

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

25 November 2022

Dear Friends:

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.”

—Nelson Mandela



We remain steadfastly focused on Nelson Mandela’s challenge to overcome poverty, now in a very different world than pre-March 2020. We have all been through a strange and difficult time since the word COVID entered our vocabulary. We could not see five feet ahead when we faced our first “lock-down”. Day by day and through each challenge, it seeped into our consciousness there was no easy fix. Whatever the long-term holds, we’re in for it.

When COVID struck, *The Townships Project* had held two successful in person *Building Better Businesses Symposiums* in partnership with Rotarians from nine different South African Rotary Clubs. We had planned a third in May 2020. Cancelled. By Christmas 2020, clearly any Symposium would be “virtual”. We pressed ahead, and, in March 2021, held a great event as we reported in last year’s letter and posted in videos from the event itself.

Rotary has supported our foundational focus on Building Better Businesses to fight poverty, with volunteer strength as well as corporate sponsorship. *The Townships Project*, in turn, has supported some of the Rotary eClub’s initiatives in peace building and early childhood development which we believe are also foundational in the fight against poverty. To date our support has mostly taken the form of approaching Rotary Clubs in Canada for funding. So, this 2022 report reflects both streams: the *Building Better Businesses Symposium* launched by *The Townships Project* as well as the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and African Rotary Community Mediation (ARCoM) programs initiated by Rotary.

Fourth Building Better Businesses Symposium, May 5 + 6, 2022

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.” —Nelson Mandela

You can access most of the sessions on our South African website at www.thetownshipsproject.co.za. The caliber of our speakers was again outstanding, and our previous prize-winners continued to inspire their peers. In 2023, this entrepreneurial learning experience will become more widely available as we add to our volunteer team and expand our outreach through in person meetings, listening centers, better social media outreach and extensive community radio coverage. One of our new team leaders, Shawn Theunissen, President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has extensive personal experience running training programs for townships entrepreneurs. Shawn is greatly energized by this opportunity to expand our efforts through his own personal networks and potential corporate sponsorships.

ARCoM – African Rotary Community Mediation

“Without peace, we cannot build prosperity.” —Nelson Mandela

We reported on this initiative last year as *100 Mediators*, as it was launched to mark the 100th anniversary of Rotary in Africa, by training 100 peace mediators in partnership with Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI). This conflict prevention community mediation initiative is grounded in the Makerere University Rotary Peace Centre, in Kampala, Uganda, and involves Rotarians and non-Rotarians. *The Townships Project* provided initial funding for this program and encouraged a number of Rotary Clubs in Canada to support it. The project received a Global Grant from Rotary International in 2021 and was the largest and most successful project ever undertaken by the Rotary eClub of Southern Africa. During 2022, Rotary agreed to expand the ARCoM program to every country in Africa, with the help and support of the InterCountry Committees (ICC). The next step is for MBBI to train all ICC members, so that they understand the ARCoM program and how it can be used to train African community mediators in each of the 54 African countries. This is a huge achievement in the second year of this program.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Training

“The true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children.” —Nelson Mandela

Early Childhood Development is foundational to building healthy communities for the future. In 2019, Sesego Foundation, led by Founding Member and CEO, Rotarian Annemarie Mostert, developed and ran an ECD project in Alexandra Township, the poorest township in Johannesburg. Graduates of this government-accredited training are now entitled to ongoing government-funded per diem grants per child. The resulting stable and growing day care businesses benefit not only the women owners but also the children and their parents.

In 2020, *The Townships Project* and the Rotary Club of Charlottetown provided funds to Sesego’s program in Soweto, and in 2021 funded a similar program in Mathibestad near Pretoria. In 2022, another program is running in Mathibestad, again supported by the Rotary Club of Charlottetown. We are planning a graduation program over ZOOM in the first quarter of 2023, so that the women owners and their Rotary supporters in Canada can meet each other. We hope to expand this ECD training approach throughout South Africa with support from other Canadian Rotary Clubs.

Leadership Transition in our Rotary Partnership

“A winner is a dreamer who never gives up.” —Nelson Mandela

During COVID, it became clear that we needed more focused Rotarian leadership to help us overcome COVID, economic disruption, climate change, war, famine and whatever other vicissitudes were coming at us. Martha Deacon’s home Club, the Rotary eClub of Southern Africa, is the largest Club in Southern Africa, with more than 100 gifted and distinguished members. To date, two of those members, Shawn Theunissen and Mike Rossouw, in addition to Annemarie Mostert (Past President) and Charlotte Khoza, the current President, have stepped forward to join Judith Chinkumbi and Martha on the board of *Rotary Townships Project NPC*. That is the new “Not for Profit” corporation that has been incorporated in South Africa as the foundation of our partnership with Rotary. Shawn Theunissen is the Founder and CEO of Property Point and President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Mike Rossouw is a retired Senior Auditor at ABSA Bank.

Once Again, THANK YOU!

Without your support, none of this would have happened.

We hope that you will continue to change the lives of vulnerable entrepreneurs based in townships across South Africa. You can **donate securely by eTransfer/Interac** through your bank or credit union to **donations@thetownshipsproject.org**. You can also donate by mail, using the enclosed envelope with insert. All donations over \$20 will receive a charitable tax receipt.

Our best wishes for a COVID-free, safe, happy and fulfilling holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely,

F. Martha Deacon
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Carole Rowsell
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YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT THE TOWNSHIPS PROJECT

www.thetownshipsproject.org

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Please send to:

The Townships Project, c/o Martha Deacon, 69 Upper Prince St, Charlottetown, PE C1A 4S6
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