



25<sup>TH</sup>

ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION

CELEBRATION OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL CHANGE ASSISTANCE TRUST

SUPPORTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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# INTRODUCTION

A new era awaits the Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) as old friends take leave.

Scat celebrated its 25th anniversary in November 2009 at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. Founding trustees Di Oliver and Gordon Young, handed on the baton to a fresh team who will continue their legacy of ensuring human rights for all. Together with the late Barry Streek they founded Scat in October 1984.

They used their knowledge and contacts to ensure financial resources reached ordinary people who could use them to make a difference in their communities' lives. Scat was founded to address basic human rights issues, lack of access to resources and poverty – after 25 years it still focuses on this. Poor people and disempowered people, are given a voice through the many Advice Offices and other projects that have come into existence through Scat's intervention.

Sadly, on the evening of the anniversary, Anne-Marie Helland, from Norwegian Church Aid (one of Scat's biggest supporters since its founding) said her country's relationship with South Africa would be changing. Henceforth focus would fall on tertiary education and bi-lateral trade rather than on investment in rural projects. Possibly, in future, NCA would not have the resources for Scat that it had in the past.



However those working with rural communities know all too well that discrimination and poverty continue to blight the lives of many, but that the hope and determination of ordinary people to overcome suffering is strong.

In the two-day workshop and celebration, marking Scat's milestone anniversary, stories of this optimism were told over and over. Community-minded people told of employment initiatives, schools, HIV/Aids awareness programmes, labour advice offices and legal victories that were all possible through the support of Scat and its funders. They are now in

control and improving their lives and the lives of those around them.

This initiative and positive spirit has always inspired the Scat team. As the organisation enters its second quarter century the conviction that all humans must have dignity continues to motivate and inspire everyone who has had, and will have the privilege of working with Scat over the years.

Scat currently supports 60 Local Development Agencies (LDAs), and these LDA's operate in the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Western Cape and North West provinces.

Scat will continue the good work of its founders, and support rural development.



# SCAT'S SUCCESS STORIES PLAY OUT IN FAR-FLUNG AND POOREST AREAS

Executive Director

Local Development Agencies (LDA) that encourage rural communities to take responsibility for their future are fulfilling a key role in improving the lives of all South Africans.

Joanne Harding, executive director of the Social Change Assistance Trust, (Scat) commended the men and women working, through non-profit organisations, to create employment, ensure food security, and support health programmes among the country's poorest communities.

Harding was speaking at Scat's 25th Anniversary Celebration, at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, on 26 November 2009.

She explained that Scat directed social funding, local and international, into Local Development Agencies. Many of these are known as Advice Offices in the communities where they are based. The biggest role of Advice Offices is to help the rural poor access justice and other social services.

Many Advice Offices have expanded this role with some initiating job creation projects, running soup kitchens for the sick and the very young and organising home-based care for people with HIV/Aids.

"There are success stories playing out in the most far-flung and poorest areas of our country because of the selflessness and leadership of good people working in these communities," Harding said. Scat enabled the people running these initiatives to access resources.



Harding said she remembered, as a young field worker, driving into communities that had no water or electricity, no flushing toilets or communication infrastructure. Through well-targeted funding and good leadership many of these communities had grown into thriving centres working to create employment, coping with the care of those living with HIV/ Aids and empowering people to understand their rights and meet their responsibilities.

"Advice Offices have been instrumental in helping communities achieve these goals," she said.

**The biggest role of Advice Offices is to help the rural poor access justice and other social services.**

Harding highlighted Spoegrivier in Namaqualand saying that 15 years ago infrastructure was non-existent. "Today there are houses with electricity, water and telephone lines, there is a sports field, a clinic and food gardens."

In another initiative near the Eastern Cape town of Port St Johns the Advice Office, through Scat funding, was helping a group of local people establish bee hives

to supply nearby guest houses with honey. "It was an initiative that started with four people and has now grown to nine. This year they harvested 50 litres of honey."

The key was to help communities identify opportunities and give them the skills so that they could create sustainable livelihoods and ensure that generations to come would live a better life, she said.

## END OF AN ERA AS SCAT'S FOUNDERS RETIRE

Remarks from outgoing trustee

Gordon Young and Di Oliver, who founded the Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) with the late Barry Streek in 1984, have retired from the Board of Trustees and will no longer be directly involved in the leadership of the organisation.

The announcement of their retirement was made at Scat's 25th anniversary celebration held at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town on November 26, 2009.

In his farewell speech Young said the trio had founded Scat at a time in South Africa's political history when basic human rights were being violated and the rural poor were the most vulnerable.

"Money, from international donors, was available but it wasn't always reaching the people it was intended to help," he said.

Scat was formed to channel this money into communities, especially in the rural areas, so that they could establish Local Development Agencies that would empower them to understand and fight for human rights.

"Initially the Advice Offices were anti-apartheid with no legal framework in the country to support them, today that legal framework finally exists and the Advice Offices role now is to enable the rural poor to access the law and know their rights."

A fundamental principal that always guided Scat was that people were poor not helpless, he said. Scat's role was to help the poor organise themselves to improve their lives through the building of sustainable local institutions.

"The poor do have assets but sometimes they are



hidden," said Young, "they also tend to be in people and not things."

Young spoke about "Scatism" versus "Statism" – the former encouraging a culture of self-reliance, control from below, the poor as agents of change in their lives, and money (from donors) facilitating this change. "Statism" was when communities turned to the state to solve problems and consequently there was increasing dependency on government, control from above and money used to gain power.

He said Scat had succeeded in many of the things which make a successful institution: it was a learning organisation; it was not afraid to make occasional disruptive changes when necessary; and it focused sharply on its main objectives. Young said funding for Local Development Agencies from Scat was not over-regulated but planning by the LDA was crucial if developmental goals were to be achieved.

He identified poor planning as a principal weakness and urged that attention be given to improved planning in the future.

"We want communities to take responsibility for their own future and this involves planning." Scat, for instance, understood and worked towards its core strategy, which was to empower the rural poor through targeted funding.

"Over the years there have been temptations to drift away from our strategy but we have refused to go off course." LDA's needed to develop a similar vision and be clear about their objectives.

In his speech Young remembered his and Oliver's friend, Scat co-founder Barry Streek, who died of cancer in July 2006.



## NATURE OF VALUABLE PARTNERSHIP MAY CHANGE

Norwegian Church Aid

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), one of Scat's oldest and most committed funders, would continue to work alongside the organisation, but the nature of the partnership was set to change.

Anne-Marie Helland, regional representative of NCA in Southern Africa, told guests at Scat's 25th anniversary celebration, that Norway's King Harald V and Queen Sonja were visiting South Africa and that the two countries were set for a more equitable relationship.

Norway was a staunch supporter of the anti-apartheid movement and since South Africa's first democratic election has been a major funder especially of poverty alleviation projects.

"The discussions between our two governments mean Norway will now be investing more in trade with South Africa and in tertiary level education."

Helland said she was "not convinced this was the right approach yet."

The NCA philosophy was to promote basic human rights and provide funding to those who needed it



... focus on HIV/Aids, good governance, and the supporting of indigenous people and their culture.

most, irrespective of gender, political conviction, religion, and ethnic origin.

"How do we encourage participation in national and local government if people continue to be left out?" she asked. Poverty and political exclusion were still issues dominating rural communities in South Africa and needed focused aid (like that currently provided by NCA) to help them enjoy the civil and human rights afforded by a democratic government.

Norwegian churches and congregations make up the constituency of NCA. The organisation has been a partner of Scat since its inception in 1984 and today funds initiatives that focus on HIV/Aids, good governance, and the supporting of indigenous people and their culture.

"Scat has always been clear about its vision those involved had an unshakeable belief that they could make the world better. Sometimes it was a bit chaotic but in the end, Scat always landed feet first," she said.

It was because of this vision, to help the rural poor by according them dignity, that NCA remained a committed partner.

## ‘UPHOLD THE DIGNITY OF ALL IN ORDER TO ENJOY HUMAN RIGHTS’

Southern Africa Head of The Synergos Institute

South Africans will only enjoy the full value of the country’s human rights-based constitution when each person accepts responsibility for him or her self and upholds the dignity of others.

This is why the work of Scat, which celebrated 25 years in 2009, has a crucial role in helping the country mature into a real democracy.

Barry Smith, head of the Synergos Institute in Southern Africa, made these remarks in a speech at Scat’s anniversary celebration at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town on November 26.

The Synergos Institute is a global programme that works to create sustainable social progress through effective partnerships and philanthropy.

Smith’s relationship with Scat developed over a number of years when he was involved, as a founding director, in Scat’s sister organisation, INTERFUND.

“If we do not uphold the dignity of others, honour our duty of care for our fellow citizens, and work together to build tolerant, cohesive communities, then the full measure of our rights will remain unattainable,” he said.



While citizenship was a right it was also a valued gift. Social justice grant-making organisations, like Scat, were making great headway helping active citizens build their communities and develop a sense of citizenship in poor, rural communities.

Smith said transforming communities that were historically disempowered and impoverished was not short term or straightforward.

“We must, like Scat after 25 years, be in for the long haul, and have the humility and courage to learn together, listen deeply, observe intensely, adapt and change every day.”

What was so inspiring was that social justice grant-making promoted just and sustainable communities by addressing power imbalances that reinforced poverty and hopelessness.

This was done through strategically mobilising financial, material and voluntary resources.

**This was done through strategically mobilising financial, material and voluntary resources.**

“This kind of grant-making empowers communities through institution-building, capacity development, and access to knowledge, ideas, and decision-making,” he said.





## GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO BREAKING BACK OF HUNGER

Western Cape Land Claims Commissioner on behalf of the National Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Gugile Nkwinti

Breaking the back of hunger to re-energise the rural poor was the short-term priority of the government's Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, says regional land claims commissioner, Beverley Jansen.

She was speaking at the 25th anniversary celebration of the Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town on 26 November. Jansen said it was only through addressing hunger that the rural poor could become full participants in efforts to lift them out of poverty.

"It is during this phase that empowerment and training of people will be intensified," Jansen said.

Jansen was speaking on behalf of the National Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Gugile Nkwinti, who could not attend the celebration event due to an urgent meeting.

In the medium-term the government would look at enterprise development and food security through a spectrum of projects tied to infrastructure development, she said.

These medium-term initiatives would be a joint effort between the Departments of Rural Development and Land Reform and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Long-term the focus would fall on supporting small, micro and medium enterprises and industries, cultural



tourism, co-operatives and village markets.

"The revitalisation of rural towns will feature prominently during this phase," said Jansen.

SCAT had a role to play in the national plan to improve life for the rural poor, she said.

"Your experience in community work is imperative in ensuring that our rural communities are emancipated in order to take charge of their destiny," said Jansen.

The Department had identified Dysselsdorp, 30kms from Oudtshoorn in the Western Cape, to run a pilot project for its Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP).

Dysselsdorp was founded as a mission station in the early 1800s is one of the poorest communities in the region. Most of its residents are employed as seasonal workers on surrounding farms, or they commute to Oudtshoorn for work.

The Dysselsdorp initiative will be part of the department's broader Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy, which, is a strategic goal in the national government's Medium Strategic Framework.

"The vision of our Department is to create vibrant, equitable and sustainable communities with the strategic objective being social cohesion and development," she said.

## PRINCE ALBERT ADVICE OFFICE SHINES

at SCAT 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Prince Albert's Advice Office was named the most effective Local Development Agency in the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape at the Social Change Assistance Trust's 25th Anniversary celebration in Cape Town in November.

Margy Jaftha, the human resource director of the Prince Albert's Advice Office's newly formed Section 21 company, accepted a cheque of R20 000 for the people of the small Karoo town. Prince Albert is situated 40km off the N1 between Laingsburg and Beaufort West.

"It was just hard work and passion, that got us here," said the elated Jaftha.

Jaftha is right. Committed leadership and dedicated workers have turned the small Advice Office, formed in 1991 with two volunteers, into a thriving business that has created work for 83 people.

Originally the Advice Office was intended to ensure food security for the very poor and to give labourers, working on the farms around the town, legal advice.

The initiative now runs - or is involved in - 11 projects, including a community garden on the emerging farm, Treintjiesrivier, a print shop, HIV/Aids home-based care, a nursery school for farm children in the Weltevrede Valley, legal assistance, and a youth development



initiative – to name but a few programmes.

It partners with government departments like Social Development and Health and the Central District Municipality to ensure people in desperate need don't slip, unhelped, through the system.

It runs on funding from private donors (through Scat, Lotto, the Office of the Consumer Protector, the National Development Agency) and the government.

Each project has its own bank account that is administered by a clerk at the Advice Office and which is audited annually.

"We have tight controls and this gives our funders confidence," says Jaftha.

The move to a Section 21 company was a natural next-step for the former non-profit organisation. Political interference was a potential threat to its sustainability and the leadership

opted to form a company to protect the staff and ensure the impartiality of the operation.

The Advice Office owns four vehicles and plans are afoot for it to eventually finance the purchase of its own building. It currently operates from a rented house. "Good leadership and hard, hard work has been the secret of our success," said Jaftha

**"Good leadership and hard, hard work has been the secret of our success," said Jaftha**





## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TO IMAGINE A FUTURE

Bot River

Building hope and encouraging young people to imagine a future is the main focus of the Community Development Centre in the Western Cape village of Bot River.

The village started as a trading station where the Dutch East India Company could barter with the Khoikhoi in the early 1700s and is situated on the N2, en route to Caledon, from Cape Town.

Today Bot River is an agricultural centre in the Overberg with abundant vineyards, orchards, and cash crops that provide seasonal work for the local community. Despite the idyllic setting poverty is a way of life for many in the community and the Community Development Centre, which turns 21 next year, offers desperately needed services and support.

Ten full time staff focus on four core areas: Youth, HIV/Aids, Early Childhood Development, and Senior Citizens. There is also a busy Human Rights desk that deals with labour disputes and other legal issues.

Administrator Marie Swartz, said youth development is the biggest part of the Development Centre with the other core areas feeding into youth projects.

Central to this is a partnership with the Department of Social Development.

For example, on December 1, World Aids Day, the HIV/Aids programme involved the local school in a march through town to raise awareness about the disease.



**“Our next big goal is to fund our own building so that we can be guaranteed a permanent home,” said Swartz.**

Young people in the community are also undergoing training to assist with the home-based care of the sick and elderly.

The Community Development Centre encourages Bot River’s youth to continue with their education, even once they leave formal schooling.

“We encourage the youth and unemployed to develop skills that make them more employable,” said Swartz.

The Community Development Centre partners with a number of initiatives that promote basic education and training for example Boland College and Elgin Learning Foundation.

The Youth in Business initiative encourages entrepreneurship and mathematical literacy skills among students from Grades Nine to Twelve.

Also under the Community Development Centre umbrella is the Early Childhood Development

Crèche, which is a partnership with the Department of Social Development and a local farmer.

Funding for Bot River’s Community Development Centre is raised through ongoing fund-raising projects throughout the year. Funds channelled through Scat are used mainly for the day to day running of the office. Funding has also been allocated by the national Lotto.

“Our next big goal is to fund our own building so that we can be guaranteed a permanent home,” said Swartz.

## PICKING UP PIECES IN SWELLENDAM

Swellendam Advice Office

One of the biggest responsibilities of the Swellendam Advice Office is to act as a channel for justice for the thousands of farm workers living in South Africa's "fruit-basket".

Employment for the very poor in this fertile region of the Western Cape is seasonal – starting with picking of peaches, apricots, plums and nectarines in summer, followed by some grapes and ending with citrus in the autumn. In some regions the biggest employers are dairy and vegetable farmers.

"A lot of our time is spent on labour disputes," says Swellendam Advice Office co-ordinator, Phumla Libazi, "We are the one place a farm worker can come when he feels he has been unfairly treated by his employer."

A growing problem in the area, one of the country's most scenic, is an increasing number of farm evictions. Farm owners no longer want the responsibility or hassle of workers living on their land and ask them to move to town.

"It's heartbreaking because these are often people who have lived on the farm for several generations and they have nowhere to go," said Libazi.

It's a humanitarian crisis that is exacerbating the housing crisis in rural communities across the Western Cape.

"In Swellendam alone we have 1 900 families living in shacks. The government built 671 houses in 2003 and there are plans to build another 71 but it doesn't come



close to meeting the need," she said.

The squatters are mostly itinerant workers from far-flung rural areas who have moved closer to where they perceive there is work.

"When people live like this you get all sorts of social problems like drugs and domestic violence."

HIV/Aids, especially among the youth, is well entrenched and the Advice Office assists with counselling sufferers in ways to access health resources like anti-retrovirals, welfare grants, and emotional counselling.

**The next big project for the Advice Office is the purchase of its own vehicle, which they hope to achieve through funding...**

"We also run awareness programmes in the community educating people about the virus, how it spreads and what it means if you are HIV positive."

One small success story is of a young man from Swellendam who, with the support of the Advice Office started a garden service to support his pregnant girlfriend.

"That project now employs 15 people and has its own bakkie."

The next big project for the Advice Office is the purchase of its own vehicle, which they hope to achieve through funding from the National Lottery Fund.





## GIVING A VOICE TO THE POOR

Witzenberg Advice and Development Office

Six families living on a foreign-owned farm in Ceres in the Western Cape were about to be evicted on the day Naomi Thomas was scheduled to present to the Scat's 25th anniversary workshop in Cape Town.

"They need an alternative but our local municipality is refusing to help them," said the fiery young co-ordinator of the Witzenberg Advice and Development Centre.

To illustrate the human tragedy about to play out, some of the local youth had taken the farm workers plight to the street, and with the support of the Advice Office, were demonstrating outside the municipal buildings.

The teenagers had heaped a few items of household furniture on the pavement with posters saying: "You know where you will spend Christmas."

Piles of mattresses at the Municipality's front were marked with signs "Our leaders are sleeping!"

"It certainly got the mayor and his team outside," said Thomas, "but the time for talk has passed, on this issue we needed help solving these families' predicaments."

It has been a long road for the farm workers. Their employer and his wife were killed in a car accident in 2007 and the farm sold to a foreigner who wanted them gone.

"They lost their work, their homes and their way of life,"



she said, "we can't just expect them to go and put up a shack and carry on."

So far the municipality has only been able to offer land to the farm workers.

"There is no plan in place for emergency housing for evictions."

It's issues like these that prompted the establishment of the Witzenberg Advice and Development Office in 1992. Ceres and the surrounding villages make up the area known as the Koue Bokkeveld and are at the heart of South Africa's fruit and vegetable industry, which employs

thousands of farm workers. The office was opened to offer these people advice on human rights and labour issues. In subsequent years it has become a voice for disgruntled consumers and today runs a Youth Programme and an HIV/Aids awareness initiative.

To this end Thomas is the ideal person to lead the operation. Through the Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) she spent a year in Norway learning how

international donors think and mastering ways to access resources available for the poor.

"So often the poor are voiceless, unable to fight or stop injustice. It's why an Advice Office like ours exists. People have to take responsibility for what they do to others and we are here to make sure that happens."

**Koue Bokkeveld... the heart of South Africa's fruit and vegetable industry, which employs thousands of farm workers.**

## MOBILISING TO ACCESS RIGHTS

Berlin Advice Office

The news was unexpected. Oupa Gqozo, head of the Ciskei government, decided the old and the sick would no longer receive subsistence grants. It was 1991 and, for the villages around Berlin, a community on the road from East London to King William's Town, the news was devastating. How would the people eat? What would they do?

Community leaders came together and decided to fight the unilateral ruling. Together they formed the Berlin Advice Office, which today still plays a major part in addressing the social, economic and political issues of this rural community.

With the help of the Grahamstown Legal Resource Centre, the Advice Office took the Ciskei government to the Supreme Court. They won the case and more than 3 000 people had their monthly grant reinstated.

"This shows the strength of our people when we stand together," says Yoliswa Mgwelo, co-ordinator of the Berlin Advice Centre. "We have so many problems but when we work together we achieve great things."

During the two-day Scat workshop, held to mark the organisation's 25th anniversary, Mgwelo outlined the many projects, run by the Advice Office.

Most economically active people were migrants, she said, working on the mines in Gauteng and the North West Province. But with every economic slump and loss of jobs they returned home, depriving their families of



an income and bringing diseases like HIV/Aids.

The frustration of poverty has also meant increased levels of domestic violence and the subjugation of women.

The Berlin Advice office has worked constantly to counter the impact of poverty.

The Human Rights Programme, still fights for the rights of the poor and is currently working on claiming compensation from Sanachem for 200 workers who were poisoned by chemicals in the 1980s.



The Health Programme informs people about HIV/Aids and oversees a home-based care initiative where volunteers cook and wash for the sick. The programme also assists with the supply of medicine.

Adult Basic Education and Literacy Programmes, the training of AIDS carers, sanitation education and food production workshops are part of the day-to-day activities underway at the Berlin Advice Office.

A soup kitchen feeds desperate children in school holidays while donations of clothes are distributed to organisations to ensure they are given to those most in need.

"There is a lot going on," said Mgwelo, "we want our people to live full, healthy and productive lives where they are respected and, in turn, where they respect others."



## STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE

Masiphakameni Local Development Agency

Masiphakameni is Xhosa for “Let’s stand up”, an appropriate name for a Local Development Agency (LDA) that has taken a stand against injustice and ill health.

This LDA is based in the Eastern Cape community of Humansdorp, about 80km west of Port Elizabeth. Most of the very poor in Humansdorp are farm and factory workers employed in the local dairy industry, or as domestic workers.

Pumeza Sibengile, office co-ordinator of Masiphakameni, said one of the biggest challenges facing the community was HIV/Aids.

“The Department of Social Development has given us money for our work with people living with HIV/Aids and awareness programmes,” she told the Scat 25th anniversary workshop in Cape Town.

SCAT also makes a quarterly donation towards the LDA alongside the Kouga Municipality, which makes an annual contribution.

The biggest role played by this LDA is the supervision and support of 34 volunteers assisting with the home-based care of people with Aids in the community.

It also runs a successful labour advice office assisting



impoverished workers fighting unfair dismissals, farm evictions, or simply needing advice.

“We have excellent relationships with the CCMA, local Department of Labour, Black Sash, and the Rhodes Legal Aid Clinic who all assist us with the resolution of cases,” said Sibengile.

A prison programme, where LDA representatives visit those behind bars, encourages inmates to take responsibility for their lives. One of the programme’s initiatives is a choir.

LDA youth workers visit local schools to educate teenagers about the risk of taking drugs.

“We face many challenges,” says Sibengile, “our office space, which is in the Kouga Municipal building, is compromised by political changes. Ideally we would like our own permanent base.”

The LDA also struggles with transport and regularly relies on the South African Police Services

or sympathetic farmers to enable them to visit the sick or those needing legal help.

“There is so much we can do for our community and we plan to hold a workshop with all stakeholders and the municipality to look at our mission statement to work out how we can make the biggest impact,” she said.

**The Department of Social Development has given us money for our work with people living with HIV/Aids**

## SOLVING TROUBLING LABOUR ISSUES

Dordrecht Advice Office

The Scat 25th anniversary celebration at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town held an unexpected surprise for the Dordrecht Advice Office when it was awarded a R5 000 cheque for excellent work in this remote rural community.

Dressed in a traditional Xhosa costume, co-ordinator and founder, Nomathembu Tsulo, accepted the cheque saying it was an appreciated contribution to the Advice Office's many projects.

Dordrecht is in the heart of the Eastern Cape, 72km north of Queenstown at the foot of the southern Drakensberg. It forms part of the Emalahleni Local Municipality, which is part of the Chris Hani District Municipality.

Unemployment is high and those who are employed work for commercial farms or are part of the government initiative to turn landless locals into emerging farmers.

"Much of our time is spent on resolving labour issues," says Tsulo, "we have a good partnership with the Departments of Labour and Social Development."

The Advice Office also assists with Identity Document applications, helping people who don't know how to access formal structures to sort out their personal documentation.

One of the Advice Office's most successful programmes is a centre for the elderly where they make handicrafts such as beadwork and traditional clothing that are sold to make an income.



"Abuse of the elderly is a sad reality of our community," says Tsulo, "the centre is a place where they can meet and where we can be made aware of any problems."

Another goal is to do more for local youth through skills training.

"They have nothing to do and inadequate education, we want to take them to the next level so that they can become productive and develop self esteem and respect for others," she said.

The ever-present spectre of HIV/Aids means the Advice Office employs an HIV/Aids activator to run awareness programmes and partner with government health workers. The Advice Office recently intervened to ask the local hospital to allow people needing anti-retroviral treatment to be assessed locally instead of having to make the long journey to Queenstown or Lady Frere.

"While they still have to go to the bigger towns to collect their medicine at least the initial assessment can now be done locally," she said.

One of the issues close to Tsulo's heart is helping the widows of mineworkers access their pensions. So many don't know they can access benefits and, when they do, they don't know where to start.

"That's where we come in," she says. Another gap, she says, is a provident or trust fund for retired farm workers who having nothing to show for the decades of hard labour.

"There is so much to do and so much we can do," she says.





## ADVICE OFFICE BUZZING WITH IDEAS

Port St Johns

A father is shot dead. Left to fend for themselves are his unemployed widow and their four young children. How will they eat? What will become of the children? It is a scenario that plays out all too often in South Africa.

In this case the Port St Johns Community Legal Advice Centre stepped in quickly to help the Matlatini family. With the help of the district municipality, the three older children were sent to boarding school so they could complete their education while the widow was given food support and encouraged to get involved in community projects to earn a living.

Nomboniso Gaya, co-ordinator of this Advice Centre, says one of the driving motivations of the non-profit organisation is to improve the life of individuals through social assistance, legal aid, and job creation.

“We are a poor community with high unemployment,” she said, “but hard work and well defined goals can achieve anything.”

The Port St Johns Legal Advice Centre services six of the 16 wards in the area, which is on the northern part of the Eastern Cape coast.

Through funding from Scat a bee-keeping project is underway and has created work for five women and four men. The honey is sold to Mngazi Bungalows, a holiday resort close by.



With Scat funding the beekeepers were trained how to run hives and collect honey. Scat provided equipment such as smokers and protective clothing and, this year, the beekeepers harvested 50 litres of honey.

“It hasn’t all been easy,” said Gaya, “climate change is playing havoc with bees and the beekeepers have had to work around droughts and floods.”

What the beekeepers have agreed is that they need to diversify their operation so as to have multiple sources of income.

In the communities of Thandanani, Ndevu, and Zenzele, the Advice Centre has initiated food gardens so that desperate families have access to fresh fruit and vegetables.

“This is an especially important project for child-headed families,” said Gaya, “not only do they grow their own food but they learn a skill.”

One of the Advice Office’s biggest successes has been to trace the pension benefits of 40 mineworkers whose families now have access to this income.

“We have many challenges in our community, HIV/ Aids, domestic violence, unemployment, and the moral degeneration of the youth. We are looking at all this and have a host of projects underway,” said Gaya.

**The Port St Johns Legal Advice Centre services six of the 16 wards in the area ... northern part of the Eastern Cape coast.**

## THE COURAGE OF ONE WOMAN WITH HIV/AIDS

King William's Town

It took a lot of courage for Miranda to tell her community she was HIV positive. The people of the rural villages around King William's Town in the Eastern Cape are conservative. Aids didn't happen here, it was a disease for those in cities like Johannesburg.

"Miranda was one of our team at the Qongqotha Advice Centre and, by going public with her status, she risked her own life to save others," said the centre's HIV/Aids co-ordinator Khumbulani Yekani. In rural communities there is terrible stigma attached to being HIV positive.

When Miranda spoke up the community was shattered. Here was a beautiful young woman, one of their daughters, saying the virus was among them.

"When she died in 2005 (leaving behind her little girl) we held a candlelight vigil for all those who have died from Aids, it was one of the most heartbreaking nights of my life," said Yekani. The consequence of Miranda's death and her declaration was that many in the community found out their HIV status.

HIV/Aids awareness is a core area for this Advice Centre, which partners with the Provincial Department of Health to ensure the community knows how to access resources like counselling, welfare grants, and medication.

Coupled with the Aids awareness programmes are efforts to encourage the moral regeneration of the



local youth. Unemployment and lack of opportunities mean many young people finish school with no prospect of a future.

"There has been a lot of waiting around for government handouts," said Yekani, "now people are starting to realise there is nothing coming."

To encourage productivity the Advice Centre started a community vegetable garden but soon discovered it wasn't that easy when others goats and cows wandered in to eat the cabbages and mielies. Fencing was stolen and the project seemed doomed.

"There are a lot of challenges," he said, "but we know we will get it right eventually."

Local women have also banded together, under the auspices of the Advice Centre, to form a group called Women Empowered that looks at tackling domestic violence.

The emotional support group, which now has 25 members, is run

by and for abused women.

The three staff and four volunteers at the Qongqotha Advice Centre also assist with legal aid but their biggest goal is to encourage a culture of human rights and anti-racism.

"We want economic justice for our people because only then will be really start to see community development," said Yekani.

**"There are a lot of challenges," he said, "but we know we will get it right eventually."**





# SCAT HAS NOT WAVERED IN SUPPORT FOR ADVICE OFFICE

Queenstown

There is something deeply moving, almost electrifying about hearing a Xhosa praise song. Maradi Gcotyelwa, co-ordinator of the Nonesi Development and Legal Advice Centre in EziBeleni, a township near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, delivered a powerful poem praising Scat at its 25th Anniversary Workshop.

“Scat is a Mamba, a snake, nestled at the foot of Table Mountain. It slithers the hills and valleys of South Africa bringing development and change to rural communities.”

Some women in the audience ululated their support, others cheered and applauded. As the praise song unfolded the real impact of Scat’s work over 25 years in the country’s forgotten corners became clear. Gcotyelwa was a woman who understood suffering and the havoc poverty could wreak in peoples’ lives.

“Scat has not wavered in supporting Advice Offices which educate our communities about human rights and now democracy,” she sang.

Nonesi Development and Legal Advice Office was co-founded by Gcotyelwa in 2003 to help the local community with legal advice regarding land claims and corruption in service and housing delivery.

“With Scat’s financial support we have grown and today our goal is to encourage development in our community,” she said in an interview.

One of the issues closest to her heart is inspiring hope in young people so they can envisage a future.

“They sometimes feel there is too much against them, HIV/Aids, unemployment, drugs, and domestic violence. It all leads to a sense of hopelessness and eventually they



feel there is no point in trying to better themselves.”

“We say to them ‘Have a Dream’, don’t always see obstacles, there are channels that can help you build a future.”

The Advice Office runs support groups for people living with HIV/ Aids, organises awareness days and workshops and is involved in a community project focusing on traditional health.

SCAT has provided resources for seeds and equipment for a community garden in the Them bani administrative area, which is part of the Lukhanji Local Municipality. The garden is to create work for those living with HIV/Aids.

One of the Advice Centre’s most recent successes was the reinstatement of a desk refurbishment job creation project for the Ikhala Public FET College.

The project had provided an income for 150 people in the community but was cancelled and moved elsewhere through nepotism by the acting head of the college.

“What happened was wrong,” says Gcotyelwa, “after the project was cancelled in February we went to the Provincial Minister of Education for help and it was reinstated in August.”

Gcotyelwa raised her four children alone after her husband, Fikile, died very young. Her life has been filled with constant challenges yet now, as she savours grandmotherhood, she looks forward with great hope.

“Our young people must not give up - education, hard work and staying away from evils like drugs is the way to build a better life.”

## KOMAGGAS ADVICE OFFICE RALLIES PEOPLE AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER STATION

Komaggas Advice Office

For the people of Komaggas life has never been easy. The small community, 60k west of Springbok in the Namaqualand region of the Northern Cape, survives in a harsh environment softened only by the coming of the flowers in the spring.

Yet they feel a deep love for the land of their ancestors which is why they felt so outraged when power giant Eskom and the National Government earmarked their communal land for a Nuclear Power Station.

Komaggas Advice Office co-ordinator, Andy Pienaar, said the battle to stop the building of the nuclear power station united the impoverished community.

Despite their desperate desire for jobs and social upliftment, they felt the legacy of a nuclear power station was not one they wanted to leave their children.

With the support of anti-nuclear activists, the Komaggas Advice Office led the fight against the building and was able, for the time being, to stop construction.

It was a battle won at a difficult time, said Pienaar. De Beers Diamond Mines had reduced its operation due to the recession leaving many people without work. People wanted jobs, but as the Advice Office researched the pros and cons of nuclear power, it became clear that the health risk to the community was big.

"For too long we have had no choice in what happens to us or to our environment," said Pienaar. "A nuclear plant in our midst was going too far."

Pienaar is confident that there is a way to stimulate the local economy through eco-tourism and safe alternative energy generation.

"Creating jobs is our next challenge which we will overcome by working together," he said.

In the meantime the Advice Office is encouraging the local community to grow food gardens so they can have access to fresh fruit and vegetables. A community food garden supplies a soup kitchen aimed at those suffering from HIV/Aids.

The community is also planning a harvesting project that could be the foundation for future economic development. Part of this project involves establishing a commercial food garden on a local farm.

Helping people with labour issues and sorting out problems like welfare grants and applications for identity documents is a major part of the office's work. Support for those with HIV/Aids and other chronic illnesses is also a core area.

"Another challenge in the future is a land claim," said Pienaar, who explained it would be based on the dispossession of the Khoikhoi as early as the start of the 1700s.

"Our people love their land and are prepared to fight and die for it."





## FOOD GARDENS BORN OUT OF DESPERATE NEED

Spoegrivier

Food gardens line the dusty roads of the village of Spoegrivier, 120 km south of Springbok in the Namaqualand region of the Northern Cape. Tomatoes, cucumbers, spinach and carrots grow in neat rows tended by the people of this remote community.

Jacobus Lewis, co-ordinator of the Spoegrivier Advice Office, said the food gardens were born out of desperate need.

“Our children were suffering from malnutrition,” he said, “fresh fruit and vegetables were hard to get hold of and too expensive for most people.”

Joblessness in the town is high with 30% of employable people out of work after the De Beers Diamond Mining Company down-scaled its operations in the Northern Cape. About 40% of the community survive on government grants.

In 2003 the Advice Office took the initiative and approached the provincial Department of Agriculture to help them install a solar pump for the community to water their vegetable gardens.



**Tomatoes, cucumbers, spinach and carrots grow in neat rows tended by the people of this remote community.**

Scat stepped in to facilitate training for the new gardeners. At first 30 families of the 210 in Spoegrivier joined the initiative and, after years of struggling to secure food, the community was on the way to feeding itself.

Today 60 families are involved in the project with excess vegetables being sold to neighbours and seeds religiously collected to build up a seed bank.

Even the Spoegrivier Methodist Laerskool has a food garden which is used to assist “food scarce” families especially those that have a breadwinner with Aids.

“It’s working,” said Lewis, “and it’s a model that can be replicated in other towns.”

Other responsibilities of the Advice Office include helping farm workers fight evictions, resolving labour disputes, and supporting local health workers with issues like tuberculosis and HIV/Aids.

“There is a lot going on,” said Lewis, “but when you eating properly you have the energy to tackle anything.”

## HIV/AIDS CASTS PALL OF SADNESS OVER PORT NOLLOTH

Port Nolloth

Old people in the West Coast fishing town of Port Nolloth remember its heyday as a bustling harbour town where copper from the Okiep Mines and diamonds from the Namaqua coast were shipped all over the world. Then jobs were plenty and the economy of the port boomed.

Today the copper mines are almost depleted and only small-scale diamond prospectors still search the seabed for stones, but Port Nolloth lives on. Most people make a livelihood from seasonal fishing and small-vessel tourism but unemployment is high leading to frustration and social problems.

Elsabe van Wyk, co-ordinator of the Port Nolloth Advice Office, said the office's time was dominated by resolving human rights and labour issues. The office employs four full time staff with a volunteer assisting the HIV/Aids activator.

"Our community is made up of people from all over South Africa and Africa," she said, "the challenge for everyone is how to earn a living."

The greatest sadness for this remote town, 140kms north-west of the regional centre, Springbok, is the increasing number of people suffering from HIV/Aids.

"Our Aids activator does a lot work counselling people on their options, directing them to the right social services, creating awareness about the virus and running workshops on how we should be dealing with it," says Van Wyk.

A partnership that is working well for the Advice Office is with the Luvuyo Drop In Centre which runs a soup kitchen that feeds 65 pre-school children and 235



adults three times a week. This partnership has produced a successful small farming project where vegetables are grown in tunnels to be sold for profit. Vegetables from this initiative are also donated to the Advice Office for its home-based care feeding scheme for people with chronic illnesses. Local people are also being encouraged to develop home vegetable gardens and so far 10 are successfully producing

vegetables.

For Van Wyk the work with the Port Nolloth Advice Office and its relationship with Scat has opened a new world. She recently returned from a six-month training sojourn in Denmark facilitated by Scat.

"When I left I was a girl from Namaqualand who could only speak Afrikaans and who had never been far from home, I came home fluent in English with six months experience of living in Europe. The experience changed me forever and gave me insight into my own community and how I can contribute to making it better."





## MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH VEGETABLE GARDENS

NababEEP Advice and Development Centre

NababEEP is the largest of Namaqualand's copper mining towns, but is facing an uncertain future as copper reserves are depleted and mine owners begin reducing their responsibilities. The granite quarries still employ many of the locals but job skills among the youth are poor. Yet there is growth in the town and the municipality is upgrading roads and infrastructure.

For Daniel Carolus, co-ordinator of the NababEEP Advice and Development Centre, adversity can bring with it new opportunity. Despite high unemployment and an increasing number of people with HIV/Aids, Carolus is confident that by working together the local people can overcome their difficulties.

"There is a huge shortage of fresh fruit and vegetables in our remote drier towns which is where we can make a difference," he said.

One of the Advice Centre's biggest projects is the development of a community vegetable garden, which has the potential to produce fresh vegetable for local spaza shops, the hospital, and schools as well as supply the Advice Centre's soup kitchen at the Drop In Centre.

NababEEP is Nama for "the place where the giraffe drinks water". Early man recognised the value of the area because of its ground water. Today this makes it a viable area for growing vegetables, said Carolus.

Seeds have been provided by the Surplus People's Project while supermarket group, Pick n Pay, has donated money for equipment. The local hospital has available



ground that can be used for a community garden.

"The trick is to start small and get people going with home gardens and then a community garden," said Carolus. Already 20 families have home vegetable gardens and this number looks set to increase.

"People with HIV/Aids, young people who have left school and can't imagine a future, anyone who needs food and a purpose in their life can make a food garden," he said.

The Advice Centre works in partnership with the Department of Social Services on a soup kitchen for the most desperate in NababEEP.

A youth job creation project is teaching interested young locals how to make videos and take photographs so that they can cover functions for a fee. The office also runs an administration centre where townsfolk can pay to have letters typed, their curriculum vitae's drawn up, emails sent and much more.

Youth coordinator Morne Samson works hard to educate local teens on issues like HIV/Aids, teenage pregnancies, career opportunities and much more.

The centre also accommodates loveLife, South Africa's national HIV prevention programme for youth, which is linked with the HIV/Aids programme at the centre.

NababEEP's Advice and Development Centre is a place where people can turn if they need advice on labour and humanitarian issues like unemployment insurance, unfair dismissals, and tax.



**25<sup>TH</sup>** ANNIVERSARY  
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