



THE STORY OF SINETHEMBA EDUCARE

*and the lady behind
their success*

Wallacedene, Western Cape



Grace Duko and Sinethemba Educare

Grace Nomsa Duko is a 51 year old social entrepreneur in the early childhood development sector living and working in Wallacedene, Kraaifontein. Grace was born in the Eastern Cape and completed her primary school and part of her secondary education there before moving to Cape Town. Grace experienced hardships and economic challenges growing up in the Eastern Cape. She moved to Cape Town in search of employment to help her parents who were financially struggling back home. Grace was able to find employment at a Total garage in Brackenfell where she worked as a petrol attendant for 9 years. Unfortunately, Grace lost this job when the garage she worked for was liquidated and retrenched all of its workers. Following the retrenchment, Grace stayed at home as she could not find employment. During this time, Grace noticed that many young children were left at home while their parents went to work during the day. But the parents in her street approached her, asking her to look after their children while they were at work. She agreed to do so.

Grace first opened Sinethemba Educare Centre in January 1998. Grace started off by looking after 6 to 10 children a week in a room in her house. Over time she realised that she thoroughly enjoyed working with children and watching them grow. Grace decided to take on more children and converted her house into Sinethemba Educare, which accommodated 29 children. Sinethemba has expanded significantly over the years.

Expansion

In 2013, Sinethemba Educare managed to purchase a larger piece of land from the City of Cape Town in the Wallacedene area in order to accommodate more children. Working with numerous supporters, construction

started in 2014 and was completed in 2016. Grace's new centre can accommodate 125 children. The building of the new centre was supported by CECD alongside Stichting Mzamomhle, the Government of Monaco, Friends of CECD and Wilde Ganzen.



On-going Success

Grace and her staff have attended on-going teacher and supervisor training workshops in order to gain specialised knowledge of Early Childhood Development, working with young children, and ECD centre management. Grace sees Sinethemba as being part of the community and believes that the centre should work in partnership with community members. The community members know that the centre is somewhere they can go if they need help. Grace allows community organisations or church groups to hold meetings at the centre.

To Grace, the highlight of running Sinethemba is getting to work with children every day. Grace has mentioned that amongst many of the parents, education was not seen as important and she wishes to change this. Grace wants her

centre to be the first step in the right direction towards quality education for the children in her care. She believes that education leads to greater job opportunities and that Sinethemba lays the first educational foundation.

Difficulties

As is often the case in South Africa, starting Sinethemba Educare was particularly hard for Grace because initially she did not have enough money to cover all of the costs, such as purchasing food for the children and paying staff. This is because most of the parents and caregivers in her community cannot afford to pay fees. Grace says that she has always sympathised with these caregivers because she is also a mother of two and she did not turn away children whose parents could not afford to pay. Instead she kept them in her centre even though she did not have enough money to feed all of them and pay the bills. The parents also made efforts to provide food for the children whenever they could to help ease Grace's financial burden. However, things started getting better financially for Grace after her ECD centre was successfully registered with the Department of Social Development in 2002. She now receives the per capita subsidy every month which provides financial stability for the centre.

Reflection

Grace Duko is humble and has an inspiring, obvious love for children. What stands out about Grace is her determination; she wanted to expand her ECD centre and she made a way for it to happen. Grace is a passionate and excellent principal who runs an ECD centre that offers a quality education to the young children in her care. It is this quality education that will set the children at Sinethemba Educare up for future success in their lives. The Centre for Early Childhood Development are honoured to work with women like Grace, in order to ensure the best education for our country's youngest citizens

To see Grace and Sinethembas Educare in action, follow this youtube link: <https://goo.gl/gEg4br>



Compiled by the Centre for Early Childhood Development

- 19 September 2017 -