



Nomakula Qengwa, left, and Zoleka Ndema are two of the entrepreneurs who have graduated from The Hope Factory.

Training and mentorship bring hope to unemployed

WHILE most people recognise the importance of entrepreneurship in the overall development of an economy, the contribution made by women entrepreneurs is not always acknowledged.

Marion Pearce, project director: enterprise development at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), says this is particularly true of low- and middle-income countries such as SA.

"The Global Entrepreneur Monitor's research indicates that the returns on investment in women are much higher than for men. Women are great communicators and networkers and are more likely to share their gains in education, health and resources with members of their families and the communities in which they live."

Pearce is deputy CEO of The Hope Factory, a SAICA initiative that provides unemployed South Africans with an entrepreneurial development programme that includes training in business,

technical and life skills and a comprehensive job creation and incubator programme.

"In the poorer areas of our society women are very community focused and want to help one another," she says.

"They want to see the next



generation thrive. For every woman who benefits directly from The Hope Factory another seven people benefit indirectly — food on the table, school fees, new shoes, books, knowledge and the like."

To date The Hope Factory has trained more than 800 people, 70% of whom are still productive. Those trained in basic skills such as sewing, pattern design and decoupage are given the opportunity to gain practical experience and earn an income while setting up their own businesses.

Fear of failure among women entrepreneurs is high, says Pearce. "Mentorship is vital and we ensure that everyone receives appropriate evaluation and advice to carry them through to the next phase."

Assisted by donor funding, The Hope Factory works to develop and place entrepreneurs in their own businesses or to

Marion Pearce ... building self-esteem while earning an income.

continue in the formal sector. A mentoring and support structure is in place throughout all phases of the programme, and this continues afterwards to ensure continued financial sustainability.

Nonzame Nompandana, who was trained at The Hope Factory and has opened her own business, Abolungi Designers Trading, says: "When I came I was a shy, quiet person, but by the end of the course I had gained in confidence and felt at home. I'm sure my business will grow and that I'll be able to help my daughter realise her dream of becoming a doctor."

Vuyiswa Dikana, of Liyanqobo Trading, says: "It took me quite a long time to understand that you can do anything you put your mind to, and I'm now more enthusiastic than ever about what I do. The Hope Factory taught me that teamwork is important, and I know I can ask management for assistance if I have a problem."

"They really want people to develop," she says.

