

Two Oceans Project Support

Empowerment through training, capacity building and resource development

March 2009 Newsletter

Greetings! Molweni bahlobo bam!

Eish! We've been quiet for a long time here at TOPS! We hope that everyone is still doing well out there, what with the world economy in tatters and climate change resulting in a very prolonged heat wave here in Cape Town, with fires in the mountains around Stellenbosch raging for weeks. Our billionaire friends seem to have lost many billions of dollars and we do our best to look as if we cared...but what's happened on the home front?

One of the reasons for the silence was that the ooghira at Groote Schuur found that a large swollen vein in my spine had been the cause of my wonky legs and they operated to pinch it closed in January this year. They are wonderful people, those doctors, and the legs are recovering very well, so all is back on track here at TOPS.

Since the last newsletter **Southern Hemisphere Consultants** had approached us to help them become accredited as a training service provider with the Services Seta. They offer two training courses – *Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for Development Projects* and *Dynamic Facilitation Skills for Participatory Processes* – in addition to their normal consultation work. We are really grateful for the opportunities for TOPS to become more experienced in this field. The more we learn, the more useful information we can pass on to others, and believe me, there are many people out there who don't have the foggiest idea when it comes to Setas and accreditation.

TOPS also participated in the research among non profit organizations for the Department of Public Works, who want to extend their **Expanded Public Works Programme** for another five years by roping in the help of civil society. This research was also coordinated by Southern Hemisphere Consultants and entailed structured telephone interviews with directors of some of the largest NPOs in the country.

TOPS is currently helping **Baboon Matters** to become accredited with THETA. They have been training baboon monitors in the Southern Peninsula for many years, so their expertise is now in great demand by owners of private nature reserves who also need creative ways of baboon management. Baboon Matters employs about 27 monitors to help keep the baboons away from the residential areas of Kommetjie, Glencairn and Scarborough.

We have been supporting VDP with many things over the past few months while serving as chairperson of the VDP Management Board. Dr Sylvia Howarth was a wonderfully generous donor from England who donated a house in Fish Hoek to **Valley Development Projects**. It is to be called Sylvia's House and will be used for HIV/Aids orphans.



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TOPS has also joined the NGO network locally. They are known as **SHARE** and meet every alternate month to support one another and share resources. One of the issues we are discussing at the moment is that the City of Cape Town leased the Noordhoek Training Centre premises to the organization Living Way at the end of 2008, for a mere R500,00 per year without any consultation with civil society. The skills training centre was built with RDP funds about ten years ago and was meant to be a shared resource for the entire Valley. We firmly believe that local residents and organizations should be consulted in local matters. Politicians have been acting unilaterally for far too long and we need to make our voices heard. So if you need some help in getting your ideas across to the authorities, please feel free to contact us.

The **Salesians** once again approached TOPS for the evaluation of their EU sponsored skills training programme at the Salesian Institute in Somerset Road, Cape Town. This was a lengthy process involving interviews with stakeholders as well as a two-day workshop with all the project staff members. We also developed the final narrative report which had to be submitted to the EU. The Salesians received funding from the EU for a three year period from 2006 for the skills training of unemployed youth as well as street youth. They trained roughly 280 people during 2008 and helped 237 of them to become employed. Well done!

In this economic climate it is more important than ever for the non profit sector to make sure that they are accountable to their donors. TOPS is willing to help you with **planning, evaluation and reporting matters**. Have a look at our website (www.tops.org.za) for our range of services. TOPS is always available for facilitating workshops [**in English, Afrikaans or Xhosa, depending on your needs**] and even for advice when you feel confused and alone out there in the big confusing world of ever changing reference points.

You will also be able to see our scheduled **training courses** for the second term, which are offered at a **33% discount** to NPOs because we appreciate the difficult times you are going through.

We are working towards our own accreditation of TOPS as well, with the Services Seta, and should have completed the process by about August this year. I attended an **Assessors'** training course at WESSA at the end of March and should have the sought after certificate in my hands by the end of the year – apparently it takes months to navigate all the red tape. (Once an organization is accredited with a Seta as training service provider, they need an assessor to assess each learner's portfolio of evidence.)

Please call us at 021 783 2509 or email us at sandy@tops.org.za



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