

Review of ACAT's impact in 2017

Growing hope



ACAT's impact

In South Africa, 2017 represented a year of complicity, including new terms like 'state capture' and a growing tide calling for the country's State President to be held accountable and even to be removed from office. Additional purchase was given to this sentiment by the election into office of a new ANC President in December, with a judicial inquiry into state capture becoming increasingly possible. Growing revelations of grotesque corruption, fraud and ineptitude in Government, coupled with the ruling party not delivering on its election promises, saw it lose considerable support this past year.

Similar purported mismanagement, was found to be rampant in the corporate sector, with scandals linked to Steinhoff, KPMG and McKinsey making headlines. It would be appropriate to say that, by the end of 2017, the country landed up in a state of national exhaustion. In addition to the political context, South Africa faced ever growing challenges of climate change, drought, unemployment, economic instability, 'disease', poverty and mistrust.

- Only 43.3% of South Africans of working age are employed.
- The number of unemployed people (according to the expanded definition, which includes discouraged work seekers) has increased from 3.7 million in 1994 to 9.3 million in 2017.
- Of the 9.3 million unemployed people, 6 million are under the age of 35 and young people show far higher rates of unemployment than older people.
- In 2017 there were more than 17 million South Africans dependent on social grants on a monthly basis compared to about 15.5 million South Africans with jobs in 2016.
- The total number of people living with HIV in SA is estimated at approximately 7,03 million in 2016.
- More than half (55.5%) of SA's population is living in poverty. This is up from the 53.2% million people reported in 2011.
- The number of people living below the 2015 poverty line of R441 per person per month, or in extreme poverty, increased to 13.8 million in 2015, compared to the 11 million in 2011.
- Only five countries out of the 178 assessed have seen their stability deteriorate more than South Africa's over the 10 years to 2017. These countries are Senegal, Mali, Yemen, Syria and Libya.

According to Statistics South Africa, the Institute of Race Relations and the Poverty Trends Report for 2006 to 2015



Food security of the ACAT participants improved by 87% during the 5 years (2011–2016)

According to a recent US AID food security survey.

These statistics highlight the value of the work of ACAT. Through its vision and mission, ACAT has since 1979 been involved in a sustained war on poverty, which comes in many forms. ACAT's programmes of sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurial development, partnerships and education and training, improve the livelihoods of the rural families in crisis. These programmes address:

- appropriate low cost food production,
- generation of much needed income,
- envisioning partners to implement their initiatives,
- provision of increased capacity through training materials.

Sustainable Agriculture

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme in Swaziland and KwaZulu assisted 781 new small household farmers in 2017, who in turn started 779 new food gardens. In addition, the youth who attended ACAT's training, started a further 260 new food gardens. Since this programme started in 2000, ACAT has trained and mentored 13,870 small household farmers, who have experienced improvements in soil fertility, yields, health, income, self-esteem, and water storage. In addition, these small farmers started 394 new income generating activities and the youth started 222 this past year.

Entrepreneurial Development

The Entrepreneurial Development Programme in Swaziland and KwaZulu assisted 747 new families who started 644 new income generating activities during the year. In addition, the youth started 461 'enterprises'. Since the programme started, ACAT has trained 12,754 entrepreneurs to start and run their enterprises. Furthermore, these entrepreneurs started 504 of their own small homestead food gardens in 2017, with a further 443 started by youth.

Empowering through training

To ensure sustainability of the beneficiaries, both programmes include training and coaching in health, nutrition, HIV and AIDS, savings and loans, record keeping, mobilizing communities into groups, spiritual regeneration and growth, advocacy, and how to lead, manage and administrate a development programme. These learning areas are taught each year through specific activities.

In 2017, 53 week-long training courses were conducted at the two ACAT centres and these were supported by 2,120 one day field training workshops, 11,080 mentoring field visits, and 365 learning cross visits.

In addition, 9,386 people benefited from appropriate information on HIV and AIDS and how to manage it and over 1615 people attended 31 Asilimani (let us farm) days. The purpose of these days is to promote food security, economic activities, spiritual development, and other disciplines to the wider community, adults, youth and children who are not necessarily part of the programme.

As part of sustainability and to assist communities with on going training and mentoring, Community Volunteers (CVs) are trained in CV courses One to Five. 272 CVs

were active in assisting their communities in Swaziland and KwaZulu through extension visits, workshops, cross visits and Asilimani days. Each year, we have a retention rate of 70-80% of CVs who stay in the programme. Those that leave, often do so as a result of finding permanent employment due to their newly acquired knowledge and skills gained through their involvement in ACAT.

Savings and loans

Given the low savings rate in South Africa, the activity of savings and loans has been given a strong focus in each of the programmes. Instead of people depending on external loans, ACAT has developed, promoted and taught a wealth-building savings and loans model, which enables communities to generate and self-fund the finance needed for the starting of income generating activities, as well as assist families to save for and purchase water tanks and fencing for food gardens, which has been significantly helpful in the drought.

In terms of training and mentoring in financial savings, the work in Swaziland expanded to 6,645 active savings and credit group members (706 new members in 2017) who saved the equivalent of R1,886,577 this past year, issued 2696 loans worth R2,118,397 with a combined closing balance of R3,303,871 of their own savings! Cumulatively R7,165,425 has been issued in loans to date.

Partnerships and networking

ACAT's Partnership Programme was again very active this past year. In total, 540 people were trained in 10 different types of courses, with Partners attending 16 courses in total. Learning areas included governance, management, administration, fundraising, strategic planning, sustainable development, food production, enterprise development, Sunday school teaching, report writing and programme implementation. Participants represented 8 organizations, 134 local churches (including 30 churches in Burundi) and 6 countries. Of those trained, 169 were Community Volunteer Coordinators and Zone Savings and Implementing Committee members, who were trained by ACAT at 5 courses as part of our partnership with local rural communities. To date, some of the course manuals have been translated into ten languages namely English, Zulu, French, Kirundi, Creole, Chichewa, Shona, Spanish, Bemba and Amharic. In addition, through this partnership concept, ACAT Swaziland trained 30 people from 15 different organizations. Over many years, ACAT has developed over 170 training manuals for our various target groups. These learning materials cover various skills, literacy, numeracy, applied agriculture, agriculture technology, food and textile technology, business management, entrepreneurship, HIV and health, spiritual development, and the administrative, management and governance skills required to run an organization, programme or project with excellence. Where required, some of these manuals have been updated and improved. These manuals have also been made available to other development organizations, churches and partners, thereby expanding ACAT's impact in a cost effective way.

In an attempt to provide an overall picture of ACAT's reach in 2017, we estimate:

- 17,000 new family members benefited directly and indirectly from ACAT's programme activities in KwaZulu and Swaziland, which includes the savings and credit groups.
- Since ACAT's inception, we estimate the total number of direct and indirect family beneficiaries to be over 1,440,000.
- Based on reports received from partners, thousands of family members were impacted spiritually, mentally, materially and physically through ACAT's partners in South Africa, Lesotho, Burundi, DRC, Malawi and Haiti during this past year.

Each year we are inspired and encouraged by the numerous stories we hear of how people's lives have been both changed and transformed in every respect, spiritually, physically, materially and psychologically. Verifiable testimonies have described individuals and families receiving benefits such as improved household food security, increased income and savings, becoming employable, receiving HIV and health knowledge, experiencing spiritual generation, having family relationships restored, and enjoying an improved environment. This has been corroborated by an external evaluation commissioned by one of ACAT's funders and is available upon request.

Regarding the way ahead, detailed annual Work Plans for 2018 have been compiled for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating every aspect of each programme, which is then used as a reporting instrument for those donors who are interested in such detail or have requested updated annual plans for each programme.

Acknowledgements

We believe that God has again intervened through the ACAT programmes to impact the target group in a sustainable way, as well as provide the resources needed to produce these results. He has used funders, prayer partners, board members, staff, community volunteers and partners throughout the world to make the above outcomes possible. Our annual report is not complete without acknowledging with sincere gratitude, all those who have made the contents of this report a reality in 2017, which sets the tone for continued benefits into 2018.

Dr S Radebe (Chairman: ACAT Southern Africa)



Transformations

Vikimpi Ndlovu of Ntumeni joined ACAT in 2013. He says that before he joined his home situation was bad. He had a business, but it was unprofitable because he did not keep records. He said that he escaped death while working within the Durban taxi industry, and since then he decided to stay in rural area.



"I had nothing. No money, no job and the children were still at school. Then I heard about ACAT's way of growing crops and vegetables using sustainable practices. At the first workshop I decided to put into practice what I had learned. I now grow different types of vegetables and crops for my family to eat and for sale. I've planted fruit trees and raise free range chickens, goats and cattle for sale. I also decided to raise and sell dogs, which is not something most people would think about doing. I get R600 per dog. I have now saved R70 000 from my animal sales. Then my son bought me a van – so I started transporting people to and from work. Since then I bought another van, which we use to transport children to and from different schools in the area. I've built a five-roomed house. I've attended the Pastors course at the ACAT Centre and realized that I must become serious with God. I am now enjoying a really good quality of life, and the whole family is impacted about the change, which was brought by being in the ACAT programme. I have truly developed a sustainable homestead through ACAT."

The first thing Mrs Ngcobo did when she joined ACAT was to find fence her garden – which took her 4 months to complete. Her next step was to plant crops and vegetables.

"Thank you ACAT for introducing me to the world of wonders!

I hear people fighting for land, but I didn't know that the land can feed you".



Nonhlanhla Nene, of Okhahlamba, is a very active G5 member and passionate about farming. Her garden is fenced with wood and any available material to protect her plants from animals. She harvested and sold 30 heads of cabbage and earned R450. Her spinach sales earned her a further R500. With the help of the ACAT Extension Officer in the area, she found an outlet for her vegetables at one of the local restaurants and at one of the schools in the area. She saves monthly in a Savings and Loan Group and has used her savings to buy an ewe (which has now produced 4 lambs), 6 goats, building material and stove.

"My life has changed, I no longer depend only on the Government grant. I have come out of poverty, and I am a changed person because of the work of ACAT".



ACAT group member, Ntombeziningi Chemane, of Elandskop, had a very good potato harvest. She sold her potatoes at R65 per pocket.

ACAT families have greater food security and increased income when compared to their non-ACAT neighbours. That means they are more resilient when challenges come their way.



Thuthuka Shelembe from Taylor's Halt joined ACAT in 2015. His home is now surrounded by a variety of vegetables and crops. He is a very hard working man, and becoming a member of ACAT has taught him new methods of working the garden and crops. His family has been impacted and influenced to work hard, and they support him by helping him because they have seen the benefit of working hard. Every season he generates R4300 from the sales of vegetables, beans, madumbes, potatoes and green maize. His goal when he joined ACAT was *"to take his business to the next level"*. To this end, Mr. Shelembe has a tuckshop which makes a profit of R3800 monthly.



Alfred Mgabhi joined ACAT 5 years ago – he was unemployed but had plumbing skills. He says he used to spend most of his time looking for a job. After attending the ACAT Basic Life Skills Course, he came back home motivated to self-employ himself. Now he spends his time doing plumbing and building houses for his neighbours. Apart from doing that, he started a vegetable garden.

"ACAT taught me business principles, that is why my business is growing. I now keep records for my vegetable sales and plumbing business. My homestead is used as a model for teaching sustainable agriculture practices. I produce a variety of vegetables, and have set up water harvesting to catch rainwater. I am also in the process of buying pipes to start piping spring water to my homestead".