

A woman with a pink headwrap and a red jacket is smiling and holding several potatoes in her hands. The background shows a cluttered indoor space with various items like a blue metal stand, a white container, and some tools. The text 'ACAT's IMPACT' is overlaid in large white letters.

# ACAT's IMPACT

**January to December 2022**

*Stories of transformed lives in KwaZulu-Natal*















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ACAT’s 43 years of working alongside the rural poor to **develop food and income security**, attempt to **mitigate the threat of climate change**, and **mobilize robust, sustainable community structures**, has resulted in a footprint covering 17 different areas in KwaZulu Natal. During this year 190 new Groups of 5 people have been formed and trained in the basic skills of sustainable food production, income generation, business principles, health, nutrition, worldview and the power of participating in groups. Our team conducted 52 three day Youth Basic Life Skills courses in these areas to encourage group members and their families and to transfer similar skills to their teenage children. This report allows ACAT’s group members to share their stories

of how they have implemented what they have learned through participating in the programme, and how it has changed their lives and their outlook in life! They are champions of this report!

These are the areas ACAT operates in:



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*“All I needed was inspiration and a mentor. So when I heard about ACAT’s programme it was like a dream coming true, because all the resources were there, but I lacked the know-how. When the programme was introduced to me, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands.”*

– Group member, Sindi Jaca



**Lindelani Khumalo**, from Vukuzenzele group, learned new gardening and business skills when he attended ACAT training in 2014. Since then, he has never stopped implementing what he learned. He says, *"With the skills I learned from ACAT I have noticed a great improvement in my garden. I know how to plant on time, and how to use the right spacing for different vegetables."*



**Sifiso Shabalala**, from Izibusiso group, who joined in 2018 with the intention of getting more knowledge in Agriculture and business skills. He is presently unemployed, and depends entirely on harvesting enough vegetables to feed his family, and selling the extra produce to earn an income. He has also managed to start a tuck shop as a means of supporting himself and his family.



**Hlengiwe Hadebe** joined ACAT when other ACAT group members told her about the benefits of saving. She says her homestead was not fenced before, but through her savings, she has managed to buy fencing and start a vegetable garden. Her area does not have a good water supply, so she uses the little water she has to water her vegetables. Hlengiwe says, *"My garden is not looking good as I need to get more kraal manure in order to improve my soil's fertility."*



**Goodness Hlatshwayo** says, *"I was motivated to start a vegetable garden when I saw some of the ACAT group members in my area who have good gardens. I now have enough vegetables to feed myself, and I sell the extra produce to earn an income which I use to sustain my family."*

**Sibongile Mazibuko** of Isibani group from Mnambithi, is one of the ACAT community volunteers. She is very proud of her vegetable garden where she practises what she teaches to other group members. She has a small plot but she says with great joy: *"I am growing enough vegetables to eat with my family."*



**Sibonakaliso Maphalala** joined ACAT in 2021. Since he is an unemployed youth, he decided to start a vegetable garden. He says he is able to sell most of the vegetables he grows locally. He is now encouraging more young people to join, so that they can get land in order to produce more vegetables. They are also saving to start a broiler production project for income generating purposes.



**Ntombifuthi Zuma** joined ACAT as a group member in 2021. She now grows different kinds of vegetables for her family. She says, *"The ACAT training programme has assisted me a great deal. I was very sick before, but since eating fresh vegetables grown from my own garden, my life and health has really improved."* She has also started a small business selling sweets and fat cakes.

Since **Gabisile Khumalo** attended an ACAT course in 2021, she has practiced what she learned. She is now employed at a local pre-school, and has started a vegetable garden at her home, as well as at the preschool. She is seen here in her garden harvesting some onions. She says, *"I am now happy because I eat fresh vegetables grown from my own garden."*



**Samkelisiwe Khumalo** from Silethukukhanya group says, *"Before I joined my group my life was full of challenges. I used to see the beautiful gardens of other G5 members flourishing and that motivated me to become a group member. After receiving the ACAT training, I went back home and started my own vegetable garden. I never stopped practising what I learned from ACAT. I have 3 children who receive the government grant. We save a lot of money because we grow our own vegetables. We use the grant money for other family needs."*





**Nokuphiwa Mabaso** lives with her grandmother, who is an ACAT group member. Since Nokuphiwa attended the Youth Basic Life Skills training, she has enjoyed helping her grandmother with watering and weeding in the family garden.



**Zenandi Xaba** says:  
*"I was so happy to attend the Youth Basic Life Skills training course. It has opened many doors in my mind for me. I now have my own plot where I practise the gardening skills I learned from ACAT. During the training I was pleased to receive different types of vegetables seeds, so that I could grow my own vegetables like I was taught."*



**Ayanda Xaba** attended the ACAT Youth Basic Life Skills training and says:  
*"Since then I have developed a love for gardening and was very happy to be part of the training. I now help my family by helping in the garden."*



**Meltha Mabaso** from Mpumelelo group says,  
*"Before I joined as a group member, I was very lazy, and only depended on pension money. I didn't have a garden at home. Attending the ACAT training has helped me a great deal, because I now have my own garden at home. The money I get from my pension is now used for other family needs. I am so pleased with the ACAT programme that enables us to produce our own vegetables to alleviate poverty."*

**Ningi Buthelezi** joined Maningi group in 2018 to learn how to produce vegetables. She says,  
*"I am very pleased to be a group member. Previously I was involved in growing vegetables, but did not have good skills. Now I am involved in producing different types of vegetables for my family. I sell any extra produce to earn cash income to contribute towards my savings."*



**Sizakele Khumalo** belongs to Hlaleleni group, which was established in 2010. She is also a member of a savings group. She says:  
*"Through saving, I have managed to work towards improving my life. I bought pots with the money I received as a loan that I took from my savings group. ACAT has taught us the importance of saving, in order to avoid buying on hire purchase. I am now saving towards buying an electric stove, because I currently use cow dung to cook our food."*



**Sibongile Ndlovu** says,  
*"ACAT's training has inspired me to start a vegetable garden and a Spaza shop. I plant different types of vegetables and seedlings, to sell to group members around my area. ACAT has taught us to come up with business ideas, that's why I started my own tuck shop business."*



**Agnes Mjiyakho**, an ACAT Community Volunteer from Mnambithi, has been a group member since 2010. Since then, she has never stopped – she is always motivating and encouraging others to get involved.

She has a vegetable garden and she sells any surplus.

She uses mulch to conserve the moisture in the soil, as well as to improve soil fertility. She used her savings to buy a water tank for water storage purposes, which in turn helps her to produce vegetables more consistently.



ACAT's mission is to empower and equip disadvantaged rural people to improve and sustain their own quality of life spiritually, physically, mentally, socially and environmentally.



**Sibusiso Hadebe** joined ACAT in 2019, and like all other group members, attended the ACAT training, in order to acquire knowledge and skills to develop himself. As a result of implementing the training he received, he now grows different types of vegetables and crops for his family, and is able to sell the surplus. He also keeps pigs to generate income.. He says: *"When I look back at my life before joining the ACAT programme, I realize what a great improvement has happened. For instance by using the ACAT methods, my harvest has increased mainly through soil fertility improvements as a result of using organic manure and compost in vegetable production. I mainly grow cabbages for sale. The profits I made have enabled me to buy a container which I will use for expanding my enterprise. I want to add cooking food and selling it at the Taxi rank. I thank my family for the financial support they contributed as well to help me buy the container. I had a few peach trees in my yard, but now I have bought and planted 8 additional peach trees."*



**Maqhawe Nene** is a Zone Facilitator in Loskop. He became a group member to gain more agricultural skills, so that he could produce his own food and make a business out of farming. As a Zone facilitator, he is responsible for motivating and encouraging other group members to put into practice all they have learned from ACAT. He says: *"Since I was made a Zone facilitator, I have worked hard to develop my own homestead to be a 'lighthouse' in the area. I have a vegetable garden, keep broiler chickens, and have set up a jojo tank to harvest water from my roof. I plant and sell seedlings and shrubs. I have also attended many of the ACAT courses at the centre as well as in the field which have helped me acquire many skills which I use for sustaining myself, as well as train other group members in my community."*



The reason **Muzi Mazibuko** joined Sekusile group in 2021, was to upgrade his knowledge in gardening and poultry production. As a result of the training, he started a broiler business and buys and sells seedlings. He is saving towards buying more fencing materials to extend his garden, so that he can grow more vegetables. He has just joined one of the saving groups in the area, and says his aim is to make sure that he has enough money to pay his children's school fees, and buy them school uniforms. He is able to save R600 a month.



**Nonkululeko Dladla** started in ACAT in 2022. Since then she has planted her own garden and is motivating her friends to do the same. She has also started to sell clothes. She says: *"Before joining ACAT I didn't own a Bible, let alone to read it, but now I am happy, because at ACAT I accepted the Lord and each day I am growing spiritually."*





**Thamsanqa Mngoma** from Inova Zone says:  
*"I joined the Thubelihle group because I like agriculture and wanted to develop my skills. Now I want to find a bigger piece of land where I can plant more vegetables. I used to plant and eat, but since I joined ACAT, I've learned to plant and sell the surplus so that I can build up my savings."*



**Insimbini group** (above) gathers around during a garden workshop to learn how to make liquid manure.  
*"Working together makes the work easier and it encourages us!"*

**Nokwanda Luthuli** joined ACAT to improve her lifestyle. Currently she plants cabbages and spinach for sale and makes about R100 per week.



**Slindile Makhanya** (in pink) joined ACAT to improve her lifestyle.  
*"I was not good in planting and I couldn't see myself getting involved in agriculture, but now I am very happy. ACAT team encouraged me by teaching me how to plant vegetables in a much better way".*



New group members from **Mkhukhwini Zone** joined ACAT because they want to work together to fight poverty. They decided to make sure that all members of their group have their own garden and make use of buying seedlings and equipment in bulk. They also help each other to start businesses and gardens and move from one garden to another until everyone has a garden.

**Mduduzi Ndlovu** says:

*"I joined Siyaphambili group, and started growing different types of vegetables which I was able to sell very successfully. I want to expand my land so that I can plant the way I want, and employ myself and others due to scarcity of job opportunities. I want to join a savings and loans group so that I can use the money for my business."*



**Nobuhle Ntuli** says:

*"I joined the programme because I like agriculture, but I lacked knowledge. I started by growing different types of vegetables. Joining the organization helped me a lot, because previously I was just sitting all day and watching television with no hope. Today I have my own garden and my dream is to start my own business. I have joined a savings and loans group so that I can save and use money to sustain my dream of becoming a well-known farmer."*





Youngsters are not left out of the ACAT programme. **Njabulo Tenza** from Highflats benefited from one of the popular Youth Basic Life Skills courses offered by ACAT in the communities during school holidays. After completing the training, the participants were given vegetable seeds to grow at their homesteads. Njabulo is not only growing vegetables, but has also started running a business from the yields he obtained from his garden.



This is one of the **sector groups** at Highflats from Mhlabashana zone. The group is very cooperative and there is unity amongst all the members. The group makes small bottles of cough mixture to sell as part of their business. The ACAT programme promotes sector groups to encourage members to walk together with different ideas to fight poverty in their communities.



These pictures were taken during the **Basic Life Skills area training at Highflats**. The group was very interested and all the members became so motivated and vowed to establish their own garden and also start businesses.



**Sindi Jaca** from KwaDunuse zone in Highflats practises mixed farming. She grows vegetables, dry land crops and raises broiler chickens. She joined the group in 2021 after being invited to a Home Food Security workshop that was conducted in her zone. She has done so much in a short space of time. Sindi says:

*"All I needed was inspiration and a mentor. So when I heard about ACAT's programme it was like a dream coming true, because all the resources were there, but I lacked the know-how. When the programme was introduced to me, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands."*



The **Silwanendlala group** from Nkwazi zone in Highflats joined the programme in March 2022. They said that the spiritual part of the programme is what they like the most. The group has already started saving in their savings and loans group.



A group of women from Highflats believe: *"Working together is powerful – and is one way we will make sure that poverty and malnutrition will soon be things of the past in our community. Our group makes juice to sell on weekends during sports activities and for functions in the community halls."*





*"Do as I do",* says Highflats zone facilitator, **William Mbona**, as he teaches group members.

*"I want to be exemplary in front of the groups so that they can be motivated thus making it possible in the community to get involved in planting vegetables and also start income generation projects."*



**Thembisile Shabalala** from Msululwini in Highflats joined ACAT in 2022. She says:

*"I cannot believe the work of my hands. When I first started planting I thought it was quite a fun activity. But I soon realized that actually I could make this my business. Today people flock to my homestead to purchase vegetables and I save the money I earn in my Savings and Loans Group."*



ACAT's Savings and Loans Group strategy has made a good impact in the communities. Here group member, **Shayizandla Mbona**, from Highflats, is so pleased to show the great improvement he has made in his homestead **with the money that he has saved through the Savings and Loans group**. He says:

*"I was living with my family in a stick and mud house – that is on the left hand side and the walls are almost falling down. Amazingly on the right is my brick house that I built using my savings! After joining the programme my lifestyle changed for the better. I stopped buying vegetables from other people, and instead grew my own vegetables and started saving the money from my sales to build a future."*







**Nelani Cele** has been very instrumental in bringing her family to where they are today. Their home is surrounded by vegetables and fruit trees. Nelani says, *"My siblings and I were brought up by our grandmother. Life was very difficult and schooling was a challenge. Most days we would go to school on an empty stomach. Although I finished matric, I didn't do well enough to qualify for any FET college. ACAT has been of great assistance to me in restoring my dignity as a person. I feel loved and supported. I started this garden with pride, proving to myself that I can also do something with my life, and that laziness shouldn't be entertained! I have learnt through being in the programme that failing at school is not the end of everything. There are those like me who should be farmers, and make farming as our true occupation. I am now a member of a savings club. I recently loaned some money for transport of my first born son to go to the University of Zululand. I will continue saving for him until he starts working."*

Ever since **Zama Miya** joined ACAT, she has worked very hard to bring her family together. Their family conflicts made it difficult for them to work together. Zama says: *"God has helped my family become unified. I learned the art of prayer and took everything to God in prayer. Today we live as a happy family and support each other. I became very dedicated to see to it that our quality of life improves in all aspects of life. Every season we grow vegetables and plant maize. My family is sustained with fresh vegetables and with maize which we eat while it is still green, and when it dries up we feed it to the chickens. It is true that what you are at home is the way you are out there. I am very active and involved in activities that support development. G5s recognised this and asked if I can be a contact person between ACAT and community. Now I am the Zone Facilitator and through seeing what I have done, many others have joined ACAT as group members. I am a single mother with only one daughter. She matriculated well and together we have acquired some land to build a house. I am thinking ahead to what I can leave as an inheritance for my daughter – which is a principle I learned through the Basic Life Skills course."*



**Zanele Gwala** stands in her aunt's tuck shop. Her aunt, Thembekile Duma joined ACAT in 2019, just before Covid-19. Thembekile said it was difficult to survive, but this tuck shop came about to answer the needs of the people confined to their homes because of the restrictions in the movement imposed by lockdown. In 2020 and 2021 she made a good profit from her shop which she used to join a savings club, and buy school shoes for her school going child. However, she feels threatened by others who have come in from outside the community, and who have taken over other shops in the area, because they have capacity to fill up these shops like small supermarkets. The competition now is huge she says.

**Nondumiso Xaba** joined ACAT in 2020. She says: *"I have always worked hard to improve the quality of our life, but things did not go our way. But after joining ACAT, life has taken a different direction. I am very dedicated to work, and this has influenced my whole family to put on a new perspective towards work ethics. Our family is still struggling, but there is a small improvement and they have seen that. This small result has fueled our motivation, and today we have fresh vegetables from the garden, and a little income from the sales of surplus. With the money we make we buy other food stuff such as sugar, bread, and so on. My next move is to join the saving club, so that as a family we can save towards starting a catering business."*



**Nomvelo Z Nkala** bought a variety of seedlings, and then asked her neighbour for kraal manure, which she used to fertilize her vegetable garden. She is able to contribute to the family's well-being as they have fresh vegetables, and her school-going child is happy because she had something to eat before leaving home.

Nomvelo has also joined a saving club with a goal of starting a business that would add to her income. She made an agreement with her daughter to put aside R50 into the saving club. Their goal is to save for some business opportunity – at the moment she is not sure what business to start, but the training provoked her to plan, and the first step of her plan is to save.



**Ntombinakho Dladla** is a very hard-working woman who joined ACAT in 2019. Ntombi says:

*"I used to stay home and complain about everything, shifting blame to other people about my situation. After joining ACAT, my life has taken a different direction. This is what the Basic Life Skills training does – it changes people's perspective towards God, work and themselves, and what it is to be loved and accepted as a child of God. I was trying to earn an income since joining a group but I battled. In 2022, I thought, I should try to multiply my small income, by borrowing from the Savings and Loans Group to start a small tuck shop in my home. My life goal is to get more knowledge on how to access the market and how to more grow vegetables and become one of the suppliers in my area."*



**Virginia Hlophe** joined ACAT as a group member in 2020. She says:

*"When you stay in the village, one thing you can do, is to plant in the field or have a vegetable garden. The extension officer from the Department of Agriculture is not available to guide and give informal training at the community level, so I am very thankful to ACAT for coming alongside to educate us on issues of development. A year after joining the group, I planted potatoes they way I was taught. I was very excited to get a yield of ten 90kg bags of potatoes which I re-packed and sold for R45 per 10kg. ACAT's trainings has opened my eyes, to see how capacitated I can become. The time must come to an end when our hope of surviving depends on the government. My goal is to supply the community with vegetables especially potatoes. I have mobilised other members to start a savings group, and they have started saving this year (2022). I am saving towards taking my farming career forward. I now network with another organisation that supports development in my area."*





Since joining the programme in 2017, **Ntombiziningi Chemane** has worked very hard to improve the well-being of her family. They work together with each family member having a portion of garden for consumption and selling. The family has more than enough vegetables, and generates R3800 through sales each planting season. Ntombi is the chairperson of a savings club, and as a group, their savings are doing very well.



**Fikile Mazibuko** joined ACAT in 2022 with a goal to growing her fast food business, by learning small business practices. Fikile had started this business in 2018, but did not make a profit. The course made her realise the mistakes she was making, especially that she was mixing business and personal money, and not keeping records of her stock and sales on credit. She is now putting the principles into practice. She makes vetkoek and sells them at R5, and small cakes which she sells for R250 for a 20lt bucket.

**Bongeka Mbona** is fighting so hard to overcome poverty by implementing what she has learnt from ACAT. ACAT's training has helped her to be organised and neat, and her husband takes pride in her, and has released her to carry on community work, because he has seen the benefit. She has a booming poultry business – selling broilers at R100, and 30 eggs at R45. She says:

*"The market is available locally, all I need to do is to keep momentum. I want to build a customer base and became a genius in poultry production! I want to teach my children to adopt the concept of saving, or be business minded. I would be happy that by the time they finish schooling or tertiary education that these principles of life become a living reality in their lives."*

Bongeka is also a community volunteer, who facilitates the training on business and challenges programme participants to work hard and think business! She always displays her business to give motivation and encouragement.



**Banothile Ngongo** has been frustrated in life just like any other person. However they owned a block making machine that was just lying at home without being used. So when she joined ACAT as a group member, she felt so challenged and encouraged as a result of the Basic Life Skills training. The course challenged them to look around at what they have at home. She remembered their block making machine. Her son gave them some starting capital, and they started making blocks. They made 500 which they sold for R14.50 each. They have a local market there, and make to order. They say they are under pressure to meet the huge demand. Banothile's next step is to join the saving club to save towards buying another machine.

**Slindile Ziqubu** says she has passed through hard times, and was always feeling very depressed with no hope. After joining ACAT as a group member, her perspective changed. She heard about doing something and keeping the momentum going. She talked to her children about a possibility of pooling their social funds to be partners in the tuckshop she was dreaming to start. She started this tuckshop during hard times of Covid-19, and they have sustained it ever since. The tuckshop is earns them a total of R500 more per month.

In 2021 she joined a savings club saving R50 per month. Her next step is to borrow money from her savings so that they can buy fencing material for a garden. They don't have one at the moment because they lack materials to fence.





Izingolweni Community Extension Officer, **Zini Ngubelanga**, believes that you should “*strike the iron while hot.*” She works with her grandchildren helping them make her a tower garden. She says she wants her grandchildren to *gain experience while they are still at a tender stage, so that they can develop their own garden skills to help them later in life.*



From garbage to business ... **Busisiwe Gigaba** of Nqabeni zone at Izingolweni displays her hand work. She makes place mats, shoes, hats and sleeping mats out of used plastic bags. Her monthly turnover from recycling ‘garbage to business’ is about R800! She saves money into her savings and loans group. Her success is motivating other group members in her zone to become involved in their own businesses.



**Nomvula Mpofu** has put into practice all the things she learned from ACAT. She used her savings to buy netting to protect her vegetables from the birds that are problematic in her zone. She joined her group in 2021 and she says:

*“My reason for joining the programme was solely to fight poverty, because my child’s grant was not enough to sustain us for the whole month. The produce from my garden has boosted the grant, and enables me to save.”*

*“What really fascinates me the most is that before I joined the programme, we depended only on the government grant for a living. Now at least we are no longer a struggling family instead our garden is like a lighthouse in my zone.”*



Group member **Sambulo Mvimbi** from Nqabeni zone at Izingolweni is working in his vegetables garden. He says:

*“Farming is our business. I started with a door size garden now I have improved to a ¼ of a hectare garden. I supply local shops with vegetables from my garden. Some of my neighbours joined the programme after seeing my improvements at my homestead. As a result, most farming demonstrations in this area are conducted in my garden.”*



**Siphokuhle Ntombela** put into practice what she learned during the Youth Basic Life Skills training. Here she is posing in her vegetable garden where she planted the seeds she obtained during the course.





**Sthembiso Nkabinde** joined ACAT to learn business skills. She buys fruit and vegetables from group members, and then re-sells them locally to minimize transport costs. She says: *"I now no longer depend on government social grants alone. My business is growing in a way that I am now able to support my family financially, and buy clothing and other necessities. Because of my improved finances, I have been able to afford to extend my house using concrete cement blocks. I love to motivate other people and youth to start their own small businesses."*



**Eveline Dubazane** of Siyathuthuka Group produces crops and vegetables such as spinach, cabbage, beans and potatoes for her family and for sale. She says: *"I have grown from being a survivalist towards becoming self-sustaining. My produce helps me to support my family in all aspects of life. I have realized that if I take good care of the soil, I am able to harvest enough to supply the markets. I want to expand my garden and plant more vegetables. Before joining ACAT, I had no goal or vision, but now I am always thinking of ways to improve my situation."*

**Buyisile Magwaza** of Phezukomkhono Group attended the ACAT Basic Life Skills training course and says: *"I appreciated these courses because they motivated me to do my work with more vigour. After the course, I established my vegetable garden and a small survivalist garden. These projects enabled me to join the Savings and Loans Group, because I now can afford to save R50 a month. I can now provide food, clothing and school fees for my family. I also keep encouraging my neighbours to join the programme, so that they too can enjoy the benefits of having their own businesses and vegetable gardens. I want to plant more vegetables so that I can supply supermarkets, while supporting my family as well."*



**Ntombizini Khanyile** was trained by ACAT to grow vegetables and maize. Previously she was unemployed with no income at all, and had no garden or business. Now she produces food. She really saw the benefits of using sustainable agricultural practices such as using organic manure to improve soil fertility, and started deep trench gardens, mulching them to conserve moisture in the soil. She saves money with other group members, and they order their seeds and seedlings together. They then go back to plant into their individual home gardens.



**Zinhle Nkosi** joined ACAT in 2021 after seeing a group member's garden. She says: *"As a result of participating in the programme, I have planted vegetables, and now help other group members by sharing the same skills I acquired from ACAT. I am on the Savings and Loans Group committee and save R50 monthly. I have managed to buy household items from the sales of vegetables. Before I joined ACAT, my life was very difficult and I struggled with everything, because I did not have any business ideas or garden skills. But now I can really help others, and often assist the community volunteers in garden workshops!"*

**Mbongiseni Mtshali** joined ACAT early in 2022. He says: *"I joined ACAT to get equipped. I was unemployed, and had no garden or business. Now I grow different crops and vegetables. My family enjoys a balanced diet and we can see that their health has improved though eating nutritious food. I encourage everyone to start a home food garden, because producing vegetables eventually brings hope and energy to continue producing more. As a result of my improved financial situation, I have been able to fence my garden to protect it from livestock."*





**Senzeni Nqayi** joined the ACAT Programme in 2022 in order to come out of poverty. She says:

*"I was influenced by other G5 members who are already benefiting from the ACAT programme. I started a business of making clay pots. Previously making clay pots was something I learned to do for fun when I was growing up, but I never ever thought of it as a business opportunity. Now I make and sell them, and sometimes hire them out as decorations for special occasions. My ultimate dream is to sell my handwork abroad."*

**Beauty Mkhize** is a new G5 member who joined the ACAT programme in 2022. She decided to join when she observed that her neighbour's garden flourished throughout the year. She was also interested in business, and after training, she started a business selling snacks and cakes.

Her dream is to establish a successful business. She now makes about R3000 a month from her business.



**Bonakele Goge** attended the Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her area. This course motivated and encouraged her to start her own garden and to improve her business. Now she grows a variety of vegetables for her family. She has a tuckshop which is doing very well (she earns about R2000 a month). She says:

*"Being in ACAT helped me a lot because even though I had been trying to run my business, it was not going well due to my lack of knowledge of bookkeeping. Now so much has changed, and I can even save money in a Savings and Loans Group!"*





**Nobuhle Mchunu** joined Nkwali Group in 2022 with the intention of learning business and agricultural skills in order to run her vegetable stall smoothly. She plants various crops to sell locally. She says:  
*"No one in my family is employed, but I am able to support my family with most necessities. We were poor and my children did not have enough food. But the money that I have earned from my garden sales has changed my life. I have now started savings with which I will be able to buy stock for my stall."*



**Anele Zulu** of Sichelumusa Group joined the programme in order to improve her situation. She says:  
*"I tried to grow vegetables, but always produced poor results due to my lack of knowledge. Attending ACAT's training courses opened my eyes. I have learned how to work towards improving my soil fertility by using organic manure and applying business skills. The training taught me how to create and improve my business. I am now a model farmer and my garden is used as a demonstration at workshops on how to establish a more sustainable homestead."*



**Thulani Sibiya** joined Thusanang Group in 2022 after being motivated by one of the Community Volunteers who told him about ACAT's Integrated Livelihoods Programme and its benefits. He wanted to learn more about farming. Now he plants maize in other big fields, and vegetables in large quantities. He makes a good living with a turnover of R12,000. He has bought goats and sheep with the money he earns from maize and vegetable sales. He says,  
*"I used to earn a living from 'piece jobs' that paid me very little money, but now I have my own money earned from the soil."*



**Phumlaphi Khumalo** joined a group in 2018 to improve her farming skills. She grows vegetables for her family and has been able to improve their quality of life. In addition to her farming activities, she still finds time to gather the youth in her neighbourhood and teach them handcraft such as grass mats, beadwork, etc. This helps to provide these youngsters with skills they need in order to survive.

**Thembeke Zondo** joined Zamodule G5 in 2021 because she wanted to acquire farming and business knowledge skills. She is a member and Chairperson of the local Savings and Loans Group which is doing very well. She motivates members to save and lend in order to get interest when it's time for dividends. Thembeke is also a business woman who helps local community with groceries. She recommends ACAT's business training, saying:  
*"It opened my eyes and it is easy to understand. Before joining the programme, I encountered many financial difficulties and I had completely lost hope."*



**Jabu Ncube** joined the programme in 2021 to acquire more knowledge and skills. As a result of participating in the programme, she is now able to plant her own vegetables and help other group members by sharing with them the same skill she acquired from ACAT. She is in the committee of an SLG where she saves R50 a month in order to improve her indigenous poultry production project. She says,  
*"I started raising home chickens because there was such a high demand for them. This is a good business with minimum costs of production."*





The **Groups** are so thankful for the Basic Life Skills training they received in their area. They want to start their own gardens and businesses.

**Mr Ntuli** is a crime prevention officer in his zone. He joined ACAT in 2022, and says:

*"I was very happy to join ACAT because I did not have a garden at home and bought everything in town. It was the first time that I heard that if you don't have water, you can use deep trenches to grow vegetables. I started but unfortunately animals destroyed my garden. I have now made a fence from sticks, as I don't have money to buy strong fencing. I want to plant more and sell to the community because most people here don't have gardens."*



**Bhekinkosi Mthimkhulu** joined ACAT in 2022 when he learned that he could use deep trenches to plant vegetables as they have a water problem in his area. Now he grows spinach, cabbage, carrots, pumpkins, beans, etc. In his first harvest, he was able to eat and sell the surplus to his community. He says,

*"I thank God for sending ACAT to open my eyes and show me that even though our area is dry, we can use moisture preserving methods to plant our crops. Many people used to buy their vegetables in the supermarkets, but now they buy them from my garden."*



**Deliziwe Khuzwayo** continues with her good work of farming. She plants potatoes and beans in big fields. After harvesting, she sells her produce to the community and they appreciate her products. She continues with egg layers and sells eggs to neighbours. She has a vegetable garden to feed her family, and sells the surplus to her neighbours. Her work is very good. She keeps good business records, and she has trained her child to do the same.



**Sindisiwe Mthimkhulu** attended ACAT's training workshops this year to learn how to start a small business and how to use sustainable practices like deep trenches, mulch and compost. Sindisiwe buys and sells second hand clothes, makes and sells grass mats, and sells fruit from her fruit trees. She says her family is now enjoying a better and improved quality of life.







**Phumzile Ntombela** joined a group a few years ago. She produces vegetables for her family consumption, because they don't have any other source of income, as her husband passed away last year (2021). Phumzile thanks God that she is able to produce enough food for her family to eat and still have enough to sell to her community.



**Thando Vilakazi** attended the Youth Basic Life Skills training course. His mother, Zama, is a group member. He has his own garden where he grows vegetables. His home is next to the road and this enables him to sell spinach and snacks to the neighbours. He has great potential to grow his business.



When **Bongiwe Masuku** joined ACAT in 2005, she had just lost her husband, and was living with her mother in law. She has worked very hard to improve her life and now has a tuckshop. She says:

*"Because I had never attended any business workshops before, I battled to get my tuckshop going. When I joined ACAT, I attended the Basic Life Skills course, and then I started a whole new life, slowly gaining strength, and as time has gone by, I have been able to increase my sales. I built a home, and have planted fruit trees and vegetables. I have learned to process food. Our group works hard to plant huge fields of maize and beans. Our savings are above R90 000 ... these savings are helpful because we are able to use our money whenever we have a problem that requires money."*



This **combined group** gathered to learn how to make fruit cake. This workshop was very successful, and the group members were happy to see that even if you do not have an oven, it's possible to bake the cake.



After **Zenzele and Musa Mgwaba** attended the Youth Basic Life Skill course, they decided to start their own little plot of spinach. Their garden is now helping to feed their family. They say they were very happy to attend the training because they learned lessons which will help them make good decisions while they are still young. Their mother is very happy and is helping them to fence their garden to protect it from roaming animals. They want to enlarge soon to plant more vegetables.



After joining the programme **Fikile Kheswa** implemented what she learned from the workshop, which resulted in this nice crop. She says:

*"Today I have something to put on my table without spending a lot of money."*



**Buyisakuphi Shange** joined ACAT in 2022, after attending the field Basic Life Skills training course, which was held in her area. She says:

*"I have experienced a great improvement since I joined the ACAT programme. I read the Bible and pray with my children. I am so thankful for the work of ACAT, especially in the deep rural area where I am living. Now I eat healthy food with less oil. Before, I used to buy five litres of cooking oil each month. I established a vegetable garden and fenced it in order to protect it from the animals. My family eats well and I sell any surplus to the community. I have a business of beadwork and traditional attires. Members of our community hire these outfits when they have traditional ceremonies and weddings. This business is good especially in the rural areas. The training really helped me to learn how to keep records for my businesses."*



**Nomathemba Magwaza** says her life has improved after joining the ACAT programme. Now her family is able to eat vegetables from her garden, and because the crop was good, she was able to sell the surplus.





**Thandeni Mayaba** became a Group member in 2008. As a result of the training she received, she has now established a beautiful garden where she grows different types of vegetables for her own consumption, selling the extra produce to earn some income for her family. She is also a member of a savings group. She acquired a loan from her savings group to buy fencing, as she wants to extend her garden in order to produce more vegetables for the market. Her future plan is to get a market where they can sell their produce as a group.



**Nokulunga Mbhense** is a member of Bambanani Group which was established in 2008. She plants both crops and vegetables, for her own consumption and for sale. She is also a member in a savings group, and has used a loan to buy blocks to extend her house. One of her children attended the Youth Basic Life Skills training offered by ACAT, and she then started her own garden. This family now saves more money, because they no longer buy vegetables, but harvest them from their gardens.



**Nomusa Mavundla** is 53 years old, and joined Sinazo Group in 2022. After attending the ACAT training, she started a garden. Before attending the training she didn't have any garden.



**Tholakele Ngongo** from Shayamoya zone, joined Sisonke group which started in 2022. She grows beans and different types of vegetables.

**Thandokuhle Thwala** (36) from Shayamoya, belongs to Siyasebenza Group. He has a beautiful garden, which he started after attending the ACAT training. He has implemented most of the things he has learned from the training, like making compost, and has fenced his garden properly in order to keep away livestock from eating his crops. He also spends some of his time visiting other group members, and encourages them to do the same. He is currently attending the ACAT Community Volunteer Courses, and has completed three of the five courses.





**Julian Mbhele** from Ndlaveleni zone, joined Siyakhuthala group in 2022. Before joining the programme, she was involved in growing crops and vegetable, but her yields were not good because she did not have any agricultural skills. She attended area workshops on sustainable agriculture practices, where he learned how to plant vegetables using sustainable practices like compost, kraal manure, and mulch. Now she grows cabbage, spinach, onions and carrots. She generates income through her tuckshop which is doing very well. She keeps her records in order to see the profit she makes. She earns ±R500 per day from her tuckshop and says she thanks God who brought ACAT in her life!



**Thophi Sithole** joined ACAT programme during lockdown in 2020 to acquire more knowledge and skills. Her Group's name is Senzakahle. As a result of participating in the programme, she is now able to plant her own vegetables and help other group members by sharing with them the same skills she acquired at ACAT. She earns about R600 a month from her vegetable sales.



ACAT Extension Co-ordinator, Mandla Manyoni, hands over a box of Bibles to **Pastor Ngubane** of African Gospel Church. The pastor is so helpful to the community, and he allows ACAT to use his church as a training venue.



**Mrs Zindela** from Dingimbiza zone at Mzumbe says:

*"Nice looking bean crops don't just happen automatically. You have to work hard to get the soil to yield good results. I say 'feed the soil, to feed you'. I am so proud of my hard work."*



**Ellinah Jali** from Makhikhi G5 stands in her bean field. She grows beans commercially. Her main market is to the local community. Before getting involved in ACAT she was a housewife. She started by growing vegetables just to feed her family, but later upscaled to grow dry beans commercially.

A group member, **Bagcinile Jali**, from Bombo zone in Mzumbe says:

*"It's a blessing to be part of the ACAT programme. Before joining the group, planting vegetables was just an impossible thing to do in my village because of the scarcity of water. ACAT's team in the community changed all the impossible things. The team headed by Extension Co-ordinator Wanda Zikalala organized the first planting demonstration workshop in the new zone, and it was conducted in my homestead. It is great to produce vegetables on my own and to even grow bananas!"*



**Zama Nzimande** from Dingimbiza zone at Mzumbe shows off her vegetable garden. She says:

*"I enjoyed the lessons I got from the Youth Basic Life Skills training course and was interested to get the seed after attending the training. What amazes me the most is the fact that now I am able to grow vegetables on my own, even starting from raising seedlings!"*



Group member **Bongekile Madlala** says:

*"In my community there is a lot of unemployment, and I was struggling to pay the transport costs for my children to go to school. However, ACAT gave me the opportunity to identify the resources and skills I have available to me. I learned financial skills which helped me to start saving money, and that savings helped me invest in my piggery project!"*



Group member **Bongani Khumalo** from Mzumbe area is very proud of the goats he purchased with his savings from his Savings and Loans Group. He joined the programme in 2016.



**Gabisile Chiliza** demonstrates the great improvement she made after joining ACAT's programme. In the first picture she stands in her tuck shop business, and in the next, she shows the blocks she has bought. She says:

*"Before I joined the Programme I just depended on the government grant. Then, ACAT opened my eyes! Like most group members, I started with a vegetable garden. And used the profit I earned from my vegetable garden to open my Spaza shop. Then I joined my Savings and Loans Group, and that has helped me save money to buy blocks to improve my home."*



**Mlondi Mkhize** from Ndunge zone at Mzumbe is so proud of his vegetables! He is business minded and he has already estimated the amount of money that he will earn from sales of his harvest. He joined his group in March 2022. He said that he was attracted by seeing some of his neighbours' gardens and that drove him to find out more about the ACAT programme.





**Mrs Myaka** is one of the oldest of the group members. She has seen the benefits of being in the programme over the years. She says eating fresh vegetables from her own garden is what keeps her strong. She also sells to the community, and this helps her to have extra income which helps at home. She also keeps indigenous chickens which she eats, and sells.



**Ntombifuthi Zuma** of Empire group in Vulindlela is a newer member. She has planted potatoes and some leafy vegetables and is really enjoying it. She says she likes the garden because she gets healthy food. She also says another thing she likes about planting is that it keeps her on her feet as it makes her work. She also enjoys that it teaches her to be disciplined as she has to make sure that everything is growing well in her garden.



The **Vulindlela training team** occasionally holds Home Food Security workshops where the general public comes to see what it is that ACAT does in the community. These workshops attract new group members. The training includes how to make a deep trench, tower garden and mulch. These workshops are also used as a means of training Community Volunteers in their communicating skills.



**Mthotshelwa Mncube** from Zayeka, Vulindlela joined the ACAT programme in 2019. He plants and sells his own vegetables to the community. He started with just one small garden, but when he saw how excellent it was, he slowly started to expand his garden. He is very happy to be able to eat fresh vegetables from the garden.



The **Qalakancane Luncheon Club** was formed by a group of older ladies from KwaMpande, Vulindlela. These ladies are from different G5s, and they come together to showcase their work. They do a lot of things, including bead work, decorating, catering, sewing and washing of church hats, make floor polish, sew different types of clothes, etc. They sell their products and thus are able to generate a bit of extra income, which helps a lot in their homes.

**Mrs Sokhela** of Mpande, Vulindlela is a perfect example of what this programme aims to achieve. She joined ACAT many years ago, and she was able to establish her own home garden, and pass her skills on to her daughter, Nonhlanhla. Then she trained her granddaughter, Enhle. This means that all 3 generations are beneficiaries of the programme. They plant and sell from their garden, sell rabbits, and have a baking business, which brings in a lot of money for the family. They are all involved in the savings group. Enhle is showing amazing leadership skills and has helped her peers with their gardens and savings. They have started an SLG for children in the area.



**Catherine Mchunu** of Nqabeni, Vulindlela is such a good example in her area. She plants a lot of potatoes, spinach, onions, cabbages and other vegetables. She has even supplied one of the supermarkets in Pietermaritzburg. She always mentions how thankful she is that ACAT "opened her eyes" as she has been able to save money through a Savings and Loans Group, and thus send her children to university and improve her home. She also rears indigenous chickens, and keeps goats, which she sells to earn an income for herself.