

Benita Garnet



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A Hand Up: Benita Garnet

Participant: Family Outreach Programme – Xola Naledi



It is five in the morning and the smell of porridge fills the rooms of the small house in Xola Naledi. Benita is getting herself and her three children – aged 6, 10 and 15 – ready and makes sure her husband, who is ill, gets his medication.

It's not very long before she hears the knock on her front door and when she opens it a little boy stands at the entrance. His grandmother kisses him goodbye and sends him inside. Benita hands him his bowl of porridge and waits for the sound of other small footsteps outside her verandah. Invariably more toddlers arrive before sunrise, their mothers entrusting them in Benita's care while most of them make their way to work in the orchards.

When they wake up they'll enjoy music, play with blocks and try their hand at colouring in, and before long it will be lunchtime.

"In the afternoon school children love to come round for a bite to eat and to do their homework here. The younger ones see this and they also want to learn how to write their names," says Benita.

This is a typical day at Benita's care group.

While it started in 2007 with one small child, today it can accommodate anything between 12 and 15 children.

"I was tired of working for others," says

Benita of her motive for starting her group. "Today I am proud to be working for myself.

"I have a passion for what I do and running this care group is my dream."

Keen to learn more about child development, Benita came to hear about CECD's Family Outreach Programme through her church and enrolled in 2009.

The experience has broadened her knowledge and she is reaping the benefits.

"Before I did the programme I saw my role with the children as being there to keep them away from harm's way. I thought it was childish to play with them, but as soon as I interacted with them I was surprised to see them learning," says Benita.

"Now I encourage my children to learn through play. Educating and helping them is what preoccupies me because I want them to make something of their lives."

Benita says CECD's Family Outreach Programme has given her children a hand up and a chance at a better quality of life than her parents were able to give her.

"I don't want to raise my children the way I was raised. I want to give them everything that I can.

"That's why they must learn so that one day they may also run their own businesses and not be dependent on someone else."