



*Child Welfare*

CHILD WELFARE

## Maluti Child Care Project

Years Funded: Thirteen • Province: Free State

Route Key: **D**



**N**3TC's involvement with the Maluti Child Care Project goes back to the early days of the concession and its membership of the Harrismith Business Forum. The Forum was a collective of Harrismith businesses – large and small – that worked together on key community programmes and projects to support Harrismith and the rural communities surrounding the town.

The Maluti Child Care Project is a social welfare programme rooted in the foundation of the family-owned Harrismith business, Nouwens Carpets. The Nouwens family has been personally involved in the establishment and ongoing support of the project that is firmly entrenched in the company's daily business operations.

The project has been instrumental in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families in seven rural communities surrounding Harrismith.

Seven community kitchens have been established in these communities using refurbished shipping containers. Volunteers from the community prepare one balanced meal five days a week for children under 18 years of age.

The project has evolved since those early days of the Harrismith Business Forum and the down turn in the economy has meant that the donor pool of Harrismith businesses has diminished significantly in recent years; yet the project team has persevered and continues to support many vulnerable, orphaned and child-headed households in these communities. While the project has felt the effects of the economy financially, it has also seen an ever-increasing number of children destitute and in desperate need of assistance ... a significant



indicator of the impact of the economy, HIV and AIDS and other social issues on rural, disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

But the Maluti team will not be defeated and continues to do what they can with what they have. Blankets and beanies are distributed to the children to help them keep warm during the icy Free State winters. Not to mention, the volunteers who encourage the children to continue going to school and assist them with homework and school projects as best they



can. They also strive to meet the social and emotional needs of the children and even assist by taking the children to the clinic should they require medical attention.

It goes without saying that the Maluti Child Care Project provides invaluable support to vulnerable members of the Harrismith community. N3TC applauds Nouwens Carpets, the volunteers, supporters, donors and community members who contribute to the project and provide children with hope for the future.



# Topsy Holistic Early Childhood Development Programme

Years Funded: Six • Province: Mpumalanga

Route Key: **B**



**T**he Topsy Holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme evolved from the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children component of the Topsy HIV/AIDS care programme that came to an end in 2014.

The programme involves improving the health, nutrition, education and overall wellbeing of disadvantaged children by providing quality, holistic ECD and support services to children up to five years of age.

By improving access to relevant and appropriate services in response to the needs of the communities Topsy is working towards:

- Encouraging active community involvement in the education and care of children through an integrated and holistic approach to their development.
- Providing emotional and social support to children and giving them hope for the future.
- Strengthening the ability of families and communities to provide their children with love, care and protection.
- Providing primary healthcare services to improve the health and wellbeing of children.
- Addressing basic human needs in community ECD centres and homes.
- Increasing the independence and self-confidence of women through training and skills development.

Initially, Topsy designed an ECD programme that focused on training the principals from 17 Early Childhood Development Centres in communities surrounding the Topsy facility in Grootvlei, Mpumalanga, and established a comprehensive toy Library that provided these 17 centres with educational toys on rotational loan.



Today, Topsy is partnering with 29 ECD centres and reaches 2000 children, through its Play and Learn Centre, which is visited, on average, by 45 children daily.

Of equal importance to this programme is the additional support provided to communities and households that Topsy serves through this comprehensive programme.

Essential to a healthy family, home and community is securing access to fresh fruit and vegetables through the development of vegetable gardens in centres and individual homes.



In this way, Topsy is ensuring the wellbeing of the children and their families.

Emotional support is provided to members of the community, ECD Centre staff and the children. Topsy's community workers lend an ear and offer moral support and advice and provide guidance on various issues that these families encounter.

This holistic approach to supporting the education, health and wellbeing of young children will ensure that their resilience, education and career prospects are secured for the future.





## Paul and his family have been beneficiaries of Topsy's vegetable gardening programme since 2011.

Paul had an entrepreneurial vision to plant vegetables for resale, but he did not have the resources to start a garden on his own. Topsy provided him with garden tools, compost, seeds and a hose pipe to pursue his dream.



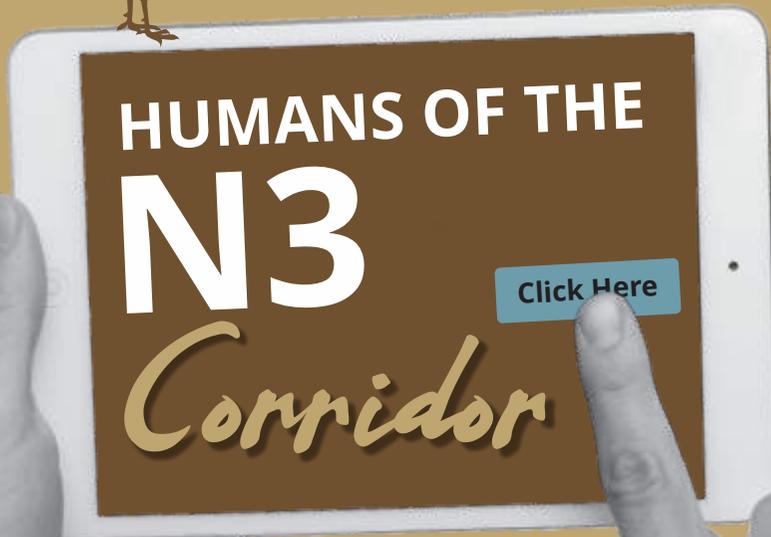
What started as a small-scale vegetable garden is now a fully-fledged farm. Paul has planted crops, and currently breeds chickens, ducks and rabbits. He sells the produce to families in his neighbourhood and supplies community tuckshops. He started breeding rabbits as a source of protein for his family, but he since discovered the benefit of using the manure from the rabbits as compost, which has contributed to the success of his crops.



From the proceeds of his sales, Paul has been able to take care of his children who are now completing their tertiary studies. Paul's eldest daughter, Ruth, is following in her father's footsteps and is studying Agriculture Economics at The University of Free State.



Paul is the perfect example of someone with an entrepreneurial spirit who despite all the odds has been successful. His story is one of hope for many others in his community.



## Paul and family



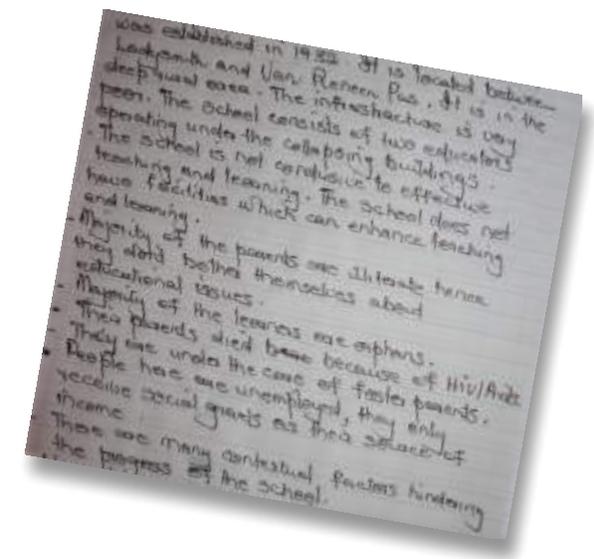


CHILD WELFARE

# N3TC Khanyisile Community Trust

Years Funded: Eleven • Province: Free State and KwaZulu-Natal

Route Key: **E**



**I**t was a handwritten letter from an educator at Ebojeni Primary School in Van Reenen that changed Khanyisile project champion, Ansie Jooste's life. The letter highlighted the dire circumstances faced by the educators and students attending the school. From crumbling buildings to a lack of resources and the plight of children left orphaned, Ansie soon uncovered the full extent of disadvantage faced not only by those associated with this school but by most families in Van Reenen and its surrounds.

This motivated Ansie to do whatever she could to change the situation. She singlehandedly travelled along the dirt tracks of the farm roads in the area visiting the schools, assessing their basic needs and requirements and slowly gathering information for what would become her list of 'to do's' for the people that she has since grown to love.

*"I observed the children working when they should have been in class learning. Pumping water and then dragging the drums of water weighing more than themselves over vast and varying distances. Gathering and carting firewood. The cooks struggling to prepare food for the children over an open fire. The educators feeling isolated because of a lack of support."* Ansie Jooste

This continues to motivate Ansie to touch lives by providing support and facilitating change. In so doing, Ansie has been able to support Educators, which has seen their students grow.

Today, the N3TC Khanyisile Trust is focused on addressing the health, welfare, development, education, school infrastructure needs and training to secure a sustainable future for the marginalised schools and communities surrounding Van Reenen.

Every year, for the past eleven years, Ansie has built a database of records of each child in the Van Reenen schools. These records include the child's photograph, measurements, weight,



in-classroom eye test results, parent detail, guardian detail, residential detail, full name and surname, identity number, grade, age, known medical history, gender and date of birth.

Ansie's list of completed projects is extensive and includes a number of infrastructure building projects where kitchens, ablution facilities, waste stations, nurseries, borehole installations, electricity supply, gas installations, fencing and basic repairs are now ensuring that learners are in the classroom and teachers are focussed on their education. Add to this well-established food gardens that now contribute to the daily meals provided at the schools and additional vegetable and fruit supplied to members of the local communities.

In recent years, Khanyisile recognised that the project needed a sustainability strategy. This saw the introduction of its envisaged sustainable arts and crafts project using Vertiver as the

material of choice. Khanyisile has since seen the successful production of Vertiver crops at Sand River Valley and Van Reenen village. Khanyisile is currently negotiating to secure two one-hectare plots - one in the Sand River Valley area and one in the Van Reenen area to sustain the Vertiver production going forward and to further the project's sustainability plans. Training of community members on managing and replanting the Vertiver is being undertaken, which will result in employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for community members in the future.

The schools, communities, families and children have been dramatically influenced by the Khanyisile support system that is fulfilling its vision to provide the community and schools of Van Reenen and the surrounds with a caring and inclusive environment while creating awareness of possibilities and opportunities despite the hardships.





**Cindi was born in Van Reenen and grew up in the village while attending school at Remington Primary, Weleni Primary and matriculating from Uxolo Nokuzwana Secondary School – all schools currently supported by Khanyisile.**

Today Cindi lives in the Sand River Valley, at the bottom of Van Reenen's Pass, and supports 13 children. When her sister Rebecca passed away, she adopted her children – a genuine act of sibling love. Cindi is described as humble, caring and bubbly and is an active member of the community. She participates in women's church groups and often represents her community at seminars and church gatherings.



But Cindi demonstrates her deeper attributes of empathy and care through her recently acquired First Aid skills. Cindi was a keen First Aid student and excelled in this new-found skill. She has since become a first responder to any medical emergencies in her community, sometimes having to walk over a kilometre to render first medical assistance to a patient. Emergency medical assistance to the Sand River Valley can take up to three hours from the time of a call, which makes the service provided by Cindi, in some instances, potentially lifesaving.

Cindi is saving lives thanks to the funding awarded to Khanyisile for first aid training and equipment bringing this essential lifesaving skill into the community.

Cindi received a hand up through N3TC and is making a difference in her community every day.



**Cindi Mnikathi**





## Othandweni Creche

**Years Funded: Ten**  
**Province: KwaZulu-Natal**

Route Key: **I**

**Othandweni is based in Bruntville, Mooi River. N3TC first became involved with Othandweni at a time when the organisation (a collaboration of local charities and NGO's) had purchased its first foster home in the community. The home was managed by the most incredible house mother taking care of orphaned and vulnerable children from the community.**

A few years later, Othandweni was able to purchase a second foster home, in the same street as the first and was able to accommodate more children. N3TC continued to support the expenses and upgrades required for running the two homes that clearly provided for the children's basic needs coupled with care, love and comfort. These children were given a stable home where they could grow and learn, and so they did.

Over time, it became evident that the community was in need of day care and pre-school facilities and as the number of children accommodated in the homes reduced as they grew up and 'left home', Othandweni was in a position to establish an Educare Centre in the original home.

The Centre serves on average 80 children, giving their parents the means to work and support their families, while their children are cared for in a safe, nurturing and comfortable environment. And so, N3TC continued to support Othandweni with a renewed vision that caters further to the N3TC Touching Lives vision of providing quality education to children in the N3 Corridor and establishing a legacy that will extend beyond the life of the concession.

### Meet Nompumelela Khanyile...

... who was cared for in the Othandweni Home for most of her life. When she left school, she was given the opportunity to gain her FET Certificate in Early Childhood Development (ECD) (NQF Level 4) at Midlands Community College. She graduated in April this year. Nompumelela is currently volunteering at Midlands Community College but has a dream to continue studying towards gaining her Early Childhood Development (ECD) Diploma. Nompumelela has been given the opportunity for a rich and rewarding life and is well on her way to making a difference in her community.





# Free State Care in Action Harrismith

**Years Funded: Eight**  
**Province: Free State**

Route Key: **D**



*“Before N3TC was part of this project, covering the costs of the needs of the project was always a big concern. N3TC's involvement is therefore greatly appreciated and makes a big difference in these kids' and their families' lives.”*

The Free State Care in Action After School Care Centre opened in 1989 as a project of, what was then, the Orange Woman's League (Non-Profit Organisation) and started with just a few children. Since then, the name has been changed to Free State Care in Action, but the main purpose of the project has remained the same. To give underprivileged children a secure haven after school where they can enjoy a healthy meal and have access to assistance with schoolwork and other needs.



N3TC first became involved with the After-School Care Centre in 2011 and at that stage the facility accommodated 16 primary school learners, representing 13 households. The number of children supported by the

Centre has increased over the years and currently 32 learners receive support.

Since 2012, N3TC's funding has provided for monthly food parcels, school uniforms, stationery, school bags, supplementary salaries for three personnel and other operational expenses like fuel, water and electricity.

The fact that N3TC has become involved with the project, has contributed to its sustainability and has fuelled the interest of other local businesses and individuals to become involved in the centre.





CHILD WELFARE

## RCC Crochet Project

Years Funded: Five  
Province: Free State

Route Key:

*"I love to crochet, and it is such a calming creative outlet for me. I took wool and crochet needles from home to the Route Control Centre and asked the team if they would like to learn how to crochet granny block and make up blankets. At first they weren't too sure as they didn't know how to crochet but I managed to convince them that I will help them."*

The Route Control Centre (RCC) Crochet Project was the brainchild of RCC Manager, Annatjie van der Sandt. Annatjie wanted to create an opportunity build staff morale and promote self-esteem in each member of her team. Today, the entire team, men and women, are part of the project and proud of all the items they make and donate to worthy community projects along the N3 Toll Route.

The staff crochet baby cuddle blankets and attach them to teddy bears that are handed out as part of the N3TC Duduza 'We Care' project. These colourful, soft and comforting blankets bring sick and traumatised children some comfort during their hospital stay and when they return home.

From blankets to beanies, the team is becoming more accomplished in their crochet work, but more importantly they are working well as a team, encouraging each other and the general atmosphere in the Centre is positive and supportive.



## Our Heroes

# RCC Crochet Project

By Nikki Brighton

*Adding  
colour to  
people's  
lives*

**I**t is way after midnight and the N3 is quiet. Still, the Route Control Centre (RCC) team is alert.

"Our wool and needles keep us company at night," smiles Supervisor Maggy Mothebe who has been part of the RCC team since 2001. "It's good to be busy, so we chat and teach each other new stitches when the phones are not ringing."

The RCC Crochet Project was initiated by Annatjie van der Sandt five years ago and has become an integral part of the team, keeping spirits high during the long, and sometimes challenging, shifts manning the N3TC Helpline.

"We needed to do something as a team, but someone always has to be on duty so we can't all go out at one time. I had found crochet to be very helpful during a difficult time of my life, so I brought in my hooks and yarn and just started."

Everyone got excited, learnt quickly and soon

colourful granny squares were piling up. In the winter of 2016, the team donated 43 blankets they had made to the community centre in Intabazwe and felt so proud – both of their work and their contribution to keeping the less privileged warm. Now they were on to their next goal – beanies and scarves for the orphanage, then baby blankets for new mothers in the hospital, nowadays they even take orders for their creations.

"We love to try new things," Philile Thabede says confidently. At first, she was convinced she couldn't learn because she was left-handed. "Nonsense," the team told her and set about teaching her by sitting opposite so she could copy the mirror image. She and Thuli Simella are both expert pattern readers now and encourage the team to create the most gorgeous things.

Crochet and conversation are perfect companions and these women certainly have stories to tell. Many road users get quite angry and take out their frustrations when calling the Helpline.

"A guy shouted the other day, saying it is nonsense that we have the toll lanes closed for five minutes to install new equipment. He told me to open all the booths immediately or he will make sure I get fired!"

The women keep calm, despite the rudeness, simply thanking the caller for reporting the issue and assuring them it will be dealt with as soon as possible.





“Saying thank you a lot usually calms them down.” says Maggy.

Minah Sikosana, who knows the route like the back of her hand, laughs. “I asked a man who had broken down to tell me which route marker board he was near, so I could send help to the right spot. He replied that there are no route markers on this road. Well sir, you must be on a different road then, not the N3!”

Along with her colleagues, Keke Tsoaeli and Grace Mabe, Minah loves to go on adventures on her days off. “I always feel happier when I am in the concession area, when we are on other roads, I get a bit worried. We stop at every route patrol vehicle to say hello and take photos. I know we are safe on the N3, and if we have a problem, we can phone the best call centre in the world.”

The N3TC RCC is well known for providing exceptional service, in multiple languages (Minah speaks seven!). Occasionally they get calls for assistance from drivers on roads in other areas.

“They had good service on the N3, so expect that on other roads too,” says Joyce Mosia. There are regular callers too – like old Aunty Zelda who calls twice a day. “We chat to her, ask if she has eaten and taken her medicine. She just needs some attention. We don’t know where she is, but if she doesn’t call, we get a bit worried.”

This dedicated team have a difficult job, dealing with stressful situations in a consistently cheerful manner – all out of sight of the public. Perhaps their next project could be a very visible 'yarn bomb' of the trees in the carpark outside the Control Centre?

“Making people happy is important,” Annatjie insists, “a bit of random colour will do wonders for Harrismith and all the drivers who pass by.”