

**In 2003 Angela** was at university and realized that South Africa did not have many solutions to care for the orphans whose parents were dying of AIDS. She began researching this issue and developed a sustainable after-school care model which embraces the Zulu tradition of involving

the community — where family members and neighbours help children in need, no matter how thinly stretched resources are. In 2008, at the age of 24, Angela started Thanda After-School — a non-profit organisation in rural Mtuwalume on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Offering care

and support in local schools through a feeding program and 11 targeted after school programs, Thanda makes tools, guidance, and resources available to the communities and children most affected by AIDS, so that they can overcome their hardships and grow to reach their full potential.

[ CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE ]

## HELPING COMMUNITIES HELP THEMSELVES

By Bonita Hattingh

*The future of South Africa is going to be built by the next generation. Their hopes, dreams, and wishes are being shaped each day. But our future doctors, leaders, accountants, lawyers, and parents are fighting a war against a deadly, unseen disease: AIDS.*

*AIDS is and will be creating shock waves that will be felt through each and every family, community, and society for many years to come. It is a disease that affects the young and the old, the rich and the poor, and is totally colour-blind. Each day, thousands of people are either infected or affected by AIDS. The aftermath of this disease is far-reaching and severe, and is leaving millions of children orphaned.*

*But there is a ray of hope, created by a revolutionary young person by the name of Angela Larkan. It is a unique and sustainable after-school-care programme which can be observed, in action, at a number of rural schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal.*



Photo: Alyssa Peterson

Through research, trial and error, Angela has realized that she needs to work at a grassroots level — not only with the community, but from within the community — to make a difference. By using role models from within the community, Thanda allows the children to

identify with someone they know and admire, which provides them with a personal support system which they often lack. This also helps create employment for people from within the area. That's why Thanda's slogan is: *Local solutions to the global AIDS crisis.*



Photo: Holly Buchanan

*Angela Larkan, Founder: Thanda After-School non-profit organisation.*



**Thanda After-School** is an exceptional prototype that uses the community's existing resources, such as locally-hired staff and community facilities that are not in use after school, to conduct programmes that enhance education and promote sustainability. Currently Thanda After-School supports,

feeds, and assists 325 children in grades R-11 daily. The children of Thanda After-School receive basic life lessons, educational assistance, sports coaching, skills training, and emotional support.

People believed that when South Africa became a democratic country, the war against poverty,

discrimination, flawed education, lack of freedom, unequal health care, and a slew of other problems had been won. Yet these problems have only been compounded by AIDS. Millions of South African citizens still live below the poverty line, are denied education, lack basic health care ... the list carries on.

*A quote by Margaret Mead that hangs  
on the wall of the Thanda office:*

**Never doubt  
that a small  
group of  
thoughtful  
committed  
citizens  
can change  
the world;  
indeed**

**it's the only thing  
that ever has.**

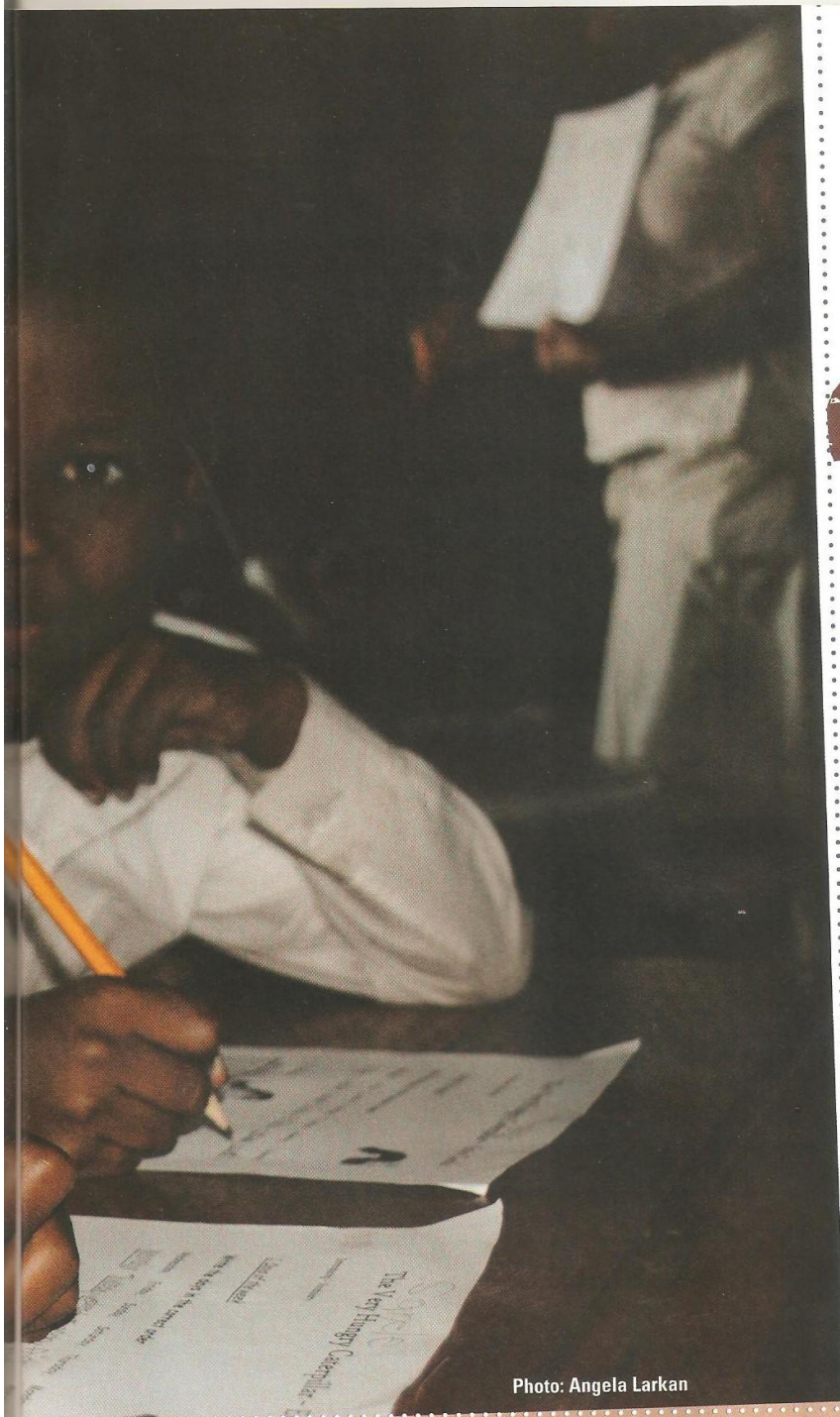


Photo: Angela Larkan

Only when these injustices are corrected will we be able to say that South Africa is truly a free country.

Angela Larkan is an extraordinary person; she has dedicated her life to fighting the battle against AIDS and poverty. The one thing that strikes you

when you first meet her is that she truly believes in the work she is doing and the changes she is creating. She believes that we can break not only the cycle of AIDS, but the cycle of poverty as well. It's contagious because once you start listening to her and discussing things with

This is one of the entries received for the **ZA Difference** writing competition: **Do you know an Unsung Hero?** (See page 20 – Deadline extended to 10 January.) We will be publishing one submission per issue in subsequent months. Winners will be announced in the February issue of the magazine.

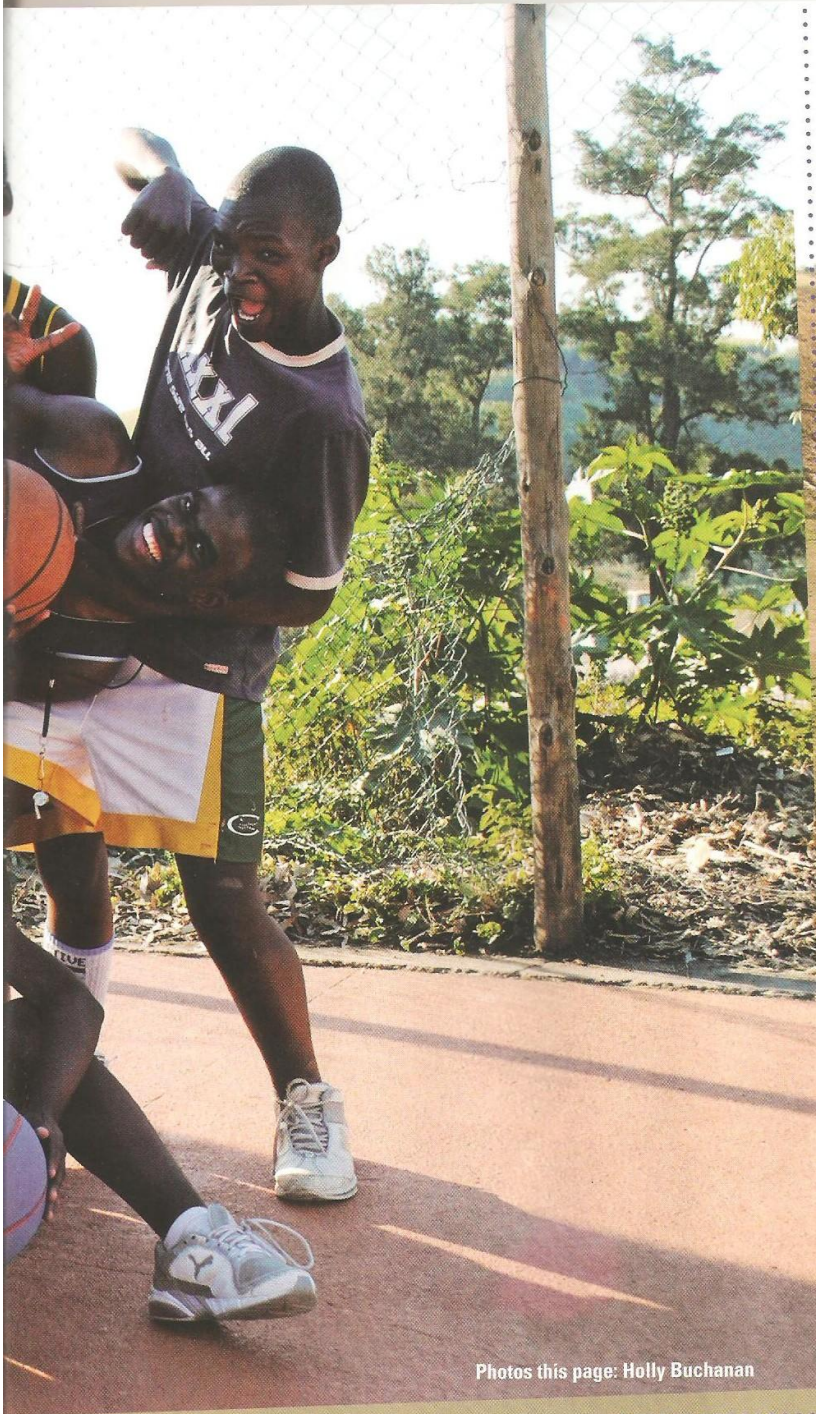


her, you want to get involved and help. She works tirelessly at finding funding for Thanda and finding ways to help the communities and children she serves. She created Thanda Zulu in 2005, which not only supports beaders in South Africa, but to also helps to fund Thanda After-School. Thanda Zulu buys lovely

handmade jewelry from the Zulu Beadwork Project, which employs women to create jewelry and in turn allows them to uplift their families. At the moment Angela has taken on one of the biggest challenges of her life so far, and that is to create a Library and Community Centre for the people of Mtuwalume. This new

center will offer training and support, to enable Thanda's work to reach even more people in the future.

**Change is being created** not only by Angela, but the whole Thanda Family. By creating Thanda to teach and help Mtuwalume's youth, Angela Larkan has created a positive ripple effect that is moving through



Photos this page: Holly Buchanan

this community to smooth out the affects of AIDS and poverty that afflict so many South Africans. Only a few people have the insight, positivity, passion, perseverance, leadership qualities, inspiration, and ability to turn such a dream into reality. Angela is one of these rare

people. And with the help of her staff members at Thanda, she is giving the community a hand-up, not a handout, and creating real change for our country.

If you'd like to learn more about Thanda, please go to [www.thanda.org](http://www.thanda.org)



*In 2008, Angela Larkan did what few other 24-year-olds would dream of doing: she started a uniquely sustainable non-profit project to help vulnerable and orphaned children in rural Mtuwalume on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal.*

**Bonnie Hattingh** — the author of this article — has been working for Thanda After-school for almost two years. She grew up not far from the area where Thanda is based today, and runs the operational side of Thanda and Thanda Zulu.

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