



Fact sheet Mziki Agri Village Kwazulu Natal - South Africa

Land and region/town or city

South Africa - Kwazulu Natal

Project name

Mziki Agri Village

Partner(s)

Habitat for Humanity Nederland – house building
Habitat for Humanity Zuid Africa – house building
Peter Cornelius – initiator
African Exposure – logistics partner
Thwasa – peace and development programme
Ecobizz – vegetable garden project
Lisa Strydom – local project manager

Description

The first project in South Africa was to contribute to the realisation of the Mziki Agri Village. This was an initiative of Peter Cornelius, a white farmer that made his land available to build 385 houses for the generally poor black population. In the area near Xiopo in Kwazulu Natal, they lived under very primitive conditions, namely in 'rondavels' - round huts made of branches and soil that people live and sleep in.

The Vebeego Foundation became affiliated with this project in 2007. During the years 2007-2008, 140 houses were built together with Habitat for Humanity and local builders. The aim was to enable the community to ultimately be self-sustaining and independent. The participants from the Vebeego companies worked during building trips on the construction of these houses.

During our presence in the area and based on further research, it became apparent that, in addition to a home, the residents had two basic needs: food and work. To encourage self-sufficiency, the Foundation supported an education project for two years to teach families to grow food in vegetable gardens. These 30 families then passed on their knowledge to other families, which got the ball rolling. Additionally the Vebeego Foundation provided a 'fence machine'. This created jobs for installing the fences, which were needed to protect the vegetable gardens against free-roaming and grazing wildlife.

Due to the years of Apartheid politics in South Africa, the area residents were sooner enemies than good neighbours. Through the Peace & Development Programme, a group of 85 residents participated in a project to work on mutual respect, appreciation and trust. This was important to the success of the project.

Period

2007 – 2008 – house building

2009 – 2010

- Vegetable gardening project for self-sufficiency

- Peace & Development Programme

Number of building trips

2007 – 2 building trips

2008 – 2 building trips

2008 – study trip

Total of 4 building trips to this project

Number of ambassadors

55 employees actively participated in this project during building trips in the years 2007 - 2008

Investment in € and time

Donations

€ 100,000 house building

€ 60,000 peace and development programme and vegetable gardening project

Total = €160,000

55 participants x 40 hours = 2,200 hours of volunteer work

Where do we go from here...?

After a slow start the VebeGo Foundation determined in 2011 that, three years after the completion of the construction, a sustainable community had been created with a strong neighbourhood committee, adequate food supplies and job opportunities. In 2013 a final visit was paid to the area. The initiator, Peter Cornelius, no longer lives in the area. The Mziki is doing well: 385 houses have been completed, a number of which are vacant. It is clear to see which houses were built by the Foundation, because these houses have a number of extras. Roads on the grounds are nearly or entirely non-existent. The agricultural project unfortunately has not been further expanded and taken up and has not been maintained. The reason given for this was because financing was lacking and due to corruption. Seven years later the necessary water tap has still not been arranged, because the government has done nothing. There is also no electricity on the grounds, and this was something the government promised upon the commencement of the project.

What have we learned?

During this sizable project in which at first 385 houses would be built by the Foundation, we learned that a small scale and clear agreements are important. On the one hand this helps to achieve objectives, and on the other hand this enables an overview, progress and control. Additionally, during this project we learned that cooperation with (local) governments can have a delaying and even obstructive effect on a project. Finally it is clear that the number of partners must not be too large in order to maintain clean communication and to achieve objectives. We also learned that the residents themselves must support the project from the start and “thinking for the community” does not lead to a sustainable project.

Want to know more?

If you would like to know more about this project, visit the website: www.vebegofoundation.nl, or contact Annette van Waning: a.vanwaning@vebeGo.com

