



An end of year letter from The Sophia Foundation - 2017

One of the issues facing South Africa and the world today is the need for leadership with imagination, a sense of truth and feeling of responsibility that can take the world forwards to a just, inclusive and compassionate social order. Through our work with The Sophia Foundation we have been privileged to work with a number of founders and leaders of organisations who manifest these qualities and are working towards this vision. We have continued to focus on deepening these relationships with our long-term partners this year and have also begun some exciting new collaborations.

A message from Cape Town from our founder Lorraine Forbes

Highlights of the year include witnessing Thabo Zondo, who found inner freedom whilst in prison; impart purpose and direction to his life. I have had a close relationship with Thabo since 2004 when I began working with The Group of Hope, a prisoner rehabilitation programme at Brandvlei Maximum, in Worcester. He was released on day parole earlier this year after 19 years in prison and served a 3-month internship with The Sophia Foundation, reintegrating into life "outside". We have since sponsored him as an intern with [Hope House Counselling Centre](#) where he has kindly been offered training and experience in counselling youth and adults from compromised communities.



He is a moving speaker, an effective counsellor and an example of the potential of the human spirit to triumph over adversity. *"The Sophia Foundation has given me a platform to explore things as they really are rather than just having a theoretical understanding. The problem with many people is that they are disconnected from themselves. I would like to help the youth to understand themselves by designing a personal leadership course that will help them to find their inner strength. Only then will they know what they can and cannot overcome,"* says Thabo.



Tonia Overmeyer (Director of The Centre for Student Leadership & Structures), Prof Wim de Villiers (Rector & Vice-Chancellor) & Lorraine Forbes
Photo by: Anton Jordaan

Another highlight has been The Sophia Foundation's developing relationship with [Stellenbosch University\(SU\)](#) and their [Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Institute](#). We will sponsor the JustLead! course which is designated to fund six online courses over a period of 3 years for 900 participants, half of whom will come from Stellenbosch University and

the other half from tertiary institutions and NGO's. It is intended that the JustLead! programme will help shape ethical, accountable and spiritually mature future leaders who know themselves and are committed to working collectively in the interests of the good of the whole. SU shared this article on our partnership in their donor [newsletter](#).

The 3 pillars of The Sophia Foundation; human development, the use of creative forms as a force for transformation, and promoting a reverence for the natural environment were combined in a pilot project which we funded between the [Awakening Spirit Through Art \(ASTAR\) Project](#) and [SEED](#). ASTAR uses creativity for self-empowerment, healing and transformation and SEED is focused on developing the capacities of youth by providing environmental training and skills development. The ASTAR Project offered art sessions over a 3-month period as part of the personal development component of SEED's Green Economy Youth Programme.



We continued our long-term collaboration with [Peace Parks Foundation](#) by offering veterinary support for rhino orphan care for the third year running. [The Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary](#) is the designated facility for orphaned Kruger rhinos - 27 remain in their care. Rhino orphan care is vital for the long-term rhino repopulation efforts. Whilst the Rhino Protection Programme initiated by Peace Parks Foundation in the Greater Kruger National Park has been successful in reducing rhino horn poaching in this area, there has been a significant escalation in rhino poaching over

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the past few months in Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Peace Parks Foundation has committed to supporting work being done by [Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife](#) to develop more effective anti-poaching and resource management strategies.

One of the core beliefs of The Sophia Foundation is that funders carry accountability with the implementers for the impact of any programme. For this reason we like to play an observational, collaborative and supportive role in the application of the projects we support. We are entering our 4th year of sponsorship of the [Earthchild](#) Alumni Programme. It has been very rewarding to see the impact of sustained positive input on participants who started as an 'earthchild' in primary school, joined the high school alumni programme and then served a gap year internship with Earthchild Project. Some will join the team as 'staff members' and others have chosen to further their studies. They are all young leaders in their community.



We look forward to continuing our 3-year commitment to the [Butterfly Art Project](#) based in Vrygrond, which encourages creativity and healing through art in marginalised communities and would like to congratulate them on being awarded the Ministerial Youth Excellence Bronze Award for promoting diversity and inclusion.





[The Natural Building Collective](#) was appointed by the City of Cape Town to integrate natural and alternative building techniques in the



construction of an Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD) in Delft, Cape Town. Further information on the project can be viewed in this [video](#).

The Sophia Foundation supplemented the budget of the City Council in order to increase the impact of the integration of the different building

methods and also funded a Training Centre on the same site as a model for the use of natural and recycled materials and to further advance the agenda of sustainable building.

There is much bad news that takes our attention but there is a huge amount that is happening in South Africa that is worth celebrating. I have felt so fortunate to be associated with some of these wonderful initiatives and outstanding people, all leaders in their different ways. I wish to pay tribute to them; my wonderfully supportive fellow trustees Koos Rossouw, Johan van Zyl and Jessica Chaplin; Hayley Bagnall who played such a significant role in the first 3 years of the foundation, for her continued encouragement and advice; Jessica Chaplin our development manager for her great work in growing the foundation by opening up new areas of interest and also updating our structures and systems; and to all the friends of The Sophia Foundation for their interest, encouragement and input. As Margaret Mead famously observed: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"*.

A message from Durban from our development manager Jessica Chaplin

I have spent the past year becoming familiar with the Sophia vision, values and ethos while creating an identity for myself that expands the work of the foundation. My efforts have been focused on building strong relationships with a few like-hearted and minded individuals and organisations working on issues relating to our pillars of human development and reverence for the natural environment, including effective waste management, nutrition, early childhood development and gender equality in the workplace.

A topic that concerns us all is the impact of disposable nappies and single use plastic on our oceans and the greater environment. I have spent

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significant time researching this matter as we would like to play a positive and responsible role in educating consumers, creating awareness and highlighting effective alternatives. This information will be accessible in early 2018 through our new website.

[USE-IT](#) is an NGO whose purpose is to research and develop waste beneficiation technologies with the aim of diverting waste from landfill and creating jobs in the green economy. Since joining their board earlier this year, I have gained greater insight into the waste management sector with all its complexities and been provided with an opportunity to identify potential projects and organisations with whom we could possibly collaborate in the future.



Belinda Putterill (USE-IT) & Jessica Chaplin at the Hammarsdale Waste Beneficiation Site



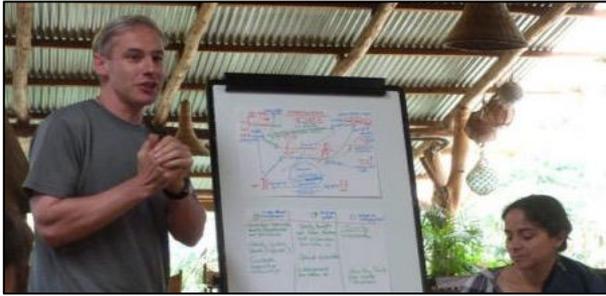
One of these organisations is Sbumeister Plastic Recyclers, a plastic recycling wash plant owned by environmental entrepreneur Sbusiso Shange. The organisation currently employs 52 people and diverts 75 tonnes of plastic (90% LDPE and 10 % PPE) from landfill per month. Our first step has been to assist Mr Shange and his team with their health and safety requirements in conjunction with [Hesscon](#) who offer specialised support and guidance in this area.

I am building my relationship with local NGO [Freshbox](#), a company selling produce bought from small farmers using a unique, e-commerce subscription service which supplies a variety of quality produce based on consumer preferences and seasonal supply. Their shared revenue model enables the organisation to tackle malnutrition by providing healthy food to at-risk primary school learners.



Through my close connection with [Amani Institute](#) (based in Nairobi, Kenya) with whom I studied Social Innovation Management in 2013, I initiated the Ushindi Scholarship Fund. The fund was set up in memory of one of the first fellows, Siegfried "Ushindi" (meaning victory) Rossmueller

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Siegfried Rossmueller providing feedback during a bio-empathy class



'Crossing cultural boundaries' - Amani student Jessica Chaplin interacting with a local Samburu woman

who unexpectedly passed away in December 2014. His love for Africa, the arts, and the ocean live on in this scholarship that supports Amani Fellows from an African country, who have a special interest in the arts or whom are passionate about the environment. The Sophia Foundation is proud to be supporting the fund for the next 3 years. Amani Institute shared this article on our partnership via their [website](#).



I was fortunate to join fellow Amani Alumni and their team in Kenya in July this year where I facilitated a workshop on being a parent in the social sector. This opportunity provided the group with the space to discuss and share some of the challenges, highlights, biases and discrimination they had experienced.

In partnership with the Snel Family, I have supported and helped guide the launch of a KZN based foundation, [Build Me](#). Through strategic partnerships it is focused on providing educational, emotional and infrastructure support to the caregivers and families of children attending ECD's and crèche's based on the KZN South Coast.

It has been a pleasure working with The Sophia Foundation over the past year. The opportunity has provided me with the space and flexibility to develop and grow personally as a new mother and also professionally as I learn more about myself, my areas of interest and the vision and energy behind the foundation. Lorraine has been an incredible support, confidant, mentor and role model to me. I will always be grateful for my close relationship with her and my connection with the foundation.

I would like to thank her, my partner organisations and friends of the foundation for their hard work, interest and support.



As we approach the end of another challenging year we are drawn to the words of Pope Francis, one of the great leaders of our present time:

"Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realise that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it. Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it."

May your Christmas festival be filled with peace and goodwill and may we all play a part in shaping the future by living more simply, sustainably and with an open and compassionate heart. We look forward to continuing our relationship with each one of you in 2018.

With our warmest wishes,

Lorraine and Jessica

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