

Force to be reckoned with



Merion Pearce, project director of The Hope Factory, is a graduate of the Hope Factory's course and is very warm, and even now, I can't spend a month without going there, as it always makes me feel good. I'm sure my business will grow and that I'll be able to help my daughter realise her dream of becoming a doctor.

While they are setting up their own businesses.

"This not only helps to build their self-esteem, but also has the direct spin-off of social networking where the Graduates encourage one another to start a business."

"In the poorer areas of our society," Pearce goes on to say, "women help one another and are very community focused."

"The ladies who come on our programme naturally want to better themselves, but because fear of failure is high, the importance of mentorship cannot be overstated, and at The Hope Factory, we ensure that everyone receives appropriate evaluation and advice to carry them through into the next Phase."

With the ultimate aim being for women to start their own businesses within their local communities, phase three of The Hope Factory's programme equips the graduates with the necessary skills to set up shop and put their time spent into practice, once again with ongoing assistance, which may include financial support.

"Our model encompasses training, employment and finally the move into full entrepreneurship," says Pearce. "It is how Pearce sums it up."

"After nine years, our track record of creating sustainable small businesses which help to fuel economic growth speaks for itself, and we have helped turn many a woman's dream into reality."

Noncane, Nompandana of Abokung Designers, Trading and a graduate of The Hope Factory's course, says: "When I came to the end of the course I had gained in confidence and felt very at home."

"All the staff were very warm, and even now, I can't spend a month without going there, as it always makes me feel good. I'm sure my business will grow and that I'll be able to help my daughter realise her dream of becoming a doctor."

Her view is substantiated by a second graduate of The Hope Factory, Moya Dikana of Lyanqobo Trading who says: "It took me quite a long time to understand that you can, in fact, do anything you put your mind to, and I'm now more enthusiastic than ever about what I do."

"The Hope Factory has also taught me that teamwork is very important, and I know I can ask management for assistance if I have a problem. They really want people to develop and have helped me in so many ways. They have a vision for the future that I share and am happy to be part of."

Factory is an initiative of The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants that is impacting the lives of previously unemployed South Africans by providing them with a holistic entrepreneurial development programme, which includes training in business, technical and life skills together with a comprehensive job creation and incubator programme to further promote these skills.

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

"Women have a multigenerational vision," Pearce points out, "and want to see the next generation thrive. So while we impact one woman at The Hope Factory directly, using the developing companies multiple, it translates into seven others who indirectly benefit — through food on the table, paid school fees, new shoes, books, knowledge and the like."

"On this basis, given that we have trained over 800 people to date and that 70% of them are still productive, in three generations time, 810 000 people will be able to have the life they choose," Pearce explains. The Hope

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the phase one training in basic skills such as sewing, pattern design and drapery, are given the opportunity to gain practical experience and earn an income

are not working.

"At The Hope Factory," says Pearce, "we provide this employment through phase two of our programme, where Graduates of

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