

ENNERDALE CAPTURES THE HEART OF BRITONS

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Article by Terrance M. Booysen

Ever since the abolishment of South Africa's inhumane 'apartheid' system of racial segregation which ended in 1994, the effects of its almost irreversible social destruction are evident on a daily basis. No matter how a person wishes to describe the country's young democracy, South Africa remains a land of stark differences. These differences are found within the 'have's and have nots', rich and poor, the educated and those who are not sufficiently educated or qualified to hold onto any form of decent work that will adequately sustain their families and communities. From a social sciences perspective; South Africa is not only beset by stubbornly high unemployment levels and crime, the country also has massive challenges in respect of 'child-headed homes' where young, parentless children live entirely on their own, or at best, under the supervision of an older sibling who themselves are minors. Woven into this toxic social environment -- which is exacerbated by an almost complete lack of funding -- is the dismal health situation which exists within these impoverished communities; HIV AIDS being just one of the many health issues needing to be addressed.

Twenty-three years into South Africa's democracy, the South African government has still not managed to deliver on all its promises to uplift the poorest of the poor. In many instances, the meagre social grants cannot do justice to an appalling situation, which is set to get worse as many corporates tighten their Corporate Social Investment ('CSI') budgets as a consequence of an ailing economy which has been intensified by the recent country downgrades to 'junk-status'. Quite expectedly, as monetary aid begins to dry up, impoverished communities bear the brunt of immense suffering, and so do their children.



Lisa Ashton (MBE), the Founder and CEO of the Winnie Mabaso Foundation, receiving decorative cushions for her young girl's beds at Ilamula House in Ennerdale

As a part of CGF Research Institute's regular search to showcase registered small non-profit organisations (NPOs) who are involved in the care-giving of less privileged children in South Africa, we were introduced to Ilamula House, which is a culmination of the life-long dream of the late Winnie Mabaso. Despite all the gloom of South Africa's social challenges, Ilamula House was established through the Winnie Mabaso Foundation and provides a loving home for twenty two young girls, ranging from the ages of 2-16. These girls are either orphaned, abandoned, vulnerable or abused and have been referred to the home by the local social workers. For some of the girls, Ilamula House will be their 'forever home'. Others will live at Ilamula House temporarily until they are re-homed with extended families or adoptive homes. Either way, qualified social workers work tirelessly to ensure that the best interests of the children are observed.

Upon visiting Ilamula House in Ennerdale (south of Johannesburg), I was struck by the warmth of the people who provide the young girl's care. Notably, the home was decorated with the girls' artwork – *but* there was also a beautiful hand-painted lemon tree on their main entrance wall. The lemon tree's branches were decorated with hand-painted lemons, and each lemon had one of the girl's name placed on this symbolic

tree of love and unity. I established later that the word *llamula* is a Zulu word for lemon, and that the home's name emanated from the beautiful lemon tree in the front garden of the home.

I also discovered how Ilamula House came into being. Approximately thirteen years ago, Lisa Ashton (MBE) was working on a BBC documentary marking ten years of South Africa's end of apartheid when she met Winnie Mabaso for an interview. At the time, Winnie was caring almost single-handedly for orphans in the informal settlement of Ennerdale, where she provided them bowls of soup to sustain them during the day. There was an immediate connection between these two ladies, and as Lisa headed back to the United Kingdom (UK), she promised Winnie she would assist her to raise funds to provide a home for these girls. Sadly, and shortly after the two ladies met, Winnie passed away. But Lisa refused to allow her promise to Winnie of a home for the orphaned girls to be forgotten, and so Ilamula House was started through Lisa's singular efforts to raise funds in the UK. The solemn commitment Lisa gave to Winnie was so deep, and equally so Lisa's commitment to the members of Ennerdale; that she gave up her lucrative post at the BBC and dedicated her time to assisting Ilamula House and its young lady occupants.

Each year Lisa travels regularly to Ennerdale from the UK, placing her personal interests second to those of her CSI duties in South Africa. After years of hard work and dedication to include all of the Ennerdale community, the South African government recognised Lisa's sterling efforts by donating an open field to develop projects for the community of Meriting. The community has since installed a library and a pre-school which is made from old shipping containers. From these containers, a homework club and horticulture programme is run. The field also includes a community gardening programme, boasting approximately 50 individual organic gardens. There is a feeding station, a play area to keep children off the landfill sites, as well as a granny club and reading workshops.

Given sufficient funds, Lisa and her team's extraordinary work and management of Ilamula House -- as well as her project community work in Meriting village -- could easily be replicated and would undoubtedly benefit other impoverished communities in the same way that they have managed to achieve in Ennerdale and Meriting.

We hope that this article will capture the attention of potential donors who are able to assist Lisa and her team to continue their critical work in South Africa. Whilst CGF, with the support of Wot-If? and Big Five Duty Free Trust were able to donate decorative cushions for children's beds, clearly so much more is needed to sustain the Winnie Mabaso Foundation and Ilamula House.

As my visit to Ilamula House came to an end, I was reminded of an African proverb that says: "*it takes a whole village to raise a child.*" I am most certain that the late Winnie Mabaso is smiling upon the promises and work Lisa has committed herself to in South Africa. In addition, Lisa's compassion has led to the inclusion of a number of Britons in this 'African village' which takes care of the children at Ilamula House. Having said this, without financial support, Lisa's work would be seriously impaired and the lives of so many would be adversely impacted. I am hopeful that this brief account of my visit to Ilamula House, will inspire the business community, and indeed society, to allow the Winnie Mabaso Foundation to continue its successes and thereby replicate itself across the entire South Africa.

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Words: 1,130

About Wot-If? Trust

Wot-If? Trust operates primarily in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general. For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee) 083 625 3929 or email gail@wot-if.co.za

About Ilamula House

Ilamula House has a certificate of registration from the Department of Social Development in South Africa, and is a key project run under the Winnie Mabaso Foundation (NPO Nr: 140-472) which was established in 2004.

Bank Account (South Africa)

Bank: Nedbank

Branch: Trade Route Mall

Branch No: 19-40-37

Account Name: The Winnie Mabaso Foundation

Account No: 1088846521 (cheque)

Debit Order / Monthly donation

The Winnie Mabaso Foundation accepts both debit and stop orders.

Donations in kind

- Seeds and gardening tools
- Educational toys (for both the younger children and the teenagers i.e. Chess)
- Outdoor play equipment
- Reference books to help with homework
- Long life foods (mealie meal, rice, sugar, oil, Spices, tinned fish, etc.)
- Toiletries
- Fuel for our vehicles
- Laptop for homework club

CSI / Corporate donations:

Please contact us to request an appointment or proposal.

For further information, please contact:

Lisa Ashton MBE (Founder and CEO)

The Winnie Mabaso Foundation

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