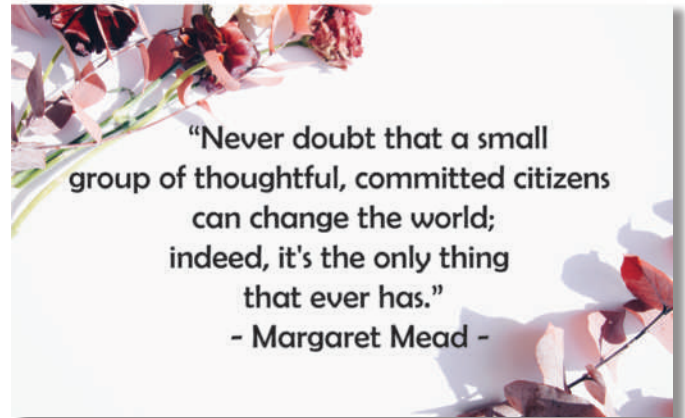
Leadership paradigms often refer only to individuals and the expansion of one person's skills. The challenges faced by fellow travelers, and indeed most challenges of sustainability, require us to go beyond the individual and build the capacity of groups and systems to move important issues of common concern forward. This requires collective action, dialogue and collaboration. It is the aspect of collectivity that has been missing in leadership development thus far.

"The championship sports teams and great jazz ensembles provide metaphors for acting in spontaneous yet co-ordinated ways. Outstanding teams in organisations develop the same sort of relationship - an *"operational trust"* - where each team member remains conscious of other team members and can be counted on to act in ways that complement each others' actions".

"Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances, but participate in creating new circumstances."

According to Peter Senge, the conceptual pioneer of the idea of learning organisations, speaks about team learning as a collective discipline, "Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances, but participate in creating new circumstances."

Every community needs a community motivator/ambassador/champion who have some of the qualities and attributes mentioned below, however the challenge is to ensure that no-one is left out and that everyone feels that they are valued and have a contribution to make towards the success of an activity or a project.



We therefore need to be mindful of the following:

- Dream of positive change and know that, working in concert with others, you can make a difference.
- Speak out with your own unique voice when you observe inequality.
- Speak with men about violence against women.
- Teach your sons and daughters to value each other, deeply and to respect their equality and their differences.
- Give money and time to organisations that are doing good.
- Embrace diversity and eliminate the concept of 'the other'.
- Recognize your own power and constantly share it.
- If in doubt say, yes.
- If in doubt, be generous and giving.
- If in doubt, choose compassion over anger - anger is dis-empowering.
- Be efficient and effective in your work, and still treat others softly.
- Be willing to be vulnerable – which is not about weakness but about truth.
- Find strength through positive connection with others.
- Value freedom and know that it emerges from trust and love.

PARADIGM FOUND

MS ANNE FIRTH MURRAY - AN EXTRACT

Reflecting on growth areas (challenges) faced by Hugs of Hope:

- We need more volunteers to step forward as the activities increase and more and more people are coming to Hugs.
- We are running out of space - the church hall that we currently use is getting too small for all the activities that are happening.
- Dedicated space for after-school care and homework supervision is also a challenge.
- Younger people need to be recruited into the organisation so they can learn valuable skills which may give them a better chance at finding employment.
- We use our own private vehicles for the pick-up and delivery of goods and this is not always conducive as we need our vehicles for our own personal use.
- An increase in social workers hours is required due to the number of cases she has to deal with. We need to find the funds to pay her for extra hours.
- Relationships with different government departments in our community need to improve. Perhaps we can have an Open Day to share what we do (my suggestion).
- Most of the personnel working at Hugs (as a labour of love - free of charge) are over the age of 60. They no longer want to attend courses and receive training outside of Hofmeyr. We need to incorporate a training schedule in Hofmeyr which they can attend and enlighten their own personal way of thinking and doing.



“YOU NEED TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO THINK IN POSSIBILITIES RATHER THAN LIMITATIONS”

There are many small but positive initiatives taking place in Hofmeyr. Below is Flippie Kleinveldt, who assists with recycling that he then exchanges for packaged meals. He is also the person responsible for supplying the whole of Twinsville with water during times of no electricity or water, which happens rather often. He collects every household's bottle

and takes it to be filled. They accompany him, and they do the filling of the bottle themselves.

Upon return with his bottles of water, they have to pack their sorted rubbish on his wagon for which he then receives food parcels from Hugs. The trailer was made with old wheelchair wheels that were thrown away on the refuse dump.



Flippie Kleinveldt

None of the ladies in the photo to the right could even use a sewing machine in the past and are now able to make beautiful quilts which they sell. Some of the income generated is ploughed back into Hugs. The material off-cuts that they use come from a wide range of sources. The first quilt completed is their property. They take it home, and then start with their own marketing and get orders, for which they can collect fabrics from Hugs, either to be sewn at Hugs or at home. A nominal fee is paid back to Hugs, but they set their own prices for the end-products that they produce and sell. They are not allowed to deliver without first receiving payment from their clients. Fabrics are received from the network of depots across South Africa.



MOVING FROM A NEEDS-BASED TO AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH

The “needs-based” (or conventional) approach has been dominant in the development field since the 1950s. It arose from the earlier welfare work of colonial missionaries and technocrats in the post war and “liberation” eras.

Rising out of this paradigm, communities have been conditioned to articulate problems and needs in a clear way to attract interventions (mostly projects) that can address needs. Conflict and competition often arises as a result of problems constantly being highlighted.

Although there may be good intentions, the needs-based approach has had some unintended consequences:

- Leaders become preoccupied with securing external resources
- Leaders play up problems and needs
- Members internalise what leaders are saying
- Deficit mentality (poverty consciousness) can develop
- Funds tend to be directed towards artificial categories of needs
- Most resources go to institutions ‘filling’ needs
- Dependency develops on external rather than internal resources and relationships
- Over the past say 10 years there has been an intentional move to shift the paradigms from needs to assets and to look for possibilities and opportunities.



STRENGTHENING PEOPLE-DRIVEN CHANGE PROCESSES

(EXCERPT FROM A MISEREOR CASE STUDY IN ASIA IN JANUARY 2017) - WWW.MISEREOR.ORG

CATALYSING CHANGE

FOR COMMUNITIES	FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS	FOR DONORS
Trust in your own capacity and the potential of your family and community to initiate change.	Support aspirations of local community.	Nurture a relationship of trust and patience with your partner organisations and try to understand their perspectives.
Build on available assets i.e. social, physical, natural, human, cultural, financial.	Listen and look for the unexpected with an open heart and mind.	Develop your listening skills and inter-cultural competence.
Look for committed allies and unite on pressing issues.	Believe in people, their potential and their skills.	Be aware of the power of controlling the funds and make the best use of this power for empowerment, learning from and with your partners.
Develop your own story and re-imagine your future.	Challenge donor regulations.	Prioritise and use every opportunity to spend time with local communities and your partner organisations to develop a better sense of local processes and relations and a better relation with "people at the centre".
Strategise for collective action for change	Listen-listen-listen and facilitate reflection-action-reflection.	Provide space for exchange and learning processes among your partner organisations for more effective support of transformation processes.
Pick up on any criticism	Immediately reflect by giving positive feedback with references.	Go back to your donors and tell them that changes have been made after negative criticism or tell them about all positive criticism. Do not keep them in the loop. It might come back to your NPO.

WHAT ROLE HAS IKHALA TRUST PLAYED: TERESA'S STORY



Teresa Opperman
Manager, Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope

In December 2017, exactly nine months after Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope was started as a project of assistance to the poor, David Fourie from Tarkastad Tourism notified me of the course. I noticed that Jenny van Heerden was also involved, and the Hofmeyr community always donated generously to her Sparrows home. I have no training in any field and was afraid of attending alone. Big was my surprise!

Not only did I find out within the first 30 minutes that Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope was not a project anymore, I also found out that large numbers of NPOs exist in close proximity to Hofmeyr and were all struggling to get registered. We made great friends and we learned such a lot, including how to determine the personality and interests of a person arriving on our doorsteps according to the ABCD Questionnaire and the Heads, Heart and Hands Test.

As we had started Hugs without any money, we soon enough understood how to start an NPO without money. Today I still see that this is the spanner in the works for several other NPOs. They start off by trying to make money. But you do not need money. You need people.

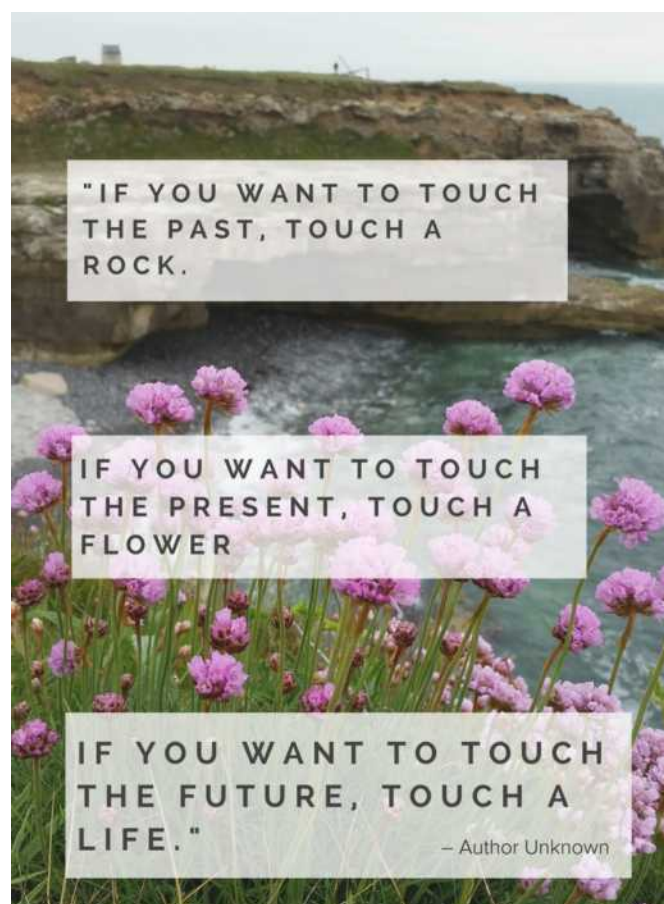
Where there are skilled people, there will be produce. Where there are products, there

will be a market to develop. Where a market develops, money will come in. Where money comes in, an economical change happens. And that is what makes Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope such a success.

We are also very grateful to Ikhala for assisting us, without our request for help, in buying some very necessary resources. These resources, have doubled our capacity, and are still doubling our income on a daily basis.

Ikhala's Bernie and Unathi are always just a phone call, WhatsApp or SMS away. That is so important. They know the ropes and they have the most wonderful networks themselves.

We at Hugs try to do as much of Ikhala's training as we possibly can. As I have said, I have no background of management or leadership of a business, and Hugs is now a business, much larger than we had ever hoped for. From Ikhala we learned how to cope, how to manage our finances and how to organise meetings.



My personal biggest struggle so far has been determining the Vision, Mission and Objectives of Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope. I was trying to think what my management team would want, but I eventually decided that I will make those decisions, and they will just have to accept what I have decided. And they did!

I am not at all involved in the finances of Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope. We have appointed three ladies to manage the finances. With Ikhala's approval, Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope decided to open their own bank account. We previously used the church's account, but many people are unwilling to donate where a church is involved.

We have a cashier at Hugs, Estelle Kruger, and she reports to our bookkeeper, Retha Smit who wants a receipt for every cent! We also have an Auditor, Wilri Engelbrecht, who oversees Retha Smit. As a result of working this way, I actually have no idea what is happening in the finances. I am merely updated at the management meeting that takes place once every three months.

Whilst things are running smoothly I do not want to know about the finances. "Hugs" is not about the finances. "Hugs" is about people in desperate need. "Hugs" is about us fixing our broken town. "Hugs" has become my way of living.



At Hugs we have different personalities, different ways of thinking, different life experiences and different outcomes. But somehow, we all make them work in the best interest of Hugs, by the Grace of God.

I recently had my 60th birthday. I never imagined I would get this old, with my T1 Diabetes. But God granted me these years. My children wanted to know what I wanted as a gift for my 60th. I told them, "Bring your old clothes and old stuff to Hugs". That is just the way my heart works. I do not need any goods anymore - I have what I need, but a lot of people suffer because they do not have anything. Those bags of old clothes gave me so much pleasure when I could hand out beautiful things to the beautiful people, who desperately needed them.

Ikhala has taught me to see my life in pictures. Pictures of seedlings growing; pictures of beautiful machine knitted jerseys; pictures of fresh eggs, herbs and spices; pictures of fresh vegetables with the smell of the earth still clinging to them; pictures of quilts traveling far and wide. Pictures of shopping bags with hand-painted designs; pictures of freshly prepared plates of food; pictures of freshly baked rusks drying in the ovens where Hettie Hanker, our lady in charge of the kitchen, prepares them, and much much more, because at Hugs we are still growing.

" 'Hugs' has become my way of living."



But above all, I could never in my life have imagined that the team at Hugs and I would receive so many Hugs and terms of endearment, that we would build such a huge community of care, and that we would be able to circulate such a lot of love in such a short time. No money can buy that. You do not need money to do that.

You need to look into a person's eyes, and see their soul. Once you have seen their soul, you know where you have to nurture that soul to make that person whole again.

This is what Hugs of Hope is about. Thank you, Ikhala for the essence you have put into the tough cookie that Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope could have been without your assistance.



CRITICAL REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What role should funders play in supporting the organic growth of community-based organisations without meddling in the aspirations of local community members?
- When should outside agencies invest in community driven activities - and in which way can this be done?
- What is the best way to support and develop leadership in community organisations?
- What support and incentives can be made available to mobilise youth within community-driven initiatives?
- What role could churches and other faith-based organisations play in supporting community-driven development?
- What are the partnership criteria that community organisations should look for when they enter into relationships with multiple external actors in order to ensure the sustainability of their programmes and projects?

REPORT ON VISIT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

At the end of 2019 Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope received a visit from the University of Johannesburg.

Dr. Naudé Malan (Self-sustaining Farming and Agricultural Development) and Convenor of Izindaba Zokudla, and Prof. Juanita van der Walt (Tourism, Marketing and Networking) came to Hofmeyr for a week-long outreach programme. 365 people were reached during this period.

Hugs also joined the group Izindaba Zokudla, managed by Prof. van der Walt, and hosted by Dr Malan.

The report received from the University of Johannesburg, opened many doors, and they promised a revisit during April 2020, which could not happen due to the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. The visit was therefore postponed to take place from 7-11 December 2020.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA'S "FORGOTTEN TOWNS"

EXTRACT FROM AN OPEN LETTER TO HUGS OF HOPE FROM DR. NAUDÉ MALAN

"Hugs-of-Hope is certainly an exemplary organization and I have to commend you for your vision and leadership. It is clear a small town like Hofmeyr occupies a peculiar structural position in the economy that marginalizes it and creates its poverty. It is important that we struggle against such structural positionality in the system, as it is only in struggling that we could find an "attractor" or mission for a place like Hofmeyr. It is important to recognize that a town like Hofmeyr can in fact produce and thus turn around this debilitating structural position.

All places are able to produce something, and this is the basis of growth and change. Hugs has produced many things, from a story and narrative to excellent blankets and other crafts and this is the basis of a new beginning."



Dr. Naudé Malan
Anthropology and Development Studies
University of Johannesburg
Convenor of Izindaba Zokudla

We need to identify and elaborate on the means that are available for such a small town to rise up and engage with and transform its position in the economy. The legacy of participatory development and appropriate technology, perhaps exemplified best by an agro-ecological approach to farming, together with the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the Internet of Things (IoT) create new opportunities that need to be seized. These can re-define what the 4IR and IoT could mean for a small town like Hofmeyr and could implement people-centered participatory development strategies.

Together with these developments, we can use social media to create a new approach to development that draws on the energies and opportunities of local areas and local stakeholders. This approach can in fact be an exemplar and model for the rest of the country and world, as “structural” positions in an economy can only be changed if something great and important happens in the local place that could turn around the fortunes of the area.

To do so, the resources of the area needs to be recognized and built upon. Stakeholders and actors need to be linked into “Communities of Practice” that can draw on local opportunities, the public sphere and technologies and social media to mobilise people to change the things that they are able to change.

“‘Structural’ positions in an economy can only be changed if something great and important happens in the local place that could turn around the fortunes of the area.”

I developed the iZindaba Zokudla Farmers' Lab based on research into Said Hassan's (2010) ideas about a “Social Lab”. The Lab mainly refers entrepreneurs to the UJ Process, Energy and Environmental Technology Station (PEETS) technology station or the Centre for Entrepreneurship and this resembles a team



“Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop.”
- Dorothy Height -

approach to developing new and interesting sustainable enterprises.

I hope to involve Hugs of Hope in a more complicated research project but I have learned that a social lab that brings issue to the public can make significant inputs into new enterprises.

We have also focused on Enterprises as a key intervention in changing society, and this needs to be considered above a welfare-type of intervention. It is necessary to create wealth and value to change things, and the benefits of this choice will be clearer later on in this letter.

It would be interesting, as Hofmeyr is not too large, to take the courage and attempt at a community-wide comprehensive planning exercise that aims to involve all the stakeholders in the area. These approaches build upon the best in Action Research, which often has a focus on lower income communities, and blend it with the best in participatory development. Techniques like PRA, PLA and others (refer to <https://www.iied.org/participatory-learning-action-pla>) could enable a community to understand their own resources, their own threats - like the high phosphate content in the groundwater that thwarts all food garden development, opportunities and weaknesses and formulate a grand plan for their own development. There are many meaningful methods available that enable a community to plan and think and make decisions as one entity.

"COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IS ALL ABOUT BUILDING GRASSROOTS SUPPORT. IT'S ABOUT IDENTIFYING THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WITH WHOM YOU CAN CREATE A COMMON, PASSIONATE CAUSE. AND IT'S ABOUT IGNORING THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OF COMPANY POLITICS AND INSTEAD PLAYING THE GAME BY VERY DIFFERENT RULES."

TOM PETERS

We often allow a community to develop a vision of their best possible future – a 5 year plan, and then we use that to develop smaller and more manageable action plans to realise the grand plan through easily attainable sub-objectives. These kinds of visioning exercises are local and intimate exercises that draws on what each and every person in the community knows about their area. It allows people to form committees and deliberately and actively start to implement small concrete plans to better their lives. These are not grand plans, but are attainable activities.

It is impossible to imagine change and growth as only stemming from or dependent on outsiders. The key insight that drives iZindaba Zokudla is that change and development needs to come from local areas and that the local actors need to embark on such change projects. These can be effectively enhanced by strategic alliances from outside the immediate community - we always need cross-fertilisation to change things - and this is what "development" should strive for.

Stakeholders and actors from both inside and outside a community - best unified by common ideological orientations - need to engage and form communities of practice wherein change projects can be implemented. In this way, projects draw on local opportunities and actors and will be sustainable as only that which is possible in the local area can be accomplished.

We need stakeholders, from near and far, to enter into this process and that is how

sustainable change can be made: with both continuities and discontinuities with local conditions. Cross-fertilisation from outside stakeholders can change things, and this is conducive to local realities as stakeholders do have some connection to the local area. In any area can the right stakeholders be found, and outside agencies who commit to local areas, can also be accommodated in such processes. This enables the local "social economy" to support change projects and creates common interests amongst all. A social lab can create and maintain such an interest. Change and development, if it is to succeed, should be supported by the resources and people of a local area, and that is why outside agencies fail most of the time as they are not integrated into the local ecosystem.

Change would be when we can mobilise and structure the local resources in such a way that the dynamic amongst the resources - and this could include everything from money to people to organisations etc. - delivers net value in the local area. It is this net value that emerges if we structure our society so the actions of one reinforces the actions of others.

This is how a Community of Practice emerges - through local dependencies and social capital. This is the value that must relieve poverty and create change. This can only be sustained by local alliances and organisations and needs local entrepreneurs to seek and realise these opportunities. Change can emerge through an enterprise that truly innovates in society by rearranging opportunities, patterns of behaviour, cultures and norms and many other things so net value is created. An enterprise should be a vehicle of value creation and it helps to think about them this way.

Someone in the community needs to make the change and it is important to think about the value that needs to be created that will sustain this change.

"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.".

Mother Teresa

The Farmers' Lab enables us to rearrange our interests amongst ourselves. It enables others to see what they need to do to meet us halfway so a change project can be accomplished. It gives us a safe space where we can experiment with new enterprises and is a space where a transition to a new system can be negotiated amongst everyone. If we know there is a follow up, we can always come back and re-do things.

Such a Lab could do wonders for Hofmeyr. The town is small enough to in fact create a wonderful opportunity. However, it is risky. I see you lock your door when you have a clothes sale. This indicates how much the community needs a healing opportunity to be able to rearrange itself to go forward.

Maybe some of the corruption you suspect is due to the fact that a lot of things are not done in public in Hofmeyr. If we all meet regularly, and without any formal obligations - in a public forum, things will become a bit more democratic, even if it is due only to improved relationships.

"We each need to understand our position in the world."

I noticed Hofmeyr has a business forum in the townships. There is a church. There are crèches and schools. The community has a structure but these structures do not have an opportunity to assert itself.

In a Social Lab such actions can take place and we can also confront those with power about this power they have. This is an opportunity for them to account for their decisions and this will lead them to make better decisions. It also allows the poor to see how the world works and they can start understanding their own "structural" position in this world. It would be very interesting, and I predict very productive - to consider establishing a social lab in Hofmeyr.

We each need to understand our position in the world. We need to know where we come from and understand how our own identities and interests depend on growing up at a certain point in time and in a particular place in the world. To commence with radical social



change, we need to all understand this about ourselves before we encounter another in society.

It is when we let go of our own presuppositions about the world, and allow a new reality, a reality shared with the one I am engaging with, that will create new opportunities. This will transform our own social realities as we will see new opportunities there. Realising new opportunities will release new material resources that can address ills such as poverty.

For Hofmeyr to achieve anything like "economic development" some kind of grand cooperation is needed in this town. We are all different but the enterprises that will create the resources that Hofmeyr needs will only emerge if common interests and opportunities between the diverse actors in the community is found.

As an example, imagine Hofmeyr is recognized worldwide as a premier place to breed horses. Not only will horsemen and -women come to the town but this could lead to related industries like guiding horse trails, beginner courses and multi-day horse treks through the beautiful landscape of the area. To accomplish this, horsemen and breeders would have to engage with community members who could act as guides. Their families could operate the B&Bs that could accommodate the riders and this

could eventually lead to another opportunity - maybe built around the Hofmeyr show, that could capitalise on horsemanship in Hofmeyr. Please note that it is the story and narrative around this opportunity that in fact creates it. It is possible to create developmental opportunities out of dust by shaping a narrative of the future and then working to realise this.

After these relationships have been established, methodical planning needs to be adopted. The following methods could be used:

- Community long-term planning: Let the community come and do a long term plan. Do not let anyone be bound by it but let people strive for this in their own time and support it with their feet.
 - Identify and mobilise most of the "leadership" or key stakeholders in the area. They need to help plan a grand open access community-based meeting where a 5 year vision for Hofmeyr can be developed.
 - Keep the meeting informal but organised, not "official".
 - Once enough stakeholders are able to attend, a grand meeting needs to be called. At this meeting a vision of the best possible future, attainable in 5 years, needs to be developed.
 - This day must be fun, inclusive and informative.
 - Use outside stakeholders and media to expand the horizon of possibilities for people - let them watch a video of an exemplary city like Curitiba, Copenhagen or other small towns.
 - Allow the people to think about things that are presently impossible that will create a new horizon of possibilities for the future Hofmeyr.
 - A plan like this will enable people to organise their own lives and activities so they contribute to this goal. Once a goal is reached it will form the basis for the next year's plans that can build on that.
- Allow people a way to see the bigger picture.
 - This enables people to understand their area, and hence to take more risks and develop new activities.

- Introducing the idea of a system here is appropriate. Don't use academic or complicated concepts in this regard.
- Once people "see the system" they intuitively grasp it and this allows meaningful interaction with bigger agencies and allows people to assert their interests better or complicated concepts in this regard. Once people "see the system" they intuitively grasp it and this allows meaningful interaction with bigger agencies and allows people to assert their interests better.
- A second meeting needs to be called after the first one. This is a strategy meeting where action plans need to be developed. This needs to be followed by a tactical meeting where implementation of each strategic goal is to be discussed and done. After that, meetings need to monitor, evaluate and reflect on goals achieved or strived for, and this needs to then lead to the next years planning cycle.



**When you hand
good people possibility,
they do great things.**

- The second strategy meeting will need to break up this goal into smaller attainable objectives and form a group or committee around each sub-objective.
 - Establish a committee for each objective. These will be simple things like: housing, health, schools, food gardens, roads, electricity etc.
 - Allow them to find their own way of working with this objective, e.g. "better housing" and find the people in the community - like retired bricklayers who have the right expertise to assist such a committee. They can also lead to implementation committee, e.g. a clean-up committee and they can develop their own action plans.
 - This will lead to a proliferation of committees in the community and these will start to

rearrange the community to a place where individuals will have more confidence to take up radical activities like setting up a new business. These businesses will draw on the previous committees and the Social Lab in the town. This will create a more conducive environment for people to act. Including the retired bricklayer, the retired electrician, plumber etc. in the housing committee - in an organised way exerts scrutiny and oversight over state activities and anything that is happening in the local area. This will help the state to attain its own goals and will be ultimately seen as friendly by the local politicians. In the end, this will build greater cohesion around the activities taking place in the local area.

- Keep access to these sub-committees open so anyone in the community can help and participate. The only power such a committee and overall approach has is a democratic power. This is a powerless lower that achieves its strength when things are done in public and in front of everyone. That is when officials will act with more determination and integrity: when they are being watched by people sympathetic to them achieving their own

success. Their success will be our success. It is important to engineer and design such win-win relationships.

- The above committees are action committees that aim to enable real and good actions to be taken. However, include one person in each sub-committee that will act as a monitoring and evaluation officer. This person needs to not only take a look at actions by "outsiders" like state officials, but also has to look at how the committee and the whole planning process affects the area and how the committee behaves and makes decisions.
- These people should be there to collect information on the failings and oversights of the whole process and the achievements. They however do not have "power" as the point is these findings need to be fed back to the committee and the whole town itself.
- These people need to report at the end of the year so we can take stock of all that is happening. This enables us to identify problems and things that we can improve and also gives people more power as they now have an opportunity to express their views about their own local area.





- Anyone can act as such a monitoring and evaluation officer and this should be encouraged
- Remember, because the assembly has no real official power, things are low risk, and they should be collegiate and informal, but that also leads people to easily change their own behaviour. The end of year evaluation session will lead to a next, beginning of the year planning session for the next 5 year plan. In this way an organised system of planning, innovation and reflection is established and this can very much feed into the official IDP and other processes
- This multi-stakeholder process, most importantly, allows a stakeholder to bring their own project to the community and mobilise the community around it. This lowers the cost for the entrepreneur and also creates opportunities for ordinary people to draw resources and value from this and thus also re-organise their own projects.
- This process will also benefit the local politician, as these could stand in for IDP planning. Careful negotiation could lead to some political capital being gained by making this process available to the local politician.
- The point of this is to develop a base whereupon a community can act.
- If the Social Lab in Hofmeyr helps the local politician to complete his or her own plans they will support the forum and this will help the local government to serve the people of Hofmeyr.

Once a strong community-base is established in a local area, it becomes easier to complete complicated projects.

This enables complicated alliances to form around any issue, and the more complicated the alliance, the more robust the resulting community (or communities) of practice will form around the issue. In this way, economic development is humanized as people occupy those positions that control and steer actions, and in this way appropriate delivery and services can be realized.

Now we have established an open forum that will allow the community to re-arrange themselves according to the 5 year vision and we can expect implicit support for activities that contribute to this goal.

Within the confines of such a grand plan, the community can meaningfully respond to new opportunities.



The list below details some new opportunities that may be considered. The more important issue is however, how we engage with these issues, and does a community have it in themselves to steer and direct these?

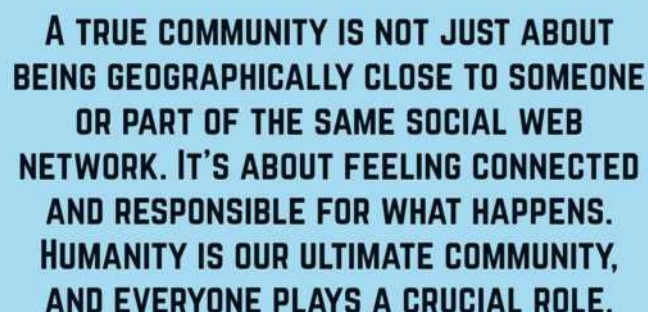
Technology

Many people in Hofmeyr asked me about recycling, but the existing technology is designed for large entities to process plastic in bulk and is not appropriate to the needs of the people in Hofmeyr. People in Hofmeyr need technology that can process the plastic waste in-situ and make it available for further processing.

Enterprises, Organisations and Associations

People need to negotiate their social persona by moving into and out of formal and less than formal associations. In this way, they can rearrange themselves and their contexts until the association in fact delivers value to them. It is important that all people have access to the network. This is the basis of socialisation of those involved so they contribute to the overall goal.

It is useful to think of the idea of a Community of Practice (CoP). A CoP represents ways how ordinary people organise themselves to accomplish common goals. All this has to take place in a structure, i.e. the Internet, events, discussion groups, local neighbours, etc. By affording anyone access to the broader system of planning allows them to align their interests with the broader system and in that way join a CoP. Eventually a broad coalition for change will be constructed in the local area.



**A TRUE COMMUNITY IS NOT JUST ABOUT
BEING GEOGRAPHICALLY CLOSE TO SOMEONE
OR PART OF THE SAME SOCIAL WEB
NETWORK. IT'S ABOUT FEELING CONNECTED
AND RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS.
HUMANITY IS OUR ULTIMATE COMMUNITY,
AND EVERYONE PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE.**

Materials, Social Media and Communication

WhatsApp, SMS, phone calls and posters on telephone poles are all widespread and these need to be encouraged to grow and flourish.

Here we will see how stories, about agro-ecology, or recycling, or handwork, create meaning and incentives for people to contribute to a group. Materials and "stories" about something also enable people to autonomously re-organise themselves to become part of a larger group.

The opportunity for people to rearrange their lives to take part in bigger processes of change allows people to make sure they can accomplish things and keep their own lives running. This lowers the risk of starting an enterprise, and the key benefit of hosting social labs is to lower the cost of change.

Agriculture

This is the economic sector with possibly the lowest cost of entry and is always touted as the key economic sector that can lift people out of poverty.

We need to re-develop knowledge of an urban agriculture that benefits and in fact creates local food systems.

When we think of technology, we should here think of appropriate technology, in-between the high-tech of agribusiness and the low tech of rudimentary gardens. Below is a sort of a guide one can give to emerging entrepreneurs and it is written with them in mind.

The key technologies that can set up a productive food garden that is able to deliver value include the following:

1. Deep trench or Hugelkultur beds

The idea is to bury biomass so that it rots over time. Roots will be growing where the rotting occurs and this will lead to higher production efficiencies.

2. Drip irrigation systems

Build your own. We have learned that a small drip irrigation system needs to deliver water in a "loop" to ensure equal pressure on each hole (even if they are dissimilar sizes). It is even more effective and cheaper to build an irrigation system with old 2 liter soft-drink bottles. This could be very effective in Hofmeyr's phosphate rich waters as it will avoid water affecting leaves.

3. Mulching, the next generation of topsoil. Always cover exposed soils with leaves, grass or even paper or chicken feathers. This will keep the soil cool and limit evaporation. It will also force you to tend your crops very carefully.

4. Tunnels or some kind of netting

This protects against birds and pests and also increases temperature and humidity which enables plants to grow faster.

5. Composting

This should cover up to 33% of your farm's usable area. Compost is the future productivity of your farm. Learn how to make a compost heap. Make compost, and then feed the compost to worms before you apply it to the ground. This extra cycle will create extra "value".

6. Wormery

These not only create best casings or compost for seedlings, but also release a liquid manure. This can be sold at a premium. A lot of information is available on the Internet and take a look at: <http://working-worms.com/how-to-make-your-own-worm-farm/>.

7. Livestock

Manure is the stuff of farming and is a necessary part of the whole cycle. Animals can eat food that we are unable to eat, and they deliver services to us, like transport, carbon capture and they can bring money if sold as meat. If you cannot keep livestock, exchange inedible food for manure. Make a wormery and mix manure with biomass to add value to the manure.

8. Liquid manure

We can make liquid manure with green or brown plant waste, or compost.

9. You need to have a beehive.

A beehive and pollination can increase your yield of flowering crops by 30%.

10. Your garden or farm needs to have a beautiful name, and an identity so everyone can see you are a farmer and that you are the one who is feeding your community. Do this is the local language! This is a marketing strategy and a way to make known to everyone who you are and what you do.

11. You should consider technology and hydroponic or aquaculture systems.

Start planning today for the moment in the future when you are ready to implement and operate such systems. They can be made for low costs.

12. You need to use the Internet and Information and Communication Technologies.

Use Facebook and create a profile for your garden. Create WhatsApp groups for your customers and suppliers. Start posting on Facebook and web pages and start thinking like a big entrepreneur.

13. Start a food waste harvesting system.

Food waste should be harvested from communities who buy from the farmer and discounts can be given as a loyalty programme.

Once a productive food garden is set up, start thinking about the farm as a business. Think about the farm as a new kind of "networked" business that sells directly to the customer and that manages the network wherein the farm sits. Start to think of your farm as a business that is networked and you need to "command the whole value chain" your farm sits in.

Start sophisticated programmes in your business development:

- a. Think about a loyalty programme for food waste and give customers who bring food waste to your compost area a small discount.
- b. Think about hosting a GOOD FOOD education day: On this day you will teach customers about good food and they will naturally come to you to buy. Show you care about their health and they will return.
- c. Start a small Agro-ecology education programme. Train people in the basic techniques of gardening. As people eat better and live better lives they will start eating more and will buy more from you.
- d. Start hosting regular community meetings on your farm. Call the businesses in the area to attend, followed by people from OUTSIDE your community to start building better relationships with them. Bringing outsiders will bring innovation and change and also commercial advantage and thus greater success.

AWARDS

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope subsequently attended the Ikhala Trust Annual Festival, and was awarded the Stanley Elliott trophy for Community Development, as well as the Boshoff Trust Award for Connectivity.

Special acknowledgment was also received from Ikhala Trust in the form of the Grantee of the Year Award. During 2019 Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope also received the WAA's Callie Liebenberg trophy for involvement in Community Development.



*Irmgard Claassen (Fashion Designer at Hugs),
Teresa Opperman (Manager) and
Elisma de Jager (Media & Marketing Manager)
receiving the awards*

TRAINING

NEEDLEWORK

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope sent two ladies to Katrina's Design School for a Certificate in Needlework and Fashion Design, and they both received their trophies after three weeks of full- time training.

Irmgard Claassen subsequently applied for a job at Markhams clothing factory in Cape Town, and was successful.

Lety Runyambo is still in charge of the needlework at Hugs.



Irmgard Claassen



Lety Runyambo



During 2021, a full group of 22 needleworkers completed training, and two remained at Hugs to give assistance to new trainees. Due to the complicated issues surrounding COVID-19 lockdown and social distancing, it is rather tricky to train new needleworkers, but a group of ten has joined and will start on 01 August 2021.

The trainees all either found jobs as seamstresses elsewhere, or are now sewing from home. Needlework articles are sold via social media networks, and delivered via Paxi by Pep stores.

Hugs also employed a full-time salaried training officer, but as she was too far away from her home, she decided to opt out of her agreement with Hugs, and left our service at the end of May. This position is currently vacant.



EDUCARE

Ten students registered for Educare training, and Hugs is ready to start with training as soon as we have equipped a venue for the training to take place. We have acquired the services of two qualified educators with N4 Seta accreditation to start with training in August 2021.



Images by Lori Heron from Pixabay

HOME-BASED CARE

A group of eleven Home-based carers completed training on 27 May at immense financial investment from Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope. Ten of these ladies are currently employed for their three-month practical training, and will receive their certificates during August.



A further ten students have registered for training, but at this stage we are looking for ways to finance the training, as we are not always able to get a return on our investment when ladies work at old-age homes for less than minimum wage. We are also unable to provide this training at the Community Centre and we are in the process of identifying means to work around this challenge.

Training was provided by Home-Based Care Steynsburg.



TRAINING ON GRACE LONG-ARM QUILTING MACHINE

Three ladies attended the training on a Grace long-arm quilting machine in Somerset East, after Hugs acquired a long-arm quilting machine on down payments. Two of the ladies were declared fit to operate the machine, but sadly, after two months, both ladies found employment elsewhere.

Hugs will offer this training again to more candidates. There are currently five ladies registered for training in Cradock towards the middle of August 2021.



ABCD TRAINING BY IKHALA TRUST

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope was involved in organising this training by Ikhala Trust in Asset Based Community Development. The attendees were given the opportunity to assess their knowledge of their own capabilities, as well as those of the people around them. The training concluded by allowing attendees the opportunity to present their own visual business plans.

Sterkstroom, Steynsburg, Cradock and Hofmeyr.

Eight workers from Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope were sponsored by Hugs to attend free training by Ikhala Trust in Asset Based Community Development. The attendees were given the opportunity to assess their knowledge of their own capabilities, as well as those of the people around them. The training concluded by allowing attendees the opportunity to present their own visual business plans.

We can report that although the exact businesses as discussed at training, did not realise, the trainees now have insight into starting their own businesses, and are really coping well under the current circumstances in their lives.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Imijelo made Dr Khaya Tshabalala available to Hugs to assist with financial training for SASSA dependents and for persons with financial problems and cash loan debts. Dr Khaya attended to the needs of sixteen trainees, and is still assisting a group of five to open bank accounts, repay debts, and draft business plans for future businesses. Training was provided at absolutely no cost to Hugs.



A NEW ADDITION

As the business grew, more space was needed and an additional two-roomed house was upgraded and is now used as storage space and knitting store room, where our knitting machines are operated from, and knitting yarns are stored.



NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

The COVID-19 National Lockdown which was announced to start on 26 March 2020 made us realise that all our needleworkers would have to be able to sew from their homes.

Each one of them was given a Hugs sewing machine to take home from 17 to 25 March.

From 26 March until the end of September, all needleworkers worked from home. Needlework parcels were made up, and dropped off at a central place for collection, and each parcel

included full instructions. The ladies could carry on right through lockdown, and many of them contacted us via WhatsApp for assistance.

Hugs of Hope also started making cloth masks. 4 400 were eventually made. Hugs supplied the local SAPD, schools, Graaff Reinet Clinic Staff, OVK staff, and Security Staff. We were also able to deliver 500 to the Provincial and Livingstone Hospitals in Port Elizabeth (free of charge).



TRAUMA AND BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

After 2020, a year in which many Hofmeyr families suffered losses due to the COVID Pandemic, Hugs only reopened on 21 January. Hanlie Barnard, Social Worker at Hugs, worked with the workers and volunteers for seven weeks to assist with trauma and bereavement counselling.



MENTORSHIPS

Surrounding towns contacted Hugs for mentorships during these hard times, and Hugs assisted by visiting, assessing existing problems, and giving advice. Special reference was made to the ABCD training by Ikhala Trust, and a training course was planned for later in 2021.

The following NPO's received Mentoring:

- Women Arise Molteno with special reference to their Pantry project and Blessing boutique.
- Women Arise Steynsburg with regards to their feeding scheme for children, and their clothing scheme for the youth.
- Yonela's Port Alfred: with regards to the collection of donations and gaining assistance from the poor community in which she works to address poverty issues.

CLEANING OF TOWN AND RECYCLING

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope is thankful for the assistance of Marius Barnard and Barend Opperman, with their different workers, for keeping the town and the surrounding communities clean, and free of trash.



SELF-SUFFICIENT GARDENS

Many courses were offered via WhatsApp, and our vegetable gardeners could also carry on without physically attending Hugs. Although the first seedlings were donated to Hugs by Ikhala Trust, Hugs assists with buying in seedlings, but the gardeners have to give a certain percentage of their vegetables back to Hugs for use in our soup kitchen in Twinsville.

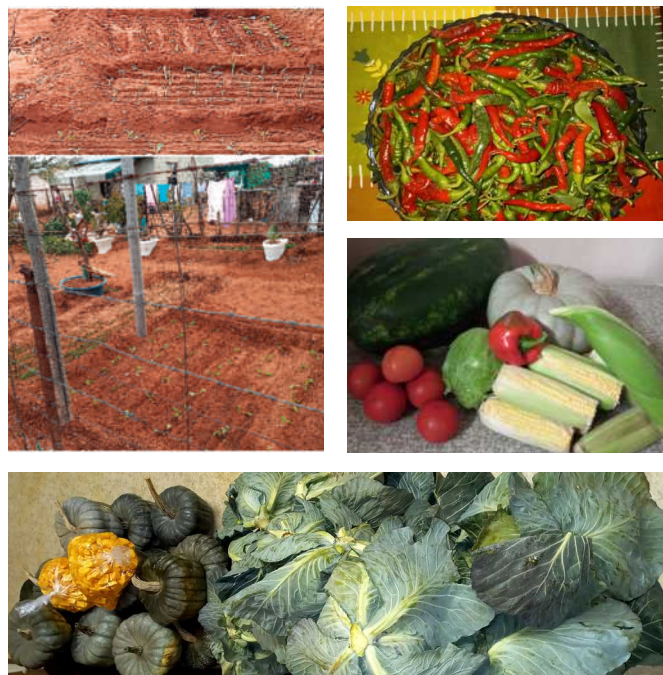


The Objectives of Hugs of Hope were changed to add the intermediate objective of supplying food. Applications were made for food distribution to the poor and the hungry but food that eventually arrived in Hofmeyr from SASSA and the Government, were distributed and used by the people in charge at the Government institutions.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope was privileged to receive donations from farmers, the Church, Helpende Hand and SPAR Molteno, for distribution in the town and surrounding areas. Up to 55 families could be assisted, and a complete assessment was completed by our Social worker for every family that received assistance.



Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope Social Worker, Hanlie Barnard, carried on with her duties, right through lockdown, assisting with social cases where help was often needed desperately. She reported to the Manager, and then plans were put into place to assist families in need.



Basie Stuurman is our self-sufficient gardener in Eluxolweni, and he trains gardeners in both Twinsville and Eluxolweni in self-sufficient gardening, according to the skills acquired through training with "Farming God's Way".



SOUP KITCHEN

Ronell Visser, a local businesswoman, assisted Hugs by creating a Soup Kitchen, with the assistance of Hugs, in the Twinsville township where up to 200 people could receive a warm meal three times a week.

The inhabitants of Eluxolweni township boycotted this soup kitchen, saying that they would rather receive food parcels. Regrettably Hugs did not have the staff or finances to provide food parcels to 455 families.



Delivery to our Soup Kitchen



A typical meal at the soup kitchen

WATER SUPPLY

On 6 June 2020, Hugs could deliver 38 water tanks to the elderly and the sick in Twinsville.

Twinsville Township has no water in the houses. This has been an ongoing problem since the new RDP houses were built in 1994. All houses are equipped with bathrooms, but here has never been any water in any of these houses.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope applied to the AIDS Association for assistance in this regard. A grant of R75 000 was received, and could pay for 38 Hippo Rollers. This is the first time that all the recipients have water inside their houses. During the COVID-19 pandemic water was in desperate need for hygienic and other purposes.

Mr Grant Gibbs from Hippo Rollers in Vanderbijlpark delivered the Hippo rollers.

Mr Roelf Opperman went for training, and assisted with training the recipients on a very cold, windy and icy day in Hofmeyr.



MARKETING UPDATE

Marketing slowed down during the Lockdown period in 2020, but the Facebook page and the WhatsApp group assisted in informing our clients of articles on offer.

WhatsApp group: 076 122 8719 HUGS FRIENDS

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/857867111033366> (HOFMEYR HUGS OF HOPE)

The link to the Facebook page and the instagram account is available on the Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope group.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope has impacted and improved the lives of at least 360 people, and 60 families in Hofmeyr since its beginning.

Hugs could also appoint a full time security guard who assists with COVID Protocol since the beginning of April.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope is also proud of the fact that our town is neat and clean, due to the services of Ds. Marius Barnard, Barend Opperman and Oupa Stuurman.



OLD AGE HOMES

Not only do Hugs assist the poor, elderly and sick, but also got involved with the Old Age Homes in the surrounding towns. The Siësta Home in Molteno, the Elizabeth Jordaan Home in Cradock, and the Marais Steyn Home in Steynsburg fall under our care.

Especially the SASSA dependents are taken care of. We supply them with clothing, underwear, bathroom necessities, sheets and towels, curtains and face cloths. We also assist them with skills. They are supplied with wool and knitting needles and we buy what they deliver, and then it is sold again. This provides them with a small income that they can use to buy themselves something as a treat.

We find that knitting assists these old folks with handling their stress, especially under Lockdown circumstances.



The elderly display clear signs when stressed, and the carers should always be able to pinpoint such stressors:

1. Changes in eating habits, such as over-eating or loss of appetite, can be caused by overwhelming stress.
2. Mood swings due to stress may present in increased irritability, general sadness or depression.
3. Memory issues may arise in the form of increased forgetfulness of names, places or other things that normally come naturally. Lack of concentration may become a problem. Some seniors may exercise poor
4. Physical signs of stress can include body aches and pains or increased episodes of illness. Changes in sleeping patterns, e.g. either trouble falling asleep or interrupted nighttime sleep, can signal significant stress.
5. Seniors experiencing overwhelming stress often isolate themselves from others, refusing to socialize or participate in activities they used to enjoy.

EDUCATION SUPPORT

Hugs could assist in placing an orphaned learner in a hostel, to be able to attend school and relieve her of the loneliness she experienced whilst she was staying with her grandparents. Hugs sees this as Skills Development. She is assisted whilst learning coping mechanisms in a controlled environment. Hugs could also provide her and other poor learners with uniforms, food parcels, pocket money on school outings and health care when needed.



DONATIONS TO SCHOOLS TO ASSIST WITH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Although our big dream is to be able to build a jungle gym at at least two schools in Hofmeyr, we do not yet have the means to do this. We believe that by developing these skills in the youth of our community, we will build a happier, healthier community. In the meantime, we assisted the schools by supplying them with stationery, masks, jerseys, uniforms, educational toys, sports equipment, and shoes during 2021.



LEARNERSHIPS

Andile Kretshwe contacted Hugs and offered to teach eleven unemployed young men to install roof trusses and put up the corrugated iron sheets. Hugs appreciates the input he has given these eleven young men, with training and skills development that could carry them far into the future.

It is with great expectation and excitement that Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope became involved with developments in Molteno, Jansenville,

and Sterkstroom. We are hoping for a huge snowball effect to change each little town, person by person, Hug by Hug.



ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

Hugs can proudly say that we have equipped the elderly in our community and surrounding communities to live a better life by supplying them with meals, bathroom necessities, warm clothing, and care.

We also supply wool, knitting needles and crocheting equipment to many ladies, and they deliver articles to Hugs, which we in turn buy from them.



Knitting by the elderly

CHOIR UNIFORMS



Hugs assisted the local Choir in Eluxolweni by supplying 36 uniforms. We believe that whilst they are developing this skill, they qualify for our assistance.

ANIMAL WELFARE

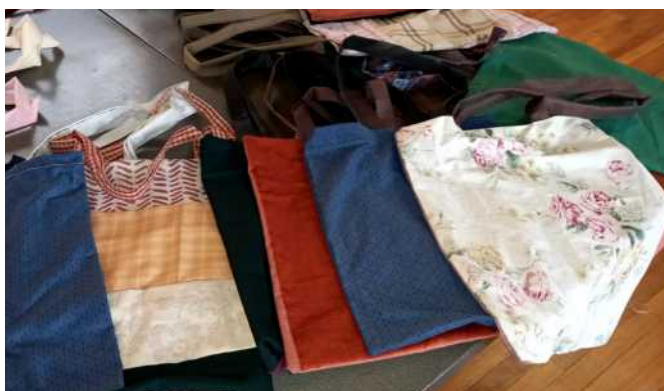
Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope has donated blankets, bedding and food upon visiting the owners of pets. The necessary training on the treatment of pets was given to pet owners.

Hugs also assisted by organising visits by the State vet to inoculate pets against the Parvo virus (Distemper) when it became apparent that many pets were dying from this disease.



NO MORE PLASTIC

At Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope we have discontinued the use of plastic bags. Each piece of scrap fabric is used by our seamstresses to make beautiful re-usable shopping bags. These bags are used by our packers to store the lay-byes and are given out to our shoppers.



COVID PROTOCOL

Strict COVID Protocol is in place at Hugs, with temperatures taken, sanitizing, and social distancing applied in all our workrooms.



SECONDHAND SHOP (*FUNI JET*)

The Shop Manager and Treasurer could make up appro orders for clients upon request. These orders were collected from her stoep, so much so, that she could pay in more cash per week than ever before.

We are grateful to Estelle Kruger for thinking out of the box, because winter was harsh and cold, and without her way of thinking, it would have been impossible for many of the poor folks to be able to get warm clothing, and blankets.



SKINS & TANNERY

Wilson Geza arrived at Hugs begging for food. During assessments it was established that he is knowledgeable in the treatment of skins, tanning and making a variety of items from leather.

Hugs assisted him by supplying him with the necessary basic equipment to start his own business, and he is now a well-known skin tanner in the area. All the hunters deliver their skins to his premises, where he works and prepares these skins for delivery to his clients.

He also trains two young men in the basic knowledge of tanning skins. Hugs assists him in managing his finances to ensure that he always has food at home.



**Freedom is the greatest
fruit of self sufficiency.**

Epicurus

VISITS

IKHALA TRUST, as a grantor of Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope, visits us at least twice a year.

Bernie Dolley and Unathi Masimla are always welcome and all the workers at Hugs are excited to see them. Bernie is also a very good client as she loves to buy articles from our market table to take home. Hugs was also grateful to receive food donations during the COVID Lockdown, as well as several sponsorships which included, amongst others, fabric for bags, stuffing, wool and clothing.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope is proud to be associated with Ikhala Trust.

HELPE NDE HAND assists Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope through their huge network. Not only do they assist us with learners and the poor, but they also provided food parcels during the COVID lockdown. They also visit Hugs once a term.



WHAT EFFECT HAS HOFMEYR HUGS OF HOPE HAD ON THE COMMUNITY?

This is a short question, with a long answer:

- 38 families now have water in their homes in Twinsville where 800 homes are without water.
- 30+ families have fresh vegetables produced through self-sufficient gardens by eleven gardeners.

"When I worked on the farm as a young man, I dreamt of growing my own vegetables. Thank you Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope for giving me the chance to turn my own garden into a small farm, and for also helping me to get seedlings. I can now feed my family. I could teach all my children and neighbours, and family members to garden, and we can now all eat fresh vegetables every day. I would still like to paint my house grey, when I have the money," says Basie Stuurman from Eluxolweni.

- The shops in town can now buy vegetables from local producers.
- Lonely, sick and elderly families are visited by Hugs carers on a daily basis, to wash, feed and provide care.
- 30 needleworkers completed training and are now either employed as seamstresses or are working from home on machines provided to them by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope.

"I have three teenage daughters in foster care from The Sparrows Children's Home in Tarkastad, and I can now care for them with the money that I make from my needlework for Hugs and for sewing I do for families around me. I can also make their clothes," replies Betty Brown, a trained needleworker, now working from home.

- All the children in schools in Hofmeyr, and Hofmeyr children attending Cradock Schools and Hostels, are clothed, fed and equipped with stationery.

- All the teenage girls in the community have access to sanitary products.
 - Hofmeyr town is clean and the Twinsville community will have access to training in recycling.
 - Twelve young boys (aged 9-13) collect up to 3 000 plastic bottles per week in the communities, and receive a reward to be used at Hugs of Hope.
 - Street children are being cared for by "Foster Parents" who supply meals and a place to sleep.
 - Serious problems experienced by street children are addressed by Social Development, and where needed, children are sent to places of care.
 - Hugs' social worker addresses all issues related to trauma, hardships, marriage counselling, bereavement counselling, and assists with assessments of families in dire need.
- "I have been unable to see my family for more than two years, and I am grateful for the counselling I received from Hanlie Barnard to help me cope with the sadness in my heart. I am also grateful to Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope for permission to use their telephone to talk to my elderly mother every week. This means a lot to me," reports Letwin Runyambo.*
- Ten of the eleven home-based carers were unemployed before training. They are now all employed by families where they care for a sick, elderly or disabled family member.
 - School leavers can now look forward to training, free of charge, at Hugs of Hope.
 - Continued training, even to people with minimal schooling, change their outlook on life.

"Thank you Hugs, I only did Grade 7 at school. Now I can open my own business, because everything I learned from Bernie and the ABCD of Community Development helped me a lot," says Lindiwe Sintu.

- Financial Management training assisted many families to get rid of the burden of cash loans.

"I was trapped in debt, and I could not get forward. Dr Khaya from Imijelo showed me the way. I can now care for my 5 children, because the money I get from Hugs buys me food and I am paying off my debts. We must never make debt again, and I want to save to send my children to school," says Anna Fiets.

- Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope makes clothing and linen available to all the members of the community.

"I bought sheets for our beds at Hugs, and could even get ones for my guest bedrooms, and so reasonably priced," says an elderly guest house owner in Hofmeyr.

"When my mother went to the old age home, Hugs supplied us with very nice bedding, pajamas and a gown for my mother," reports Chris from Hofmeyr.

"Thank you Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope, for always being ready to assist when we need suits for funerals," reports Thusano Funeral Directors in Hofmeyr.

- Many families receive warm meals twice a week.

"I do not know how we would be able to cope, without the warm meals that Hugs delivers to us twice a week," reports an elderly couple in Hofmeyr.

- Vanity bags with essential toiletries are given to school children attending hostels, to children in care centres and to the elderly in old age homes.
- Hugs can give, because we receive donations of goods from people who knows one of us at Hugs, or from children who grew up in Hofmeyr, and now owns businesses elsewhere.

As the Manager of Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope I can report that no previous plan had ever brought together so many souls to this place of extreme happiness and health as Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope has done. We are blessed by so many from all over South Africa to be able to do what we do.

It makes a huge difference in our small town, and impacts our whole community. The Board of Hugs are made up of representatives that have a sincere interest in our town, even though some of them do not live here. We are grateful to them for their involvement, and for sharing their networks, knowledge and insights with us.

Teresa Opperman



Hugs of Hope – making a real difference

DEUR Elsabé Pienaar | 27 November 2020 15:52



Chuma Freeksee is employed at one of the vegetable gardens in Hofmeyr which is supported by Hugs of Hope. Hugs is passionate about self-sustenance and avid gardeners are provided with healthy seedlings. A vegetable garden course will be hosted in December. PHOTO:ELSABÉ PIENAAR

HOFMEYR Hugs of Hope, a non-government organisation which receives grants from the Ikhalala Trust, was started on April 4, 2017, in a bid to get beggars off the streets and into a skills development plan.

Only at the end of 2017, did the manager of Hugs (as it is generally known in town), Teresa Opperman, attend a training session in Tar-kastad, called "The ABCD of Community Development", presented by Bernie Dolley.

This sparked the development of a huge multicultural and multifaceted skills development centre in Hofmeyr.

So far, 600 people have benefited from the services delivered by this association.

A part-time social worker is in charge of counselling sessions to assist people with coping skills.

A qualified seamstress is in charge of the needlework room, where up to 12 women can sit and learn to sew at once.

The sewing machines, although not expensive, were acquired with the assistance of the Ikhalala Trust.

The needlework room also received chairs, tables and all the necessary equipment by means of donations to the association.

A horse-riding academy, under the auspices of Thaleen Burger, JF Burger and Zettie Jordaan as the trainer, assists physically disabled people with exercises and horse riding to strengthen muscles.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope assists where requested and is always available to make the riders designer outfits for their participation in shows.

The system at Hugs ensures that the jobless receive the necessary training to be able to provide for themselves in the future, whether it is through carpentry, building, bricklaying, painting, wirework, fencing, needlework, crocheting, knitting, beading, art, card making, baking, cooking and catering, Educare and home-based care courses, as well as financial management, self-sufficient gardening, recycling, upcycling and marketing, which are just some of the skills offered.

During lockdown, Hugs managed to provide food to hungry families, with the assistance of many donors, because governmental institutions had failed to provide for these desperate families. A soup kitchen also offered warm meals on cold winter days.

HUGS SIEN UIT NA TOPKWILTS

Gelukkig is nie een van die vrywilligers of werkers by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope bang vir harde werk nie, en ons sien uit na die nuwe produkte," sê Hettie Hänker, vrywilliger by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope

Correspondent Teresa Opperman | Monday, 05 April 2021, 08:01



Van links is Ella Kleinveldt, Katrina Olifant en Isabel Wilken druk besig om te kuilt op die langarm en masjien. Simmie Sintu, gemeed met die installering, kyk toe. Foto: Teresa Opperman

HOFMEYR NUUS - Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope het die afgelope week hul opleidingskoördineerder, Katrina Olifant, asook haar assistent, Ella Kleinveldt, na Somerset-Oos gestuur vir gevorderde opleiding.

"Dit was vir my 'n reusevoorreg om hierdie geleentheid mee te maak, en ek gaan poog om elke naaldwerkster by Hugs of Hope te help om net die beste diens te lewer om topgehalte kuilt te maak," het Olifant na die opleiding gesê.

Isabel Wilken het die vroue na haar groot kuilterswerkwinkel genooi, waar hulle geleer is om op die Grace-langarmkuiltmasjien hul voltooid kuilt te span en te kuilt. Verskeie steekstipes en patrone is ook geleer.

"Ek is verstom deur hul masjienvaardigheid, entoesiasme en die netheid van hul artikels wat hul saamgebring het. Dit spreek van intensiewe opleiding en absolute toewyding. Hulle poog ook deurgaans om net die beste te lewer, en dink nie twee keer as daar

losgelating moet word nie," het Wilken gesê.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope het 'n afbetalingsooreenkoms aangegaan met 'n voormalige lid wat verhuis het en so haar langarmkuilt en masjien bekom. Die aankoop van die masjien gaan gepaard met reuse-insette deur die werkers by Hugs, want die afbetalings affekteer die kontantvloei.

"Maar, ons gaan topgehalte, professionele kuilt lewer, waarop elke kuiltelenaar lewenslank trots sal kan wees," verseker Olifant."

Gelukkig is nie een van die vrywilligers of werkers by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope bang vir harde werk nie, en ons sien uit na die nuwe produkte," sê Hettie Hänker, vrywilliger by Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope.

DIÉ OPLEIDING 'N LIGPUNT VIR KLEIN DORPIES

Nie-winsgewende organisasies word ook aan mekaar voorgestel om 'n netwerk te vorm wat die hele Suid-Afrika mettertyd saam kan verbeter en ophef.

Tuesday, 18 May 2021, 12:32



Die kursusgangers het vanaf Hofmeyr gereis om vir drie dae in Molleno hul opleiding te voltooi. Vir baie van hulle was dit hul eerste opleidingsgeleentheid waar daar nie navres gedoen is na hul vorige ondervinding of vlak van skoolonderlig nie. Voor, van links: Nico du Plooy, Ella Kleinveldt, Dinah Booysse, Brenda du Plooy, Lety Runyambo en Lindie Sintu. Agter: Teresa Opperman, mede-organiseerder van die opleiding en bestuurder van Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope.

HOFMEYR NUUS - Altesaam 26 kursusgangers van hoofsaaklik Hofmeyr het die afgelope week opleiding deur die Ikhalala Trust in Molleno onder streng Covid-19-protokol bygewoon.

Bernie Dolley, besturende direkteur en stigterslid van Ikhalala Trust, sê sy het geen idee gehad hoe die dorpie lyk of wat ek te wagte kan wees nie, "maar ek was aangenaam verras deur die goeie getal kursusgangers wat opgedaag het. Die positiewe gesindheid van samewerking en ontwikkeling het my onmiddellik opgeval".

Dié Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) kan selfs deur ongeskooldes deurloep word aangesien dit prakties aangepas is en groot veranderinge in enige gemeenskap te weeg kan bring.

Hofmeyr Hugs of Hope in Hofmeyr werk ook volgens die riglyne van ABCD en word in hierdie gebied gesien as 'n ligpunt vir talle ander klein dorpie wat nog in duister gehul is en werkloos en in armoede vasgevang is.

Ikhalala Trust gee opleiding, raad, leiding en natuurlik ook

bystand in moeilike omstandighede, wat elke besigheid soms teëkom.

Nie-winsgewende organisasies word ook aan mekaar voorgestel om 'n netwerk te vorm wat die hele Suid-Afrika mettertyd saam kan verbeter en ophef.

Opleiding vind plaas deur die wortels van armoede uit te lig, daarna word die talente van die kop, hard en hande uitgelig. 'n Kaart van hul eie omgewing bewys kursusgangers dat hulle in hul omgewing aangepas en georiënteerd is.

Die hoogtepunt is die voorlegging van 'n virtuele besigheidsplan.

Hierdie kursus is geakkrediteer deur Ikhalala Trust en sertifikate word uitgereik.



HUGS of HOPE

H O F M E Y R

**WE WORK TOWARDS
A HAPPY, HEALTHY, HOLISTIC HOFMEYR**

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