

# SHARED INTEREST : IN FOCUS



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## Opportunities Have Come Up for Us

“It is so pathetic to look at a young person, and see someone so brilliant not working,” declares Pildah Modjadji, mother of eight children and grandmother of 11. Mrs. Modjadji is a former school principal and one of the dynamic women organizers of a community initiative in the small rural village of Pankop, Mpumalanga, where two Shared Interest guarantees are beginning to create livelihoods and jobs for 300 of the community’s 2,400 families.



Pildah Modjadji and Salome Mondlane, former school principals, are leaders of the Diretsogetse project.

In this traditional Tswana-speaking community, formerly part of the Bophutatswana “bantustan,” jobs are few and far between. Men typically seek employment in the province’s mines, or to go Pretoria or Johannesburg in search of manufacturing work. This leaves the women in charge of much of the daily life of the community, under the traditional governance structure.

The project began in 2002, when a neighboring farmer advised the com-

munity that the area could be a good place to raise tropical fruits. Chief Moluka allocated tribal lands (from the former Bophutatswana homeland) and encouraged young people to cultivate them, but with little success. Next the community’s women took over the plots and began to raise fruits and vegetables. In 2003, a consultant, Stratviz, suggested the community create a facility to purchase and dry its produce.

With only two other large dehydration plants in the country, the project made economic sense. Individual families welcomed the initiative -- eager to be able to afford bread, electricity and school fees. The youth, who appreciated the potential for job creation, named the project “Diretsogetse” which, in Tswana, means “opportunities have come up for us.”

Stratviz worked with the newly formed Pankop Women Farmers’ Forum, traditional and municipal leaders to design the project and secure government support. They renovated the abandoned boys’ and girls’ high school dormitories that had been replaced by a more modern government school after 1994, and converted them into a dehydration facility. In 2005, the project trained 65 young people to do factory work, and prepared four on site to train others to peel the produce and use the machines.

In 2006, the community applied to ABSA Bank for a loan to improve and expand the facility and purchase driers. ABSA brought the project to Thembani, which worked closely with the community to engineer the financing. With the help of a Shared Interest guarantee, the loan is currently providing the working capital for the expansion and operation of the facility. To date, 100 community workers

have been hired – the majority of them under the age of 35. When the plant is fully operational it will employ 200 people – 80 percent of them women.

Early in 2007, a second Shared Interest guarantee launched the project’s its next phase: organizing families to increase fruit and vegetable production. Since some families had no previous farming experience, Mrs. Modjadji and her team began to work intensively with their neighbors. “We are teaching them that the richness comes from the soil,” she says. So far 100 families have each received one-fifth of a hectare (with a well), and begun to grow fruit trees and vegetables in their own yards.

The community is also preparing to farm collectively in greenhouses made from poles covered with special nets. When workers observed that poles might tear the cloth, they asked local auto repair shops to donate used tires, which they cut up and nail to the tops of the poles for protection.

The women in the project have already secured an accountant and an auditor, and opened individual accounts at ABSA bank. As their production and  
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Community member Ruben Makgabo hammers tire treads to protect net house poles at Diretsogetse.





Diretsogetse employee displays tray of dried fruit.

(Continued on Page 1...)

incomes grow, the processing plant will increase its supply and economize by virtually eliminating transportation costs. Eventually the business will expand further by purchasing from neighboring farmers. Mrs. Modjadji reports, "When I go home now there will be a message some has left under my avocado tree. Other communities want to know how we got started."

At the end of the production process, the community sells its dehydrated fruit and vegetables to other companies for a variety of purposes. These include inexpensive, nutritious and hardy fruits and vegetables that can be rehydrated by simply immersing them in water, or used as components for canned and powdered soups and spices.

The project plans to purchase equipment to make juice from their mangos, lemons, guavas and bananas, and to sell some of their products (such as hoodia and the African potato) to pharmaceutical purchasers. Diretsogetse has also begun to explore marketing linkages to a number of potential partners, including the union Solidarity, representatives of the Mpumalanga school nutrition scheme, and the University of Pretoria program akin to

Meals on Wheels. They already have more demand than they can meet.

In the future, they also envision satellite enterprises, such as a sewing business that would train and hire local women to make the uniforms and protective clothing for the project's factory and field workers. Anticipating needs of their employees, Diretsogetse plans to organize a day care center and preschool, with the support of University of Pretoria students, who will gain practical experience under professional supervision. A local factory has already promised to supply the furniture.

Finally, to promote occupational health and safety (the nearest formal medical services are thirty kilometers away), Diretsogetse is planning to train workers in on-site first aid measures, and enlist volunteer doctors to staff a weekly clinic for its employees and their families.

"Now we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel," concludes Mrs. Modjadji. "When God calls me, I will know that I have helped the young people of this community to eat and drink and dress and receive an education."



Diretsogetse employees: Imelda Masilo (Chief Supervisor), David Rammoki (Senior Supervisor), Andres Aphane (Processing Worker), Johana Mokwele (Administrative Clerk).

## From the Executive Director:

Dear Friends,

During the past year, South Africa has made major advances against HIV/AIDS. Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka and Deputy Minister of Health Madlala-Routledge built effective relationships with civil society and launched a five-year National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS. Its objectives for 2007 include:

- treating an additional 17,000 children and 120,000 adults,
- comprehensive AIDS care, with ARV's for 25,000 pregnant women,
- treating 60% of HIV-positive pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission,
- testing 70% of all pregnant women for HIV, and
- testing 45% of babies born to HIV-positive women by six months of age to determine their status.

The dismissal Madlala-Routledge sparked a furor as the country's activists, medical practitioners unions questioned the decision.

Whatever its genesis – the Deputy Minister's differences with the Health Minister on HIV/AIDS, her travel to a conference in Spain, or her outspoken response to the child mortality crisis at East London's Frere Hospital – her dismissal by the President has shaken public confidence.

Madlala-Routledge commented publicly, "how we respond to the AIDS epidemic is not about me or anyone else in government, it's about sick people who need care and who need it yesterday."

With South Africa's government reporting 5.41 million infected, we are hopeful the Plan will continue to galvanize the national campaign. Like the movement to end apartheid of the 1960s, '70's and '80's, the struggle to defeat HIV/AIDS has taken root. The only question is how long it will take to prevail. And at what cost.

Sincerely,

*Donna Katzin*

Donna Katzin





**INVESTOR SPOTLIGHT**  
**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH GENERAL**  
**BOARD OF PENSIONS AND HEALTH BENEFITS**

United Methodist Church General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

Shared Interest has received a \$1 million investment from the United Methodist General Board of Pensions and Benefits to support small and micro-enterprise development in South Africa's most impoverished communities. The investment demonstrates the pension fund's commitment to invest in the economic and human potential of marginalized communities like those served by its African clergy.

The \$1 million investment will leverage at least \$6 million in loans to clients of South African community development finance institutions, benefiting an estimated 30,000 entrepreneurs. Since 1994, Shared Interest has benefited nearly one million black South Africans, of whom more than 75 percent are women.

David Zellner, chief investment officer for the United Methodist General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, said the pension fund's investment in Shared Interest will help provide retirement security for United Methodist clergy in Africa

and represents a continuation of its investments in the area of microfinance.

"Concurrent with this initiative, the General Board wanted to make an investment that had a positive social impact on the African continent, home of rapidly growing church membership," said Zellner. He noted that the pension fund strives to place funds with organizations that will deploy their



Vidette Bullock-Mixon, Director of Corporate Relations, UMC General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, examines Diretsogetse driers with Mrs. Modjadji.

capital in a manner that will positively impact the lives of underserved individuals in the United States and abroad.

The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits is a not-for-profit administrative agency of The United Methodist Church, responsible for the general supervision and administration

of the retirement, health and welfare benefit plans, programs and funds for more than 74,000 clergy and lay employees of the Church. With more than \$15 billion in assets under management, the United Methodist pension fund is the largest faith-based pension fund in the United States and ranks among the top 100 pension funds in the country. A socially responsible investor, the pension fund has invested more than \$600 million in social investment opportunities since the program's inception.

**New Ways to Help**

This year, friends have boosted Shared Interest's resources in a number of innovative ways. In addition to cash donations (which are always welcome!), they have made gifts of airline miles and appreciated stock, and explored donating partnership shares and retirement benefits. Some supporters have provided for Shared Interest in their wills. Others donated time (thank you to our wonderful interns and volunteers!) and services ranging from communications to legal advice. If you would like to discuss these or other opportunities, such as low-cost office space, please contact Shared Interest at 646-442-0182.

**Yes, I support South Africa's democratic development!**

- Please send me information about how to invest in Shared Interest.
- I am enclosing a tax-deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support Shared Interest's work.  
 Or, please bill my:  VISA       MASTERCARD       AMERICAN EXPRESS  
 for a tax-deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Account Number	Exp.Date	Signature
<input type="checkbox"/> Please add me to your mailing list.		<input type="checkbox"/> Please send Newsletter by e-mail only.
Name		E-mail address
Address		
City	State	Zip

Please return this form to:  
**Shared Interest**  
**121 West 27th Street, Suite 905**  
**New York, NY 10001**

Or fax it to **(212) 337-8548**  
 For further information please call: **(212) 337-8547**  
 Or e-mail: **info@sharedinterest.org**  
 Website: **www.shared interest.org**





## Shared Interest's Vision and Mission

Shared Interest envisions a just and vibrant South African economy that eliminates disparities and upholds the basic human rights enshrined in the nation's constitution – a South African society that serves as a model of economic justice. Shared Interest's mission is to mobilize the resources for South Africa's economically disenfranchised communities to sustain themselves and build an equitable nation. To that end, Shared Interest: guarantees South African bank loans to low-income communities and their own financial institutions to create businesses, jobs and affordable homes and services; works through its partner organization, Thembani, to build the human capital and self-sufficiency of these community development financial institutions; collaborates with other organizations to advance models and policies that recognize women as primary drivers of development and that increase the resources and power of South Africa's most marginalized communities; builds partnerships with individuals and institutions in the U.S. that enable them to invest in South Africa's future.

## Shared Interest Events

**Boston:** *October 16*

***"My Africa, Your Africa, Our Africa..."***

A conversation between Dr. Henry Lewis Gates and Charlayne Hunter-Gault, at the Unitarian Universalists' Association, 25 Beacon Street, 6 to 8 pm. For information call 646-442-0181 or email [info@sharedinterest.org](mailto:info@sharedinterest.org).

**Pittsburgh:** *October 24*

***"From one touch—a million ripples. Friends raising hope in South Africa."***

Honoring Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu at the Carnegie Music Hall, 6 pm. For information and reservations call (412) 456-2890 or email [bas@muslaw.com](mailto:bas@muslaw.com).

**New York City:** *March 17, 2008*

***Eighth Annual Awards Dinner***

at the Capitale Ballroom, honoring South African Constitutional Court Justice, Albie Sachs and BET CEO Debra Lee. For information call (212) 537-6843 or email [sharedinterest@dildaymeyer.com](mailto:sharedinterest@dildaymeyer.com)



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