

# Transforming the world into a better place

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They come from all over Africa, from India, South-East Asia, the Americas and even from Europe, to attend Training for Transformation (TFT) courses at The Grail Centre in Kleinmond. Since 2002, literally hundreds of development practitioners have attended the many courses and, in turn, they have impacted on thousands of people, mainly women and children, in struggling communities across the developing world.

At the beginning of this month the latest diploma course got underway, catering for 23 trainees from nine African countries and 14 different organisations. Although their developmental focus and circumstances may differ, they are already discovering how much they have in common and how valuable it is to be able to share challenges and solutions with one another.

TFT is based on the writings of Brazilian, Paulo Freire on a new and creative approach to adult education. In his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he says: "Transformation is only valid if it is carried out with the people, not for them."

The training courses in Kleinmond are similar to those presented all over the world, highlighting the need to create a new generation of community leaders in emerging countries. The four training manuals they use were developed by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel of The Grail Centre and first used in Kenya in the 1980s before being transplanted to Kleinmond.

As Ntombi Nyathi, Director of Training for Transformation points out: "Transformation begins with the self, unfolds into the family, community, society and the universe. However, liberation (from oppression, poverty and ignorance) is not carried out for the people, but with them. It is not neutral; its aim is radical transformation of society."

The course is hands-on, highlighting both the theory and practice of transformative development. It focuses on how the participants, who are all already working with community-based organisations, can become more effective agents of change, both in terms of their grassroots work and advocacy initiatives.

Divided into four segments, the year-long diploma course consists of two, two-month periods of intensive residential training in Kleinmond, interspersed with two periods of monitored practical implementation at home. Since 2002, 458 civil society leaders and activists from 113 organisations in 40 countries have benefited from this training. The Tft Diploma and Certificate courses are jointly certified by the Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Dublin, Ireland, and The Grail Centre Trust.

The following snapshots of five trainees from five different countries attending the current course give a fascinating glimpse into their diverse challenges:

#### Abiodun Ozurumba (Nigeria)

An award-winning radio journalist, Abiodun works for the Voice of Nigeria, collaborating with NGOs and community workers to highlight various cultural practices, both 'good' and 'bad', like female genital mutilation. By means largely of documentaries, she tries to present all sides of an issue to create public awareness. She anticipates that the new skills learnt on this course will enable her to speak boldly to power on behalf of the voiceless, especially in terms of human rights, but also to highlight those customs which have the ability to draw diverse people together through music, laughter and dance.

#### Shean Mukocheya (Zimbabwe)

Shean works for an NGO, the Zivakawakabva Trust. In a country which views itself as 95% Christian, she believes that many of the ancient African cultural and traditional practices are being lost. As an orphan herself, identity has always been an important factor in her life and she has felt cut off from her roots. She feels, indeed, that the Zimbabwean social structure has suffered through being deprived of essential cultural knowledge, whether it be in the form of music, eco-conservation and agricultural practices, food or religion. This workshop is teaching her the necessary skills to network, share information and discover an effective way to address these issues.

#### Margarida Silva (Angola)

Margarida works for a Portuguese NGO called APDES, Piaget Agency for Development, which is concerned

mainly with matters related to education and health care in marginalised communities. They try to ensure that these communities, for example the elderly, sex workers and people living with Aids are not isolated, but are integrated into the wider society, and that risks affecting them are minimised. Her organisation supports and encourages the various NGOs and communities to co-ordinate their actions, using their combined voice to advocate for change. This course is already offering her new tools to facilitate her interaction with her target communities.

#### Moureen Wagubi (Uganda)

The Institute for Social Transformation, which was founded by a former TFT trainee, focuses mainly on the empowerment of market women, most of them with a low level of formal education but a strong business sense. They are beset by many challenges, mainly because it is the men who take leadership positions and make decisions without consulting them. These include issues like child-care facilities, access to funding, banking, safety and security and middle-men who try to muscle in on their businesses. Moureen's NGO is trying to establish a co-operative movement for marketing women, so that they can confidently advocate for their own rights.

#### Nomthandazo Bewana (South Africa – Mthatha)

Her NGO, The Jersey Farm Advice and Information Centre is concerned with promoting human and gender rights, with a special focus on rural women. They work closely with other NGOs in the area, as well as Chapter 9 institutions to develop an understanding of their rights and to empower them to become leaders in defending and promoting those rights. At the same time, they reach out to boys and girls from pre-school level upwards to influence their attitude towards girls and women. Nomthandazo believes that she first needs to feel empowered herself before she can effectively assist other women.

Training for Transformation can be contacted at 028 271 4887 or [tft@graiprogrammes.org.za](mailto:tft@graiprogrammes.org.za)  
Their website is [trainingfortransformation.co.za](http://trainingfortransformation.co.za)



Course members engage in active debate and information sharing.



Getting down and dirty in hands-on training.



Facilitator Jumana Eltigani from Sudan and Tft Director Ntombi Nyathi lead a session during the diploma course.