
The Sophia Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT – 2014



LORRAINE FORBES
JANUARY 2015

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Much has been written about the negative impact of well-intentioned donor interventions as in “Stop trying to save the world Big ideas are destroying international development” by Michael Hobbs <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/120178/problem-international-development-and-plan-fix-it>. The sense of responsibility that the Sophia Foundation has as a donor organisation for the final outcome of how our funds will be used and whether this conforms to our vision of “Raising consciousness for the good of the whole” has informed our focus this year. We have worked to identify and build trust relationships with organisations and individuals who are implementing models that are or have the potential to be successful in terms of our values and our mission.

HIGHLIGHTS :

Completion of a home for the Sophia Foundation :

This beautiful space was consecrated on 8 October 2014 – to become a chalice for the healing force of the Sophia Wisdom and a space to inspire all those who work within it to serve this Wisdom. The Sophia Wisdom is the enabling force that opens up a world of new possibilities, new wisdom and new solutions in the consciousness of Man for meaningful change in the world.

Whilst the Sophia Foundation is new and modest our work ethic is to gain recognition for our professionalism, effectiveness and integrity.

Initiating a meeting between the Peace Parks Foundation and Blue Ventures :

As part of our research into organisations successfully bridging the gap between family planning and the environment, we identified and have a growing relationship with Blue Ventures. They have achieved world recognition for their work in Madagascar developing a very effective and comprehensive model for integrating community health, sustainable coastal development and tropical marine conservation.

Our relationship with Werner Myburgh the CEO of the Peace Parks Foundation has evolved over the last two years into one of trust and respect. There seemed very positive synergies and possibilities between the community/environmental work of the Peace Parks and Blue Ventures particularly in the area of reproductive health. We were very happy to be able to host a lively and engaging discussion at our office and then over dinner with Werner Myburgh and Alasdair Harris, the founder/executive director of Blue Ventures, who was visiting Cape Town.

The developing collaboration with Ikamva Labantu :

The humanity and respect for the dignity of all human life as a founding principle of Ikamva Labantu has served as an aspiring value for the Sophia Foundation and I remain deeply grateful to Helen Lieberman for her support and guidance in the years prior to, and from her staff since, our Inauguration. A condition of our funding of food parcels for Ikamva Labantu's Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Programme in 2013 was a field visit to see how our funds were being used. One of the families visited was headed by a pregnant twenty-one year old with two young siblings and a sister who had given birth at the age of fifteen. We were concerned that giving food without any conditions attached may perpetuate the problem of dependency. The need to work towards including a reciprocal element from recipients of funds, preferably one that would impact positively on the environment was included in the Memorandum of Understanding for our contribution in 2014. After further discussion Ikamva Labantu invited us to initiate environmental training for their youth facilitators at their Rainbow Centre in Gugulethu.

Following up on an e-mail forwarded to us by one of our trustees from the Life Matters Foundation to "Help Save the Numeracy Programme", and after meeting with their CEO to discuss their needs, we met a number of organisations that we identified as bringing an environmental/life skills aspect into the teaching of school subjects. One of them, The Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA) agreed to work with us and Ikamva Labantu creating the Ingcambu Nobomi (Roots and Life) pilot programme for the youth facilitators. After a year of negotiations and work at building trust with the community supervisors we are very pleased that the 2-field trips and 8-sessions programme will begin in March 2015.

Ikamva Labantu has a wide outreach and network of inter-connections in communities. We have modest expectations of the pilot programme but if the evaluations show there is some success there is great potential and openness from Ikamva Labantu for further collaboration, and with this the possibility of sowing the seeds for a new dimension of consciousness to the very valuable work they are already doing.

Ikamva Labantu are in the process of reviewing their relationship with recipients of food parcels to encourage greater empowerment and responsibility.

The clause in the Sophia Foundation Constitution allocating of a portion of our annual funding to feeding the poor needs review.

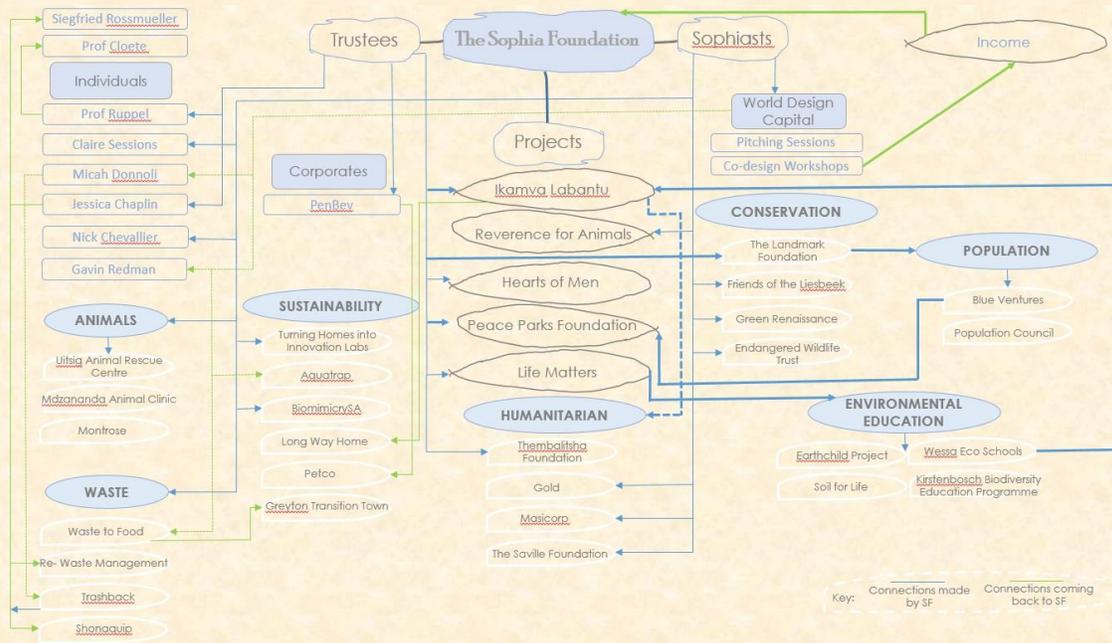
MEETINGS/SITE VISITS :

In order to identify successful models of intervention in line with our vision we met the following organisations/individuals :

Aquatrap	Sustainability/Waste
*Biomimicry SA	Sustainability
*Blue Ventures	Conservation/Community Development
*Earthchild Project	Education/Environment/Spirituality
*Endangered Wildlife Trust	Conservation
Friends of Liesbeeck	River Rehabilitation
Gold	Peer Education Development
Green Renaissance	Conservation/Sustainability
*Hearts of Men	Community Mentoring
*Ikamva Labantu	Humanitarian Aid
Individual Charity Grid	Charity Funding
Kirstenbosch	Bio-diversity Education
*Landmark Foundation	Leopard Conservation/Birth Control
Life Matters Foundation	Humanitarian Aid/Education
Long Way Home	Building Using Recycled Material – Guatemala
Masicorp	Humanitarian Aid
*Mdzananda Animal Clinic	Animal Anti-Cruelty
Micah Donnoli	Inventor/Recycling
*Peace Parks	Conservation/Community
Peninsula Beverage	Corporate Sustainability
*PETCO	Corporate Recycling
*Population Council (USA)	Reproductive Health (Skype Call)
*Prof Oliver Ruppel	Climate Change/Sustainability- Law, Stellenbosch University
RE- SEED	Waste Management
*Soil for Life	Sustainability/Environment
Shonaquip	Sustainability/Environment
Trash Back	Social Enterprise
Thembalitsha	Recycling
Turning Homes into Innovation Labs	Humanitarian/Education
*Uitsig Animal Rescue Centre	Sustainability
Waste to Food	Animal Anti-Cruelty
*WESSA	Social Enterprise
	Conservation/Environmental Education

* Organisations/People with actual or developing partnerships with the Sophia Foundation.
For more detailed information on the above kindly refer to “Meeting Notes 2014”.

CONNECTIONS :



GRANTS :

Peace Parks Foundation :

R 1 million was committed as seed funding for a pilot study to devalue rhino horn in 2013. This served to strengthen the PPF's successful bid for substantial funding from the Dutch and Swedish Postcode Lotteries and our funds have since been re-allocated to veterinary support for saving injured and vulnerable rhino in the Kruger Park. R 500 000 has been paid as the first instalment of our grant.

Ikamva Labantu :

A donation of R 108 000 was made towards sponsoring food parcels for 30 children in the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Programme.

Hearts of Men :

R 100 000 was paid towards the editing, design, graphics and printing costs of a resource for anyone working with young people in challenging circumstances. The book is scheduled to be launched in March.



FUNDING PROPOSALS DECLINED :

Prof Oliver Ruppel from Stellenbosch University : for his Development and Rule of Law Programme (DROP). We are more interested in supporting the formation of a multi-disciplinary hub to work on the challenging issues of sustainability in our time. Discussions continue.

Life Matters Foundation : for the production of a teaching guide for young children from deprived communities who have problems with numeracy. In order to meet the vision of the Sophia Foundation we proposed a more meaningful approach to numeracy education by introducing an environmental/life-skills aspect and making teaching tools more culturally specific. After doing relevant research and meeting a number of organisations with existing programme we presented to Life Matters but declined to proceed further as it became evident they were more comfortable with their existing approach.

Lewis Pugh : for an epic journey to highlight the need for more national sea parks. After reviewing the facts and figures of the journey, specifically that all expenses and support would be incurred offshore and from prominent and high profile individuals and institutions, the trustees declined assistance.

Blue Ventures : to support their population/health/environment work in Madagascar. We have great respect for the organisation and would like to support and promote the introduction of their programme, particularly in the field of reproductive health, but in South Africa.

Masicorp : for funding for educational material for their community literacy programme. We were taken on a visit of their projects in Masiphumelele but felt there were not enough similarities in our approaches.

Nick Chevallier Video Productions : for funding for the filming and distribution of a video on canned lion-hunting. We had allocated large funds to rhino anti-poaching and in addition had limited information on which to be able to access the potential effectiveness of the video.

NEWSLETTERS/PUBLICATIONS AND PROPOSALS

Eco Newsletter : this was produced as an experiment with easy to read information on sustainable produce. We received positive feedback but it has not been a priority to create further issues.

Genetic Modification Article : Much research was done into producing a draft document but owing to the complexities of the subject and the need for extensive editing to make it accurate, informative and readable for the lay person, completion has been put on hold.

The Toothbrush Impulse : A proposal to create a recyclable toothbrush with benefits to the mamas at Ikamva Labantu who look after orphans and vulnerable children, leading to the development of a bio-degradable toothbrush, was submitted to Unilever for consideration.

Rhino Anti-Poaching Awareness Postcard : We had discussions with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) suggesting the possibility of using postcards (as per an example found in a local bookshop) sold at strategic points to illustrate the plight of our wildlife, as had been done with the orang-utans in Malaysia.

FINANCIALS/BUDGET

Hayley Bagnall joined the Sophia Foundation on contract for a year from 1 February 2014. Costs reflected in the Sophia Foundation accounts will include her salary and the cost of obtaining her work permit. My time honours my commitment to the impulse of the Sophia Foundation and I have personally covered all office expenses including the building, administrative and equipment costs. The latter will need to be reviewed going forwards for a realistic perspective on the ratio between actual running costs and money spent on project sponsorship. The intention would be to keep running costs at between 15% and 20% of total costs.

As the Sophia Foundation is not reliant on the demands and expectations of outside funders, our approach has not been to spend available funds but rather to seek out projects and interventions that meet our objectives, without exceeding funding constraints.

MEETINGS WITH SOPHIATES

Two gatherings were held with friends of the Sophia Foundation for feedback, support and discussion. As a thank you to those who had volunteered time to the Sophia Foundation, we hosted a weekend in Kommetjie where one of our Sophiates treated us to a workshop on LaStone Therapy.



COURSES ATTENDED

Strength-Finder : Lorraine enrolled to identify her top strengths and how to maximise their use in leadership and management.

Soil for Life – ‘Grow to Live’ : Hayley attended to learn more about organic gardening for possible application in township projects.

World Design Capital – ‘Co-Design Workshops’ : Hayley was invited to attend 3 workshops in the role of a professional designer. The Sophia Foundation received R 600 per workshop.

PERSONAL GROWTH

The ability to meet the vision of the Sophia Foundation and to be receptive to the impulses that will take humanity forward calls for great responsibility. This will be dependent on the level of consciousness of those working for the foundation and inner development is a prerequisite as indicated in the Constitution. We are currently reading ‘How to know Higher Worlds’ by Rudolf Steiner as the basis of a weekly study and discussion. Our focus for most of the year has been on developing reverence and gratitude, regulating our words and actions to ensure they do not infringe on anyone’s free-will and consciously relating to the higher nature of others.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

In the year 2015, we will continue to build and facilitate strategic partnerships and look forward to working practically with some of these organisations on the implementation of programmes as with Ikamva Labantu and WESSA and hopefully Blue Ventures. In addition we will be exploring the possibility of initiating social enterprise projects starting with the paper log. Once the design of the logo has been completed we will be able to formalise our branding.

THANK YOU

These words of Goethe seem to express so clearly what the year 2014 was about for the Sophia Foundation :

“Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans : that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would otherwise never have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, do it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.”

We began and a whole stream of events issued from this decision, resulting in many unforeseen incidents and meetings which we could never have dreamed would come our way. This has included meeting and forming partnerships with some wonderful individuals and organisations doing significant work. We are deeply grateful to the trustees, Sophiates, and all those who inspired, supported, encouraged and shared with us as we continued our unfolding in 2014.

Raising consciousness for the good of the whole

Trustees : Lorraine Forbes · Koos Rossouw · Johan Van Zyl
PBO IT2321 / 2012