

Msinga Mamas: Creating a new life ... stitch by stitch

What started as a dream 16 years ago, has now become a reality, says dr. Marius Wasserfall, physician at Panorama Mediclinic and Western Cape director of the Faculty of Consulting Physicians of South Africa (FCP(SA)).

Dr. Wasserfall and his wife, Carine, were introduced to the community of Msinga in 2000, when they were student leaders of a medical outreach project in KwaZulu-Natal. Since 1981 medical and other students have been doing volunteer work during their July holidays in this remote community.

In 2015, after their annual outreach with 80 students, they decided to approach Mr. Koert Pretorius (CEO Mediclinic SA) and the Mediclinic South Africa management in Stellenbosch for help to serve and uplift the Msinga community. Msinga is an extremely traditional Zulu community, largely still without water and electricity, where women and children are left behind while the men travel to Gauteng for job opportunities.

In the last 12 months Mediclinic and their CSI contact were involved in projects of over R400 000; among them a borehole and the three community centres, comprising of a small one room building each. The next step was to help the community by identifying job



Above:
Msinga
Mamas hard
at work.
Right: Some
of the
colourful
denim bags.



A crowd of Msinga residents gather in front of one of the community centres.

opportunities, thus providing them with a sustainable income. The first opportunity was an order for 300 bags made from recycled denims for the FCPSA. – Project Msinga Mamas. Panorama Mediclinic was actively involved in the project: their linen department (Cloudfour) sponsored washing all of the old denims, creating an easy to follow pattern, as well as cutting the denims into specified sizes. Mediclinic's CSI contacts also sponsored 8 industrial sewing machines and 2 overlockers. Discovery agreed to pay R100 per bag.

The ladies' needle work is painstakingly neat and precise; their colourful bags might easily be sold at tourist destinations such as the Cape Town V&A. No wonder the Msinga Mamas have received another order; this time for producing bags for World Congress of Internal Medicine to be held in Cape Town in 2018.

The dream is to establish a sewing factory in Msinga to provide steady income for this forgotten community which will lead to social upliftment and empowerment in the area.



Dr. Freek Bester, Dr Marius Wasserfall, Dr Carine Wasserfall, Mama Anah Mnisi, Dr Adri Kok, Ds Simon Mnisi and Leigh du Plessis (Londocor) at the FCP congress.

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