



# ACAT's IMPACT

**January to December 2023**

*Stories of transformed lives of families in KwaZulu-Natal*

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










ACAT’s 45 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 16 different areas in KwaZulu Natal. During the year 171 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 15 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 the champions of this report!

These are the areas of KwaZiulu ACAT operates in :



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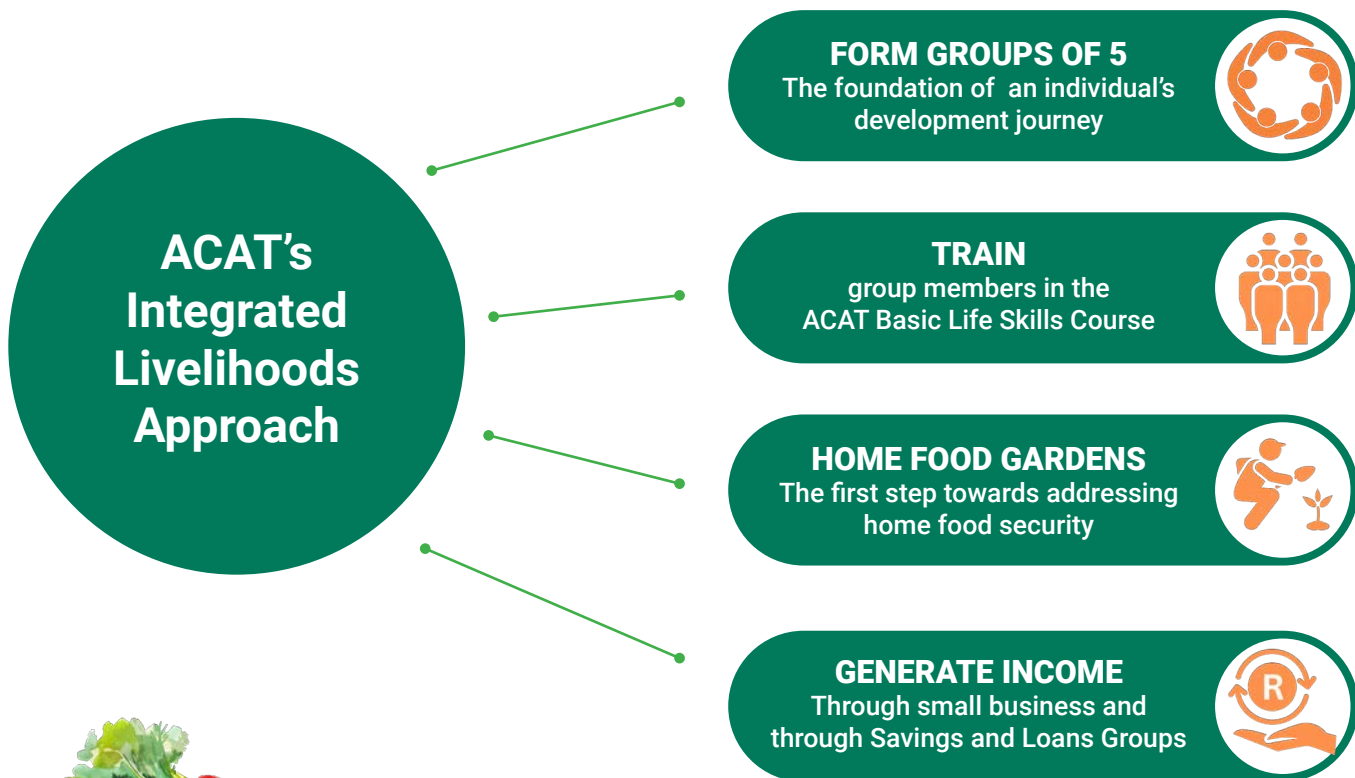


“ The prevalence of childhood stunting in South Africa is alarmingly high, with around 27% of children under five years of age affected, meaning that these children will likely not reach their full growth and development potential. ”

Daily Maverick 26 July 2023

◀ The ACAT alternative to this – teaching families and children how to grow their own food and eat nutritiously ... one trench garden at a time!

# ACAT's approach



## Impact

January – December 2023

### 855

New group members trained through the Basic Life Skills Course

- 84% female; 16% male
- 62% under 45 years old
- 43% have achieved Grade 12

### 796

New group members have already started vegetable gardens

### 611

Youth trained in Basic Life Skills – including reproductive health, career guidance, vegetable gardening and basic business skills

- 61% females; 38% males; 1% other
- 548 gardens started
- 494 small business initiatives started

### 661

New group members started income generating activities

### 148

Total Savings and Loans Groups (SLG) with a total amount saved of R8,404,787



**Khatheleni Ndaba** of Mtateni Zone joined the programme in 2021. She says:

*"I am so thankful that ACAT opened my eyes. I plant a variety of vegetables for sale. I also have a sewing business. I am grateful for the lessons on bookkeeping as this has helped me grow my business. My children now help me in the garden as they can see the value of planting and how it helps financially. I also belong to a local Savings and Loans Group."*



**Neli Mhlongo** from Gudlintaba Zone joined in 2020. She says:

*"I am the breadwinner at home. ACAT really helped me to understand that I can make a living for myself. I sell any surplus vegetables and seedlings to community members. I have now established my layers and I sell eggs to the community members."*



**Erick Shange** from Kleinfontein is a new member of the programme, having joined in 2023. He says he really enjoyed learning more about Jesus, and how to plant vegetables – which he now sells to the community. He is eager to join a Savings and Loans Group next year.



**Mapicture Mabaso** from Emadrayini says,

*"I joined the ACAT programme in 2018. I am so thankful for the programme. It has helped me to grow. I now have a Spaza Shop where I understand the value of record keeping, which I learned in the Basic Life Skills training. I am part of a Broiler Sector group where we sell chickens to the community. Currently I am improving my house through my Savings and Loans Group and my children are also part of a childrens' Savings and Loans Group."*

**Sibusiso Zwane** from Kleinfontein joined the programme in 2023 and says his eyes were opened because he learnt so much. He enjoyed learning about business and has planted different vegetables, like spinach, red onion, and potatoes.

**Sthembiso Hlongwane** plants and sells vegetables.

*"I am thankful that I was part of the Basic Life Skills training course as this has given me so much knowledge. One of the things the programme helped me with was the ability to have self confidence. I am no longer allowing my disability to hinder me from achieving my goals."*





**Nathi Sithole** is a very diligent man who has welcomed the programme and is starting to see the benefits of being part of it. He plants and sells vegetables. He was also very instrumental in the starting up of the Loskop Market days. He bought three young calves and grew them and then sold them to buy a van which he uses to grow his farming business.



Here we see the market day in action. The group members bring their produce and products together and sell to the public. This has been a success. We also see the workshops that happen in the communities. The training team really helps with different solutions to different problems that group members face.



**Lindiwe Zungu** joined the programme in 2022 where she learnt about business and bookkeeping. She now plants her own vegetables which they consume as a family and sell the surplus. She also has indigenous chickens which she sells to the community. She says she will keep improving because she has been taught the proper skills.

**Khethiwe Dubazane** joined this year. She says:

*"I was happy because when I started I did not have any hope that my life could improve. But during the training, I saw that things really could improve in my life. I now have a small garden which I plan to expand, until I am able to sell from it."*



**Gogo Mbhele** is an amazing lady. She says:

*"I appreciate the programme so much. I have started my garden and already we are eating from it. I plan to expand it. I also sell some snacks and eggs, and I am so grateful for the business lessons I received during the Basic Life Skills training!"*

She really is an example to the other grannies in the area.

**Mncedisi Mazibuko** joined the programme in 2023. He says:

*"Before joining the ACAT programme, I lacked self confidence and struggled financially, because I could not provide for my family. But since attending the Basic Life Skills Training, things have changed for better. I now plant and sell different vegetables, especially cabbage. This has boosted my financial income. I also sell chickens. I am so thankful for the programme and now I planning to expand and become a professional farmer."*

**Gogo Mbatha** joined this year and has really made sure she implemented all that she learned during the Basic Life skills training. She has started a garden which feeds her family and she sells to the community as well. They are planning to start their own Savings and Loans Group next year as she has seen the benefits of being able to save towards specific goals that will improve her future.

**Mama Xaba** is fast becoming a "lighthouse" in the area. She has a beautiful garden from which she sells cabbages, spinach, beetroot and other vegetables. She keeps indigenous chickens and broilers which she also sells to the public. She is so grateful for the programme and is willing to help others with the knowledge she has acquired.



Sibongile Nzama of Cabazani zone, joined Siyakhanya group to learn how to produce vegetables organically. She now grows a variety of crops and vegetables for her family and sells poultry. She makes and sells traditional attire which is very popular with her community and in town. She saves R150 monthly in her Savings and Loans Group.



**Ntombemhlophe Bhengu** joined Siyazama group in 2020. Before joining ACAT programme, she says she had little knowledge about sustainable practices and soil fertility. Now she grows cabbages and spinach and rears poultry, which she sells to the local market. She saves the profit (about R1000) in her Savings and Loans Group.



**Philisiwe Gwala** joined Thandanani group in 2019 after hearing the area Community Extension Officer, Ms Goba, explaining the programme. Philisiwe started by making a small garden. Then, after seeing the harvest, her husband helped her to expand the garden because she earned a profit by just selling to the neighbours. Their vision is to sell to other communities as well. She joined the Savings and Loans Group with the aim of expanding her business. Philisiwe says, *"I also make and sell beadwork and grass mats. I am so thankful to God for the encouragement I got from my CEO to start a business."*



Section 28 of the South African Bill of Rights, entitled "Children", says: **Every child has the right to basic nutrition.** In reality however:

- For 1 in 4 children under 5 years old, this right has not been met.
- 1 in 4 children under 5 years old are stunted, and are not getting the nutrition they need to thrive.

These photos show the **G5 members attending a workshop at the nearby creche** on how to plant vegetables to ensure their children eat nutritiously. They encouraged each other on the importance of gardening to produce and eat healthy food, teaching parents and children how to plant and to care for vegetables. ACAT also encouraged them to plant and sell vegetables so that they could earn income to make ends meet. At the end of the workshop, the members were very happy with the ACAT programme, and they all wanted to join a Savings and Loans group. We also taught them the importance of involving children in agriculture so that they can work together with their parents at home. Even the children enjoyed making liquid manure! (below).



**Hlaliswe Nxumalo** of Zizamele group from Mgangeni zone, says, *"I was farming in my own way before joining the ACAT programme, but after attending a workshop on how to plant in a more sustainable way, I decided to plant a variety of crops and vegetables with the help of my husband. I like the ACAT programme and I am so thankful to God for this wonderful knowledge and the savings that ACAT has taught us how to do. I can now save money for the needs of my family. Thank you for opening our eyes, I was blind but now I can see."*



**Nikeziwe Dube** joined Eyethu group in 2019. She is an active G5 member and a community health worker. She says: *"As a single parent and independent person, I wanted to get more knowledge in agriculture and business. I really got it, because before I didn't grow any vegetables in a sustainable way. Now I have fruit trees which I didn't have before, and I now grow winter and summer crops. I have my own garden that I am proud of. I am very grateful for this programme. It really changed my family's life."*



Community Volunteer, **Nobuhle Ntuli**, joined the programme in 2020. She is from Mgangeni zone. She was influenced by other G5 members' gardens which she saw were thriving throughout the year. She is a very active member. She lost her husband, and had to take care of her three children, but that didn't deter her. She grows crops and vegetables throughout the year. She says, joining the ACAT programme has helped her a lot. She makes a living by sewing church uniforms and by growing and selling crops. When her crops are ready, she sells them to the community. She saves the rest of the money for her children – just the way she was taught through her Savings and Loan Group. She saves for their future!



**Thenjiwe Mathe** joined her group in 2019 after attending a workshop on sustainable agriculture practices. Before joining, her garden was small and unproductive. With the help of the area CEO, Ntombiyenkosi Goba, she started her garden and within a short period of time, she enlarged it to a big productive field, helped by her husband and children.

She also sells limes to wholesalers, sometimes earning up to R2,000 if she sells well. She says,  
*"My life is not the same as before. I eat healthy food every year, and I earn my own money".*



Meeting and teaching in groups is the backbone of ACAT's strategy – here Xolisile Sithole teaches group members during their Basic Life Skills training course. Modules include health, basic business practices, HIV and AIDS, spiritual development, child protection and many other topics, including how to save money through Savings and Loans Groups. This course is very helpful, and when the participants implement what they have learned, their families reap the benefits!



This Savings and Loans group in Highflats conducts their monthly saving meeting in a very orderly manner. It is very interesting to find out that the committee do not approve loans to members who do not have a plan or purpose on how they are going to use the money. They require a member to have a purpose and sign a form for the period of their loan. The lady in the photo below is **Thembi Gumede** and she is proud to show a refrigerator that she purchased with money from her savings just in a small space of time.



**Duduzile Sikhosana**, a hard working group member grows a lot of maize for sale. When asked about her farming experience she says: *“Working in the field is in my blood. Good management determines the success or failure of any business. For instance, now is the time to weed my maize crop and I am doing it right on time before the weeds compete with the maize. What actually made me want to join the programme was seeing people live a Godly lifestyle and many people advancing in life after becoming group members.”*



**Vuyisile Tenza** is a new group member who started her tuckshop business immediately after attending a Basic Life Skills training in June 2023. She said that starting a business was always on her mind, but she did not have the knowledge and the courage to begin. However, since joining ACAT’s programme she is seeing her dream coming true.



These new group members from Highflats attend their Basic Life Skills Training. In the first picture the group is learning theory in class and then in the photo below they get stuck into practical training. They start with land preparations and end up planting vegetables. This ‘learning by doing’ fascinates many people.



During the Youth Basic Life Skills courses our team teaches teenagers agricultural methods, business skills and explores spiritual development. The children were so excited to attend the lessons, that none of them even missed a class in all the 3 days training!

Parents too become excited for their children being part of the training, and said:

*“We wish such trainings could flood the whole area, because most of the kids who attended Youth Basic Life Skills change in their lifestyle, more especially after accepting the Lord Christ as their Saviour.”*



This sector group works together in what is called ‘Lilima’ – whereby community members work together to fight poverty. They move from one member’s homestead to the next. They formed this group after completing their area Basic Life Skills training in May 2023.







These twins **Sipehele** and **Siphesihle Duma** attended Youth Basic Life Skills (YBLS) at ACAT in 2015, while they were enrolled in Grade 8. The knowledge they acquired at this course served as the foundation for their current ventures. The twins' involvement in many courses has taken locals, including those who are close to them, by surprise. The young men have decided to pursue a career in agriculture, and they have taken a few short courses on the production of broilers and pigs. Their first attempt at running a farming business was to breed hunting dogs because they identified a need, and believed that this would help people in general, and hunters in particular. The money they made from selling dogs was reinvested in a piggery and broiler business. The proceeds from the sale of 200 broilers and 12 piglets were put towards the purchase of blocks and building supplies to build a four-bedroom house.



The Twins' philosophy is fostering the development of genuine youth who are driven to design the world they envision. The goal of Siphesihle and Sipehele is to prevent other young people from going through what they went through by teaching their peers their mistakes, and how to embrace the discomfort of hard work, and that in order to build a pig house and a chicken run, they required assistance and working funds which they worked on through saving and loans.



**Gugulethu Ngcobo** is an extremely hardworking lady who lives with her only child in Impendle. When we first arrived in this new zone, she assisted us to create groups. She is full of business ideas, but acknowledges that she does not have the necessary knowledge or ability to access specific government departments to help her with her initiatives.

She asked us a lot of questions because she was interested to learn what the ACAT programme would offer her. When we explained how we operate and its potential benefits to her and others, she became intrigued and decided to join the programme in 2023.

After completing the Basic Life Skill workshops, she couldn't wait to start a small spaza shop in her house and immediately bought 20 broiler chickens for business.

She also took us to one of her big dreams – which was to start a vegetable nursery. Previously, she had attended a month's training workshop with another organization on how to plant and grow seedlings in a tunnel. She had built a tunnel in 2022, and offered her land to 9 other business partners. But after a while, she was the only one left in that group. Through the ACAT programme she can see the possibility of saving towards what is needed financially to continue this business.





After several years of employment as a truck driver, **Mr. Sithole** retired around five years ago without a solid strategy for supporting his family. After learning about the ACAT programme from one of our group members in the Gomane Zone, he quickly went out to gather four other people to form a group of five. In 2023, they participated in the field training.

*"It's my first time to have a vegetable garden prepared by myself. All along my wife used to plant some pumpkins and we would enjoy eating pumpkin leaves and so on. But now I am determined to put into effect what I learned from the training. I am determined to drastically alter my family, neighbourhood, and way of life. I shall make the best use of the land and spring water that God has provided me with. In the future, I want to be self-sufficient and have access to everything that can be produced. Despite my age, I have no regrets about working hard and supporting my group. My objective is to contribute positively to the community."*



**Nelly Mbhele** is a single mother who lives with her two grandchildren. She has attempted to establish a business and garden, but her efforts have not been successful. She eventually learned about ACAT from a member of our organization, and she made the decision to join the programme for 2023. She joined ACAT with the intention of learning more so that she could resurrect some of her previous businesses, such as gardening and tailoring. She informed us during our follow-up meetings that the knowledge she gained from ACAT had enhanced the value of what she already had, and she intended to apply it wisely in order to perform significantly better than she had in the past.

Her desire to raise indigenous chickens for sale has always been there, and she has taken the first step toward realizing it by building a poultry house with lovely divisions where hens can lay eggs. Additionally, she has walled off a space for her vegetables, and has planted potatoes. Her only complaint, though, is the difficulty she has with water. Although there is a spring close to her property, it will cost lots of money for her to pipe water to her house and garden. She therefore is looking forward to joining the savings and loans group in 2024, and has agreed to start saving from January 2024.



**Thembisile Dlamini** is a very hardworking woman, who actively participates in initiatives that promote the welfare of her community. She has worked particularly hard to make her home sustainable. Thembi always talks of the kindness, knowledge and assistance she has received as a group member of the ACAT family. She joined ACAT in 2021, and since then has never gone without vegetables at home. She has managed to raise goats, sheep, cattle, broilers, and operate a tuckshop in this brief amount of time. She makes money from all of these initiatives, which supplements her income at home.



She charges R1500 for goats, R2000 for sheep, R130 for broilers, and R8000 for cattle. She makes R1200 a month in profit from the tuck shop. Her goal is for her children to have secure employment and is a strong advocate for their education and hopes they will attend college.



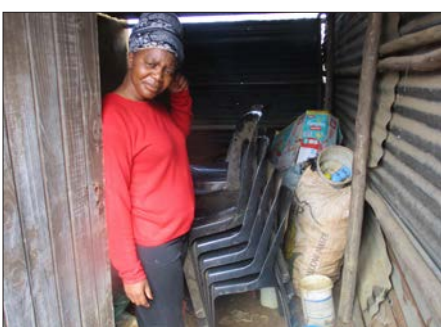
Her other goal is to own a sizable plot of land where she may actively pursue her dreams of being a commercial farmer. Thembi has plans for her children's future and is a member of the savings club.





After learning about ACAT from her neighbours, **Jabulile Dlamini** attended one of our neighbourhood introductory meetings, and decided to become a group member of ACAT in 2023. Jabu expressed a great deal of interest in the business module throughout our training session, and was able to ask a lot of questions about it. She explained, after completing the course, that she now understood why she had been consistently failing to maintain her tuck shop business, particularly with regard to keeping accurate records and selling merchandise on credit. Jabu learned from her mistakes – after finishing the course, we saw many changes in her Tuckshop business practices during our follow-up visits. She showed us a ledger in which she tracks of all her daily transactions. She says this discipline will benefit her in the future:

*"I have been able to earn a profit and have noticed a change in my cash flow for the last three months following the training. Previously, I would just sell, and my kids could profit by stealing some sweets and so forth. I am now planning to become a member of a Savings and Loans Group in January 2024."*



**Betty Mbanjwa**, who became a group member of ACAT in 2023, explains to her daughter, Ntombenhle, how the training course changed the way she thought about work and business. They got together and discussed how to begin their long-term goal of raising pigs for profit. Following their dream, they went and bought two pigs, a boar and a sow. Her daughter (*below*) is looking forward to expanding the company and is excited. Nevertheless, in order to run and maintain the business, they require a specialized short course.



**Londoka Nkabinde** is a very passionate focused young lady who has worked hard to put to practice what she learnt during the training. When she joined ACAT as a group member in 2023, her intention was very clear – she wanted to learn how to handle business. During the training she showed much interest when business topics were being presented, and asked a lot of questions. Prior to joining ACAT she was involved in some small businesses, but always failed to sustain them. She says:

*"My story has to change with the information I have gained. I will work hard towards sustaining my business. After the training I set up a garden and started a catering business. I bought 30 chairs 10 foldable tables."*

Londoka is one of the founding members of saving club, and sits on the ZSIC Board.

A new ACAT member, **Ntombikayise Khwela**, took part in a training session in 2023. Prior to this, she said she was not a fan of group work and was hence not interested in participating in the programme. Previously she used to take part in some of our field workshops, and conceded that they were beneficial. Then she chose to join the programme in 2023. One of the obstacles she encountered was how to fence her garden. She thought she would consider an alternative way to fence it so she fenced a tiny portion of her land with corrugated iron sheets. She is now excited to join a saving club in the area, because she wants to save towards other fencing material, so that she can extend her small garden and plant a variety of vegetables. The small portion has given her a taste of success and motivation to do more.



**Mr. Ngcobo** is an extremely diligent individual; it is thanks to him that we are in this Zone and that he actively participates in activities that promote the well-being of the local population. He says:

*"I want to be focused and make agriculture my permanent occupation, because the training has impacted me differently. I own goats and cattle. After completing my training, I want to engage in mixed farming."*

We have connected him with the Department of Agriculture to gain additional knowledge about animal husbandry. The next stage for him is to start a savings club, with the objective is to save money so they can improve their small enterprises.

This **group member** has been a part of the programme for five years, during which time she has made significant improvements to her home. One of the biggest improvements is building a new house. They were living in a mudhouse, but now they have built a large house made of blocks, as well as a modern rondavel house. Her work has involved a variety of small businesses, from the sale of vegetables and crops like potatoes, to the sale of goats and rabbits. She says that the ACAT training manual has assisted her in improving their standard of living. She says:

*"My husband, who works as a general worker in one of the retail shops in Pietermaritzburg, has no objections to letting me continue being part of those involved in issues of development. Before he used to be against me attending group meetings where they talk about self-empowerment. He thought of it as a sheer waste of my time. He thinks very differently now."*



Mrs. Mncube has changed from being a housewife who only did housework, to owning a vegetable garden, layers, a broiler production unit, and the rearing of traditional chickens. She says, *"Hard work pays. Participants who take things seriously and use the knowledge they have learned exhibit this behaviour. Today we have breakfast with eggs and chicken meat. We no longer buy meat from the shops. I have made some nice money from the sales of my vegetables, chickens, and eggs. This has motivated me to continue with my business endeavours. We are enjoying eating fresh vegetables, eggs, and the chicken meat makes the grandparents and the children happy! We have more ambitions to grow our businesses and provide services to the local market."* Mrs. Mncube is also one of the founding members of their Savings and Loan Group.





These **group members** say that they move from one member's field to next with one thing in common and that is to fight poverty by addressing food security. They joined the programme in 2022 because the idea of working together in a group of 5 really made sense to them. They say if the group was too big it would not work.



The Zone Facilitator from Izingolweni **Sizeni Ndadane** leads by example. She practices mixed farming as she grows crops and vegetables right through the year. Her age does not limit her in achieving her goals! She says: "Working hard in the fields is what keeps me healthy and strong and is part of my exercise! I work hard and supply local schools and tuckshops with my products." In the photo on the right she tells her ACAT Extension Co-ordinator Wanda Zikalala about the successes and challenges that she experiences. She explains that farming helps her to boost her income so that she does not only depend on the government grant.



**Noxolo Hadebe** says: *"I am very grateful to ACAT for all the valuable things I have learned free of charge. I have also received such great support from my group of 5. All along I thought that agriculture was for elderly people – however the Basic Life Skills training changed all that taboo! I am now able to grow my own vegetables in the garden my grandmother used to plant in over 5 years ago! And I am also earning some cash from selling vegetables from my garden!"*



Raising broiler chickens and growing vegetables is what made this lady **Thembi Mdujani** a famous business lady at Izingolweni! She joined the

programme in 2022. She said being one of the Basic Life Skills participants really opened her eyes. The top-up workshops after the Basic Life Skills training was all that she needed to stand up on her feet and start her business journey. She can't stop thanking ACAT for raising her up: *"I went from zero to hero. Before being a group member I used to depend only on the government grant for my children. Now I am a totally changed person! I have savings and have been able to do some home improvements."*



**Mbhele Cebisa** says that she is just doing all the things that farmers have to do in order to obtain better yields. She planted her potatoes early and manages her field – there are no weeds in the field and the crop is now almost mature.



Women empowerment! This multi-skilled and talented community volunteer, **Jabu Mjiya**, from Godloza zone at Izingolweni makes sofa covers, pillow cases, sells sweets and chips, and grows crops and vegetables.



Strike the iron while its still hot! This child (one of our KNH children) loves to work in his grandmother's garden.

**Anele Malunga** attended the Youth Basic Life skills courses offered by ACAT in the communities during school holidays. At the completion of the course, she went home with vegetable seeds. She is so proud to say that she is still sticking to the lessons that were offered to the youth during that training!





**Violet Mabadi** of Siyathuthuka group, joined the programme in 2023. She is a woman of many skills. She started her business of roofing poles a month after she attended her first Basic Life Skills training. She says: *"All along I had been dreaming of this business, but I did not have the business skills. Now I collect and sell wood from the nearby forest, and I get lot of support from the local community."*



**Ntombifuthi Mpanza** of Phumeceleni zone at Mondlo says: *"I used to be lazy before joining the ACAT programme, but attending the Basic Life Skills course was a special blessing to me. Now I work hard to produce crops and vegetables for my family to enjoy!"*



**Nosipho Magubane**, a community volunteer from Siyathuthuka group from Mvuzini zone at Mondlo, joined ACAT ILP in 2022. She said that seeing the vegetables in the Community Extension Officer's garden is what attracted her to join the programme. She now plants her own vegetables to feed her family and sells the surplus.

**Hlengiwe Magubane** joined the ACAT ILP programme in 2020. She says: *"The reason I joined a Group of 5 was that I wanted to improve my business skills by gaining knowledge and farming skills from the experienced ACAT field team. I had seen a lot of group members growing their knowledge through the programme. I have grown too ... and now I grow vegetables to feed my family and for sale. I also love to encourage the youth to start their own sustainable projects because finding employment has become a very scarce thing."*



**Busisiwe Ndlovu** of Isibane group, Phumeceleni zone joined ACAT ILP in 2023. When she had completed the Basic Life Skills training, she started her vegetable garden with a great effort. Now she eats fresh vegetables, and her family enjoys a healthy balanced diet.



In spite of her age, **Lydia Phenyana** of Siyathuthuka group is still able to plant vegetables to feed her family. She says that eating fresh vegetables is what keeps her healthy all the time.

**Nthabiseng Nxumalo** is a very dedicated group member who grows lots of vegetables as her business. She sells her vegetables in her community.



Age does not stop this group member from producing food for her family.



**Ntombifikile (49)** is a member of Siyaphambili group from Esiqoqweni zone. She joined because she was interested to gain business and agricultural skills. She says:

*“Before joining the group I was clueless on how to improve my soil’s fertility, in order to get good quality crops. ACAT training taught me that I could use compost and manure to improve soil fertility, and after I tried this, I started to grow good quality crops from our vegetable garden. I grow different vegetables and sell any extra produce to earn additional income. I also sell clothes and make about R1000 profit from these sales. I have joined a Savings and Loans Group, which has enabled me to build my own house and leave my parents’ house.”*



**Nomusa Mkhize, (47)**, a member of Amandlethu group from Esiqoqweni zone, collects water in empty Coke bottles. She also makes liquid manure (in the container on the right). Nomusa says:

*“I joined the ACAT programme in 2019 because I saw the interesting benefits the G5 members got. I was recruited by them to join their group, and enjoy the same benefits. I started my vegetable garden and an indigenous chicken business. Now my family eats fresh vegetables all year round. I make about R800 monthly from my sales. I use the money I earn from my business to pay for school fees and to buy household items and to save monthly.”*

**Nhlakanipho Gwala, (29)**, joined Bantwini Group in 2023, after attending the Basic Life Skills Course. He says:

*“After the course I was so motivated and applied the skills I learned from ACAT. Before joining, I was already involved in a piggery business, but due to lack of basic business skills, I did not make a profit. I now see why – and now I make a profit because I keep records of my business. I rear pigs and sell them to the community. I also sell pork which earns me about R3600 a month. I am the only one selling meat in my community, so I have no competition. My dream is to become a successful business man. I also now know the power of saving – and save R2000 monthly in my Savings and Loans Group in order to expand my business by opening a butchery.”*



**Sanelisiwe Zungu**, joined the Phezukomkhono group in 2021 with the aim of learning to produce crops and vegetables to feed her family since there was no one earning an income at home. She attended area workshops and the Basic Life Skills Course in her area, where she got motivated to start growing spinach, cabbage, carrots, green pepper, and beetroot, to feed her family and to sell the surplus. Her vegetable sales earn about R500 a month. She says:

*“I work hard to produce and make at least R2000 a month in order to support my family financially. As a young person who is unemployed but has needs, I am so grateful that I joined the ACAT programme. I am so impressed with how the spiritual lessons are taught, which has given me back hope that no matter how difficult life can be, if you have Jesus in your heart, you have peace”.*





**Amos Hlophe** joined the ACAT programme as a group member of Ikhuba group in 2019. Since then, he has acquired a lot of farming and other development skills. He learned about proper planting methods, and soil fertility. Implementing these methods has made a big difference in the quality of his crops. From his produce sales, he makes about R800 monthly. His goal is to increase his garden in order to earn about R3000 a month. Currently he saves R200 monthly in a Savings and Loans Group.



**Nozipho Mbhele** joined the ACAT programme as a group member in April 2023. She had finished her university studies, but could not find a job. She attended a Basic Life Skills Course which was offered by ACAT in her area. She became motivated to learn agricultural, business and handwork skills. Now she makes beadwork which she sells, and sometimes people hire them for special occasions. She makes R500 a month from her business. She says, *"I am so thankful to God who opened my eyes through ACAT. I was already doing beadwork work, but I didn't think that it could be a business".*

**Nelisiwe Mbhele** joined Isoso group after attending the Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her area. After the lessons on how to start a small business, she became so motivated because she remembered that she was trained to sew and that sewing could be her business. In the past she used to make pinafores, but stopped because her husband was working and his salary enabled them to pay for everything at home. However, now her husband is no longer working, so she decided to restart her sewing business. From her first sales she earned R800. She is now planning to sell her clothes near the shopping centre in order to attract more people. Her husband is so happy and very supportive of her work. They are now planning to expand their vegetable garden in order to sell the surplus.



**Gladys Chonco** is a new G5 member who joined the ACAT programme this year after the Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her area. She says, *"I am so happy to see the work of my hands. This is my first crop after joining my group. I am looking forward to learning new things and improving myself."*



**Buselaphi Thusi, (66)**, joined Intaba group in 2023 because she says *"I was influenced by G5 members in my neighbourhood who kept on praising the work of ACAT and talking about how their vegetable production has changed their lives. I started by attending their area workshops on how to grow crops and vegetables for home and for sale. I earn about R500 a month from sales, and I save R100 monthly in my Savings and Loans Group."*







Practise what you preach! Our **Community Extension Officer (CEO)** at Nquthu does not only teach or talk about establishment of gardens and business start-ups, but implements everything she teaches at her homestead. She says:

*"I want new group members to learn from what I am doing, and also to see for themselves that I do not just theorise, but teach them to grow and sell vegetables like I do. I know that my gardens really encourage aspiring group members."*



**Mlungisi Xulu** from Sicelumusa group at Nquthu, used what was available to surround his vegetable garden. He joined the programme in 2023, and after attending the Basic Life Skills training, he did not waste any time in collecting sticks to fence and make a vegetable garden. Now he is happy that at least he is able to feed his family with fresh vegetables, and earn income from his produce. He says: *"I never dreamt that this is something I could do – not even one single day! This programme changed me. It taught me about savings, how to eat a balanced meal, and the greatest of all is coming to know the Lord Christ Jesus!"*



The **Nquthu Area Committee** members conduct a local exposure visit to the CEO's homestead in order for them to see how she has set a great example with her vegetable garden. Her homestead is referred to as a "lighthouse". They also observed some new farming technologies from the CEO. The members said that they were motivated by seeing the vegetables in this state, as many people always say that they do not plant because there have no water for irrigating. Now they are glad to learn her secret of farming, and all the members are so optimistic to do better in their fields.



Having the support from family members contributes to the success of a lot of projects. **Total Mncube** is always supported by his wife in the garden. They are **both group members** and they supply lot of vegetables to local schools involved in the school nutrition feeding scheme. This couple is only limited by space, otherwise they would have the energy to grow more vegetables because the demand for their produce is great.

**Lindiwe Dlamini** saves water in bottles because of the scarcity of water. She says that sometimes they stay without tap water for 1 to 2 weeks. So she uses this water her plants when the taps run dry.



Although **Themba Buthelezi** joined the programme in 2022, he did not grow any vegetables. However this year brought some changes in his life, and he started planting vegetables both for home and for sale. His garden is a good example of a mulched plot as this helps to conserve moisture especially in the dry season.



The **Chairperson of Nquthu Area Committee** leads by example. His potato crop looks excellent, and he always welcomes other group members to come and learn from demonstrations that are conducted at his homestead. He has a passion for growing crops, and that is what makes him successful in his planting projects.



**Zandile Shezi** joined ACAT as a group member of Phungelihle group in 2023. She says,

*"I was not aware of the good things that are found in the workshops provided by ACAT. I used to see my mother-in-law plant her garden unlike others, using sustainable practices. She told me about ACAT, and I decided to join the programme. I went for training which was very helpful to me because I too learned how to plant using sustainable practices. Now I grow a variety of crops and vegetables and I sell any extra vegetables and fruit from my garden. I lost my job during COVID-19. So life was very difficult for me to buy food, but now things have turned around. I can afford to buy food and spend money on my kids. For extra income I make and sell dresses, jerseys, and jackets. I am so thankful to God for the ACAT organization, it has really changed my life for the better."*



**Sindisiwe Biyela**, a new G5 member of Nsikayefu group who joined the ACAT programme in 2023, says:

*"I attended the ACAT training which motivated and encouraged me to start a small business. I didn't have a garden before joining the Programme, but now I grow my own crops and vegetables and no longer buy any vegetables from the shops. I also planted sweet potatoes, which will help me to earn more money because people like them and I have learned how to process them and pumpkins into juice. Now my children are learning from me, and I really hope that they will start their own gardens one day."*



**Langelihle Xaba** a new G5 member says:

*"I joined because I members benefiting from the programme. My situation before joining ACAT was very bad, but after attending training, I now grow vegetables for my family and have a tuckshop which earns me about R500 every month. I also save monthly to buy stock for my tuckshop."*



**Jabulani Dlamini** joined the ACAT programme in 2018. He's attended many different courses offered by ACAT, and is very active in teaching others exactly what he has learned. He planted fruits trees and they have produced well for his children to enjoy. He has a business selling watches, handbags, shoes, and sweets, and sells drums for people to collect water for their gardens and helps them set up small gardens. He also evangelizes in different places and reports how many people have accepted the Lord. During area training courses, he helps our team, and always remembers that ACAT was helpful to him.



*"I thought planting was just for old people. I didn't know that anybody can plant – now I have my own garden, and it produced a good onion harvest. I am so happy about my sales. I have been telling my friends about ACAT and how the programme has helped me. Some have now started too, and they are harvesting from their gardens,"* says **Samkelisiwe Nxumalo**, a new group member.



**Delisiwe Khuzwayo** joined ACAT in 2019. She grows a variety of crops and vegetables. She bought layers with the money she earned from her sales, with the aim of producing and selling eggs to her community. She also keeps broilers for sale. She is a member of a Savings and Loans Group, and is using her savings to build a strong house.



The **Ncanana family** joined ACAT in 2022. They are a family that loves learning new things, and they always work together in everything that they do. They are still new in the area, and so were very happy when they heard about the ACAT programme. Mr Ncanana is also a pastor, and he said:

*“Attending the Basic Life Skills course gave me more courage to continue preaching the truth and God’s good news to our congregation. My wife is now a Community Volunteer – she is a person that always loves teaching other people. She attended different short courses, and then came back to teach others. Before joining the ACAT programme, we had planted a vegetable garden at our home, but it’s harvest was not good. After the training we re-started our garden again. We have made 16 deep trenches – and we plan to dig more because we saw the outcome! We really thank God for this programme!”*



**Babhekile Khoza** joined a group this year. She says:

*“Being in the programme has taught me a lot of things and has revived me a lot. I have learnt a new method of fertilizing the garden using sustainable practices. I had an old lemon tree which had never produced anything ever since it was planted, but this year it produced fruit because I applied the new methods. When it rains, I collect the water so that I can use it to water my crops in my garden. My husband and I plant sweet potatoes and amadumbe in a huge field. We have about 200 free range chickens, and use a brooder cage to keep chicks so they can be protected.”*



**Abraham Masuku** joined Masiphumelele group after attending the Basic Life Skills Course this year. He applied what he had learned during the training. As a result, his family has more than enough to eat. He is looking forward to enlarging his garden to produce more vegetables to sell to his community.



**Evelin Buthelezi** who joined Siyaphambili group in 2023, is very happy to be a group member because she was longing to join ACAT, but the programme was not yet active in her zone. Before joining the ACAT programme, she was involved in vegetable production, but did not have as much success as the other G5 members did. After being trained at the Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her area earlier this year, her crops and vegetables are thriving and she is very happy.



**Babambile Dlamini** joined a group this year 2023. She plants different types of vegetables in her garden to feed her family and for sale. This has improved her life through healthy eating, and earning an income through selling veggies. We are looking forward to seeing a great improvement in her life as she continues to work with us.



**Makhosazane Maphumulo** joined Masiphumelele group in order to produce crops and vegetables for home and to sell in her community. She implemented what she learned, and was rewarded with a very good bean harvest which enabled her to sell the surplus to her neighbours. She says, *“Feed the soil, so that it will feed you in the future”.*

**Sibusiso Shezi** says there is a great change in his life since he joined a group a year ago. After completing training, he started to grow vegetables for his family, and now is selling them. His dream is to have an agri-business.





**Nomphumelelo Zwane** joined Ithemba group after attending the Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her area. She went home so encouraged that she immediately implemented what she learned from the course. She was interested in business, so she started a spaza shop at home, and seeing that people were supportive in her area, she started a poultry project to expand her business. She saw that her life was improving, so she joined a Savings and Loan Group. This has made a great impact in her family, because they can all see financial improvement. They always have fresh vegetables and fruit from the garden.



**Phumzile Ntuli** is so happy to be a member of Siyaphambili group. She says:

*"The way a vegetable garden is done in this organization, makes people eager to start their own gardens, even if they are not group members. People are influenced by seeing ACAT gardens. You get a nice crop from the first day, and because we use available inputs, it makes it easy for anyone to join".*



**Nothando Makhathini** of Simunye Group has made her dream come true as she is a business-minded person. Since attending ACAT's training, she has taken great initiative to start a business with her own personal experience. She makes and sells beadwork to the community and in town. People also hire her beadwork on special occasions. She says:

*"Now I have a better understanding of what is a business is, as well as simple book-keeping methods. I joined the programme when I had no knowledge of how I could stand up and do things for myself to improve my situation. Now I have been trained on savings, gardening and business."*

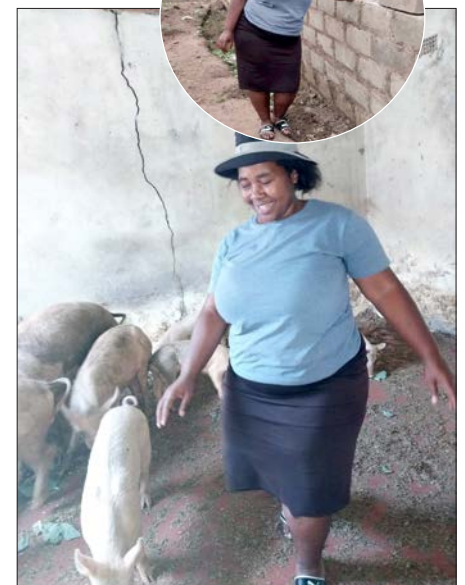


**Noziphlo Zulu** has become such a wonderful ambassador of the work of ACAT programme in Ntumeni. Before joining the programme, she had no idea that she could produce thriving crops and vegetables.

Now she has a big field of beans, potatoes and maize. She is so grateful that she is able to put plates of food on her table – something she said was impossible before joining the programme.



This new G5 member was influenced by other G5 members gardens. As a business-minded person, she quickly learned the basic business skills, and then started a piggery project through which she is able to provide food for her family and occasionally sell pigs to the market. Her business is expanding, and so she joined a Savings and Loans Group and borrowed money to buy building blocks to make pig sty in order to separate the pigs by age.





**Ntombikayise Zondi** from Thenjani, Vulindlela joined the programme in 2023. She says:

*"I was hopeless before joining the programme. Now I can't wait to implement what I've learned. I have a beautiful garden which feeds my family, and I am so happy to be saving some money because I no longer need to buy vegetables. My plan is to expand my garden so that I can sell my produce."*



**Kwanele Sokhela** joined in 2020 through the partnership programme via the Sweetwaters Praise Centre Partnership. Since then he has not looked back. He plants and sells to the public and earns a profit. He is thankful that he learned about bookkeeping. He is now assisting some members to form a Savings and Loan Group as he has seen the value in being part of one.

**Neli Zondi** of Shayamoya has been a part of the programme since 2017 and has been steadily growing. This year she started selling from her garden and is so happy that she now can make some money. She says being part of the programme helps her to keep fit and behaved since she does not need to be involved in things that do not help her to grow.

**Mbali Ngubane** of Inadi really enjoyed being part of the Basic Life Skills Training this year after she joined the programme. She is a health worker, so she enjoyed the health side of the training. She also enjoyed planting and has since started a beautiful garden. She now sells to the community, and wants to grow her garden to increase the profit from the sales she makes.



Part of the **Vulindlela Training team** hosts one day workshops where the members and the community are taught to plant, making floor polish and the like. These workshops usually generate great interest from the public because they see how beneficial this training is.



**Thembeke Mhlongo** says she just needed something to direct her towards a better life. She found this in the Basic Life Skills training. She started a garden where she and her family eat from, thus saving them money. She also now has rabbits, which she plans to sell as part of her income generating strategy together with selling different types of cakes which she bakes.

