



Dynamic Women

OF HELDERBERG



Empowering women out of poverty

Tasmin Cupido

“She truly cares about making a real difference and uplifting women in our community.”

This is how Léanne Keet, a proud Helderberger and the driving force behind local non-profit organisation Masikhule, has been described. From humble beginnings hosting an early intervention workshop for women at Keet’s house, the organisation has grown by leaps and bounds, and annually empowers more than 300 women from marginalised communities in early childhood development (ECD) in the Helderberg.

Since Masikhule’s establishment in 2005, Keet continues to steer it successfully, empowering her all-women team as well as the women through its programmes. What makes her an inspirational leader is the manner in which she encourages independence and creativity, leading by example through training, mentoring and uplifting those around

her.

“Masikhule consultants are encouraged to work to their full potential,” she explains. “Its flat structure allows everyone to have a voice and purpose.”

Born in Namibia, Keet moved to Somerset West in 1976 and received her schooling there, and it is where she went on to raise her family. She trained as an occupational therapist. Apart from realising her passion for empowering and educating women and for family life, she enjoys the simple things – taking a hike, gardening and painting.

While living on a farm, she saw that the young ones living on the farm were faced with potential developmental delays, which could be avoided through correct purposeful play and a stimulating developmental programme.

After the first workshop for mothers on the farm, the demand for Keet’s services was so great it saw the birth of Masikhule, which means “we are growing”.

Thanks to her continuous



Léanne Keet, founder and director of Masikhule

efforts, thousands of women in the basin have been educated, empowered and motivated to achieve their goals as well as to develop and nurture

children so they can start formal schooling with a solid foundation.

“Education is the only way to break the cycle of poverty,

and it needs to start from birth,” Keet pointed out.

Over the last 14 years the organisation has expanded its offering to include ECD teacher training, advanced ECD teacher training, business management training for ECD principals, a nutrition workshop for cooks at ECD centres, baby and toddler training for teachers and teacher enrichment workshops, among others.

Keet’s dream of establishing a resource library for educators was also realised in 2015. The facility now provides teachers from 28 crèches with theme bags, educational toys, games and access to computers and Wi-Fi.

As an “intelligent, upstanding and genuine” person, Keet freely shares her passion and knowledge, imploring others to follow suit. She is determined, dedicated and resourceful, and those lucky enough to work with her, always flourish from her input.

► For more information on Masikhule, visit www.masikhule.org.