

Organisation provides technical and life skills Hope Factory meets dire need

LA FEMME CORRESPONDENT

PORT Elizabeth's Hope Factory is celebrating its eighth anniversary this year by looking back on a track record which has seen it help more than 560 unemployed people.

The North End centre is a non-profit organisation aimed at helping previously disadvantaged South Africans by providing technical, business and life skills, together with job and wealth creation opportunities. The woman who created and nurtured the Hope Factory is Elizabeth Zambonini, a project director in enterprise development at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants. The project was established by the SAICA in Johannesburg in 2001 and later found a permanent home in Algoa Bay, where it has been based for two years.

"There cannot be a single factor ensuring the sustainability of a social

enterprise," says Elizabeth.

"Several factors working in combination are required to achieve long-term success, of which a sound development model that achieves sustainable results is probably the most important.

"Once that is in place, the success stories, and proven track record, can be used to access funding, and attract skills, partners and investors.

"People want to put their resources into something that works, is sustainable, and that can be monitored and reported on, in its deliverables."

Although based in Johannesburg, Elizabeth takes a keen interest in the Port Elizabeth activities of the Hope Factory.

She believes other success criteria include:

□ Strategic partnerships and alliances: this would include key funders; service providers such as a good public relations or marketing providers to identify and communicate with key investors and supporters, and involved board members.

□ Multiple revenue streams reduce the risk of being dependent on one key donor, and also help to create scope for growth. There is also a move to create one's own sources of income, such as by selling products or services.

□ Committed partners and stakeholders who feel part of the project. Sustainability of such commitment is achieved by regular communication involving activity updates; regular, consistent and accurate reporting; site visits, and tangible involvement.

□ Running a social enterprise requires the same skills it takes to run a normal business enterprise, but it has to be done with fewer resources and more challenges.

A successful and sustainable social enterprise must have the necessary management skills, either within the enterprise, or as part of the board, or accessible in an advisory capacity.

Indeed, believes Elizabeth, a skills asset base can be more valuable to the enterprise than outright donations of money.



SUCCESS . . . Simnikiwe Zamisa (left) and Zikona Mrano are among the Port Elizabeth graduates of The Hope Factory. Picture: BEVERLEY DARLOW

□ A clearly defined strategy containing clearly monitored and evaluated deliverables; a proven track record studded with success stories; a policy of reporting regularly to stakeholders, and skilled, trustworthy management.

Elizabeth highlighted the prime factors in the success of The Hope Factory.

"We adopt a three-phased approach involving training, on-site work experience and entrepreneurial mentorship. We focus on developing each individual via a personalised programme that is tailored to the individual's goals/career path.

"A critical success factor to any person's future



BUSINESS BOOST . . . Elizabeth Zambonini is one of the drivers of the Hope Factory.

financial sustainability is self esteem and confidence to be able to go out there and try.

"This is developed throughout the programme."

"The first phase consists of a broad-based training programme designed to equip the trainees with a variety of skills. It's a holistic, practical and project-based in approach."

This 15-week training

programme covers:

□ Technical skills like sewing, pattern-making, beadwork and other crafts.

□ Business skills that encompass entrepreneurship and small business techniques.

□ Life skills such as time management, CV writing and HIV/Aids prevention.

Graduates then move into the second phase of The Hope Factory.