

The Hope Factory – an inspirational story

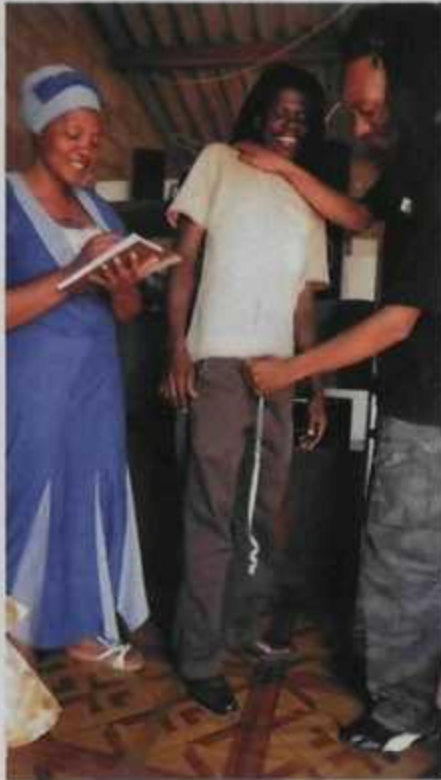
IF THERE WAS EVER a heart-warming, inspirational story in South Africa The Hope Factory in Port Elizabeth fits the bill. Perfectly. Thanks to the generous support of Saica and other investors, this leading enterprise development programme – which started off in a garage but has evolved into a flagship enterprise development initiative of Saica – has trained almost 700 entrepreneurs with an 87% placement rate. Up to 15% of those joining the Factory's development programme go on to become entrepreneurs with their own sustainable businesses.

With all its courses approved by SA's Labour Department, The Hope Factory ranks as one of the most successful entrepreneurial development programmes in the country. The Argus's Angel of the City award in 2004, The Old Mutual/SABC2/Sowetan Community Builder of the Year (2005), the Shell/Gibs Social Entrepreneur of the Year (2007) and runner-up in the Southern African Social Entrepreneur of the Year



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Almost 700 entrepreneurs have been trained

(2009) bear testimony to that.

"By training previously disadvantaged men and women to become entrepreneurs we not only create hope (hence the name) but we also develop, empower and inspire them to become self-reliant and productive, thereby taking ownership of their future," says Saica enterprise development project director Marion Pearce.

"During the first phase men and women are trained in a 20-week course in technical, business and life skills to ensure a solid foundation for entrepreneurial development. The centre trains 64 people per intake, with two intakes a year totalling 128 trainees," says Pearce.

Technical skills training includes sewing, pattern making, paper products, beadwork and crochet; business skills focus on basic entrepreneurship and small business skills; and life skills training involves communication and interview skills, time management and HIV/Aids.

After graduating from the 20-week course trainees move into the job creation side. "We have a fully-fledged corporate gifts division that manufactures, markets and sells items to a range of corporate

clients, big and small, on a national – soon also international – level," says Pearce.

Through their entrepreneurial training and working experience in phase two, trainees learn all about working, working life, time and money management to ensure they're sufficiently equipped when they later venture out on their own, she adds.

From phase two, trainees are encouraged to move to the third phase, where the independent units are spun off and trainees basically become entrepreneurs in their own right. During this phase the emphasis is strongly on mentorship support, as well as access to networks with other organisations to obtain finance, other forms of assistance (such as business cards) or further skills training.

Funding for Saica's enterprise development programme comes from companies that can claim 15 to 25 points under the enterprise development category on the black empowerment scorecard. "Though they score in terms of the empowerment scorecard, companies that assist with funding are genuinely interested in enterprise development as a cornerstone for SA's future success," says Pearce. ■