

HEIFER NEWS

In partnership, achieving food security and poverty alleviation in rural communities

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Working with communities to end hunger and poverty in South Africa and care for the Earth

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Passing on the Gift®. First step towards a better future.

By Claire Hawkridge, Resource Development Officer

On 19 May 2011, 15 new needy families near Ixopo in KwaZulu-Natal were given the chance to build towards a better future through breeding and raising meat-goats – by members of their own community.

The members of Woza Moya are volunteer caregivers, working to improve the health and care for the sick in their communities. In 2006 the women began working with Heifer International South Africa. Eight of them received laying hens. With these chickens and the training they had received from Heifer International South Africa, they began to improve the nutrition of their families and earned a small income. Soon, through Passing on the Gift to other caregivers, they were able to expand the group membership to 16. These volunteers were then able to pass on the training they had received, as well as animals, to needy families they visited in their work.

Mrs. Thandi Mzolo, a widow, remembers when she was given chickens as part of Heifer International South Africa's 'Passing on the Gift' process. Through this process, recipients of project animals agree to pass on the offspring of the original animals to other needy families. With the income from her chickens, Mrs. Mzolo was able to send one of her children to computer school. Her child is now employed because of this training. She was one of the people who received goats during Thursday's Passing on the Gift ceremony.



Mrs. Khumalo (on the left) and Mrs. Ngcobo during Passing on the Gift ceremony.

She is very excited and hopes that she will be able to use the money she makes from the goats to give her other children the same kind of opportunity.

Mrs. Jabu Mjwara is also thinking about her child's education. She says she is very happy to be able to Pass on the Gift. Now that she has been able to share her good fortune in benefiting from the project with another family, she will be using the money she makes from breeding and selling goats to save up for her child's tertiary studies.

From a small group of volunteers, the Woza Moya project now has 33 group members – 32 women and one man. The project is no longer directly supported by Heifer, yet project members continue to work hard to use the livestock and training provided by Heifer International South Africa to improve their own lives. They also continue to Pass on the Gift to other families, so that more and more people are able to enjoy the food and livelihood security they get from raising and breeding animals provided through their relationship with Heifer International South Africa.



Project members before Passing on a Gift to new beneficiaries.

Read to Feed – a first lesson of citizenship.

By Magdalena Wos, Resource Development Officer

For more than 10 years, Heifer International South Africa (Heifer) has been present in South Africa transforming rural communities. The organisation's work concentrates on providing people with everyday access to food and helping them towards a sustainable life. But Heifer's job doesn't finish here. We know that only by involving the whole nation, even the youngest ones, and mobilising them to take action, can change be created. Therefore, Heifer has been running a programme called Read to Feed for a number of years.

Read to Feed is a reading programme during which children get sponsorship for every book they read. Collected funds support Heifer and its work. As part of the programme, rewards are offered to the pupils. One of the rewards learners experience is to see, touch and learn about the different types of animals Heifer provides to rural areas. As most of the children, who participate in the programme live in urban area, for many of them being able to see and touch an animals like sheep, chickens or goats is a new experience. Children can also find small surprises in some of their books. Whoever picks up the book that contained the gift is the owner of the reward. Additionally, the two pupils from the school who read the

most books and who raise the most money are rewarded with Read to Feed t-shirts.

However, Read to Feed is much more than surprises. The initiative improves children's reading skills. It is also a great opportunity to extend children's knowledge about hunger, world population, global food distribution, cultural diversity, the environment and other important issues. Read to Feed is also a way to build good citizenship and encourage children to have a philanthropic spirit. Children learn from an early age that they can make a difference and help others.

Heifer International South Africa has been running the programme for several years and every year more and more schools take part in Read to Feed. Schools that have already participated in the programme this year include St. Mary's Diocesan School for Girls, Hillcrest Christian Academy; Charles Hugo Primary School, Atholl Heights Primary School and Benjamin Pine Primary School, just to mention few. Some of the schools like Hillcrest Christian Academy and St. Mary's participate in Read to Feed regularly. But for some of them, like Charles Hugo Primary School and Benjamin Pine Primary School, Read to Feed is a new initiative.

In some of the schools participation brought unexpected results. In Charles Hugo Primary School children were so



Best readers at St. Mary's Diocesan School for Girls together with Mrs. Stanley (Librarian) and Marisia Geraci (Heifer's Exec. Director).

involved in the programme that children from grade R, who have not yet learned to read, were spending their breaks in the library trying to read books.

One learner managed to read 40 books in a period of 6 weeks! The interest in reading was so dramatic that Mrs. Naicker - the deputy principle responsible for the programme in Charles Hugo Primary School – decided to open the library around 7 in the morning so children could come and borrow a book before classes started. Atholl Heights Primary School decided to hold a Read-a-Thon during which children were reading books for a period of 24 hours. To keep children interested, they had short breaks, during which children made jewellery, ate sandwiches or learned to dance. Learners from St. Mary's Diocesan School for Girls also showed their interest in reading and supporting Heifer. The school participated in the project for the fourth time and contributed to Heifer's work with an enormous amount of over R69 000.

Read to Feed is certainly one of the ways to take the action and a first step to create awareness in the younger generation. The programme gives children a chance to combine their passion, interest and will to help others. One student recently had this to say about Read to Feed *"It is a good idea to raise money for less fortunate people. It was a great opportunity to read more books and have a lot of fun at the same time."*

OUR SPECIAL THANKS GO TO: Mrs. Mandy Stanley, Mrs. Heindriksen, Mrs. Linda Atwell and all librarians who run and motivated children during Read to Feed programme. *Space, cost and data protection prevents us from listing all of our kind donors by name, but we would like to send our thanks to each and every one of our supporters.*



Learners at Atholl Heights Primary School, Westville, KZN during Read a Thon.