



1st January 2015

Chairperson's Annual Report 2014-2015

In the 2013 report I said that "The story of 2014 will be the unrolling and establishing of this plan that involves the empowerment of disadvantaged women on the farms. This proposal, together with the managing of what we have today will mean 2014 will be a seminal year for Hug a Baby, changing its structure and expanding its field of influence far wider than originally envisaged.

2014 has been precisely that. The bag for the mothers and babies remains as the core of the Hug a Baby Project. It is still given to all the new mothers in the State hospitals of Caledon, Bredasdorp, Swellendam and Montagu, over 2000 bags a year. Through our local representatives in these towns our service and the relationships with the Matrons and Maternity staffs is excellent. Apart from serving the Premature baby ward in Mossel Bay, 30 a month, we have no plans to increase the number of hospitals we serve. Many hospitals would love to have the service but not yet.

This constant demand for blankets, flannels, bags and vests provide the backbone for the project's expansion into the upliftment of women. In 2014 we established two workshops on farms to make these items. One workshop proved too small whilst the other has flourished. Four women are now engaged and between them earn an average of R2000 per month. The only work available to them before was the clearing of rocks from fields. The piece de resistance has been their ability to now make baby vests!!!! Dignity is being restored to these women.

This successful pilot scheme is now the example we are able to offer other farms. Our hope in 2015 is that we will have three fully functioning workshops offering work to the women who live on them with the farmers contributing to the costs. We have a private donor who has sponsored the 'vests' for 2015, which is so encouraging.

There is a scheme in South Africa, BEEE, by which medium and large businesses can enjoy access to State and Municipal tenders if they can demonstrate meaningful contribution to the empowerment of the primarily black community. Hug a Baby as an NPO and Public Benefit Organization is seeking accreditation to qualify itself to be able to offer to such industries the requisite BEEE points that they need. In exchange they must donate a % of their profit to Hug a Baby. This may take some months to achieve and we do not know how much is involved but we have taken the first steps in that direction.

Hug a Baby has outgrown our home so this December we rented 100 sq mtrs of warehouse space in an attractive and well positioned part of town. The photographs show how much we kept at home but it is now all clearly shelved with good working space. Half of the space has been set up as a textile machine workshop. We have agreed with Mark, our machinist that he looks after our machines and teaches the women whilst free to do his own work.

Our facility, with Mark, is enabling us to set up a school to teach young people who have dropped out of school how to machine and make garments. We are joining with the Clothing and Textile Guild which is helping us to enroll with SETA. SETA provides sponsorship for this kind of activity whilst establishing industry standards of teaching. The finishing students receive a SETA qualification that enables them to

Hug a Baby

because we care



Fran Heather

P.O. Box 812, Bredasdorp, 7280, South Africa

get work. Funds permitting we shall have some trials with students over the next few months. SETA may possibly providing finance and training protocols in July.

As a further effort to become self-sufficient we may possibly explore creating our own range of fashion items made from African fabrics. These will be to a high quality for sale to the tourists, Mark and the students will make them. These will be for tourists at the top end of the market.

The Hug a Baby bags will continue to flow out and be our main interest. Someone said "The main thing is to make sure that the main thing is the main thing!" The other activities should eventually bring Hug a Baby towards a self-sustaining position. I believe that with everybody's help we have fulfilled the plans of 2014.

So to our many helpers and sponsors I say thank you and hope you can see how all your efforts, products and donations have been put to very good use. I sincerely hope you are sufficiently encouraged to continue your wonderful support throughout 2015. It has the making of a very interesting year for Hug a Baby.

With warmest regards for 2015

Fran Heather

Project founder and Chairperson