



# ACAT's IMPACT

*Stories of transformed lives  
in KwaZulu-Natal*

January to June 2024

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










ACAT’s 46 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 this 6 month period 340 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. An additional 155 groups are being trained.

Our team conducted 12 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!

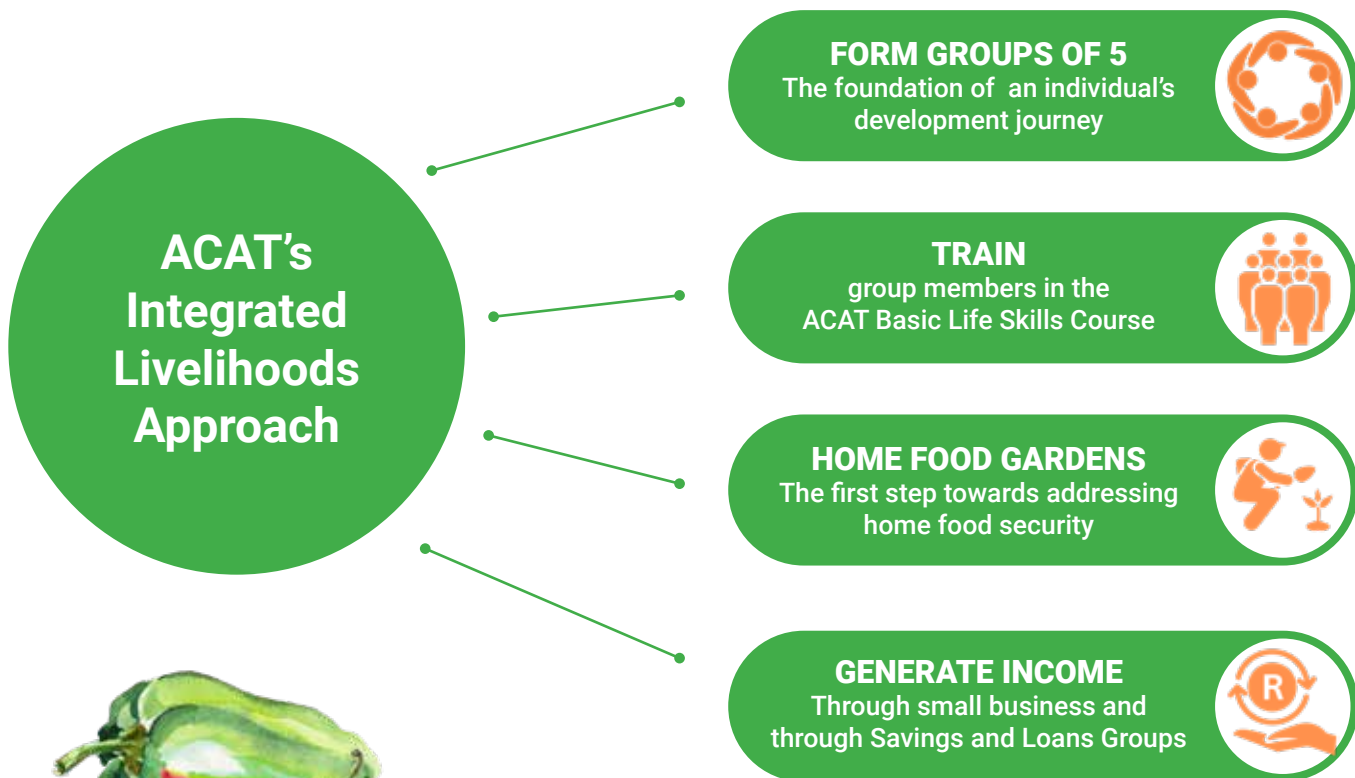
These are the areas of KwaZulu ACAT operates in :

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“ ...While most of my neighbours were appreciating my garden, I was duped into thinking that I could take pride in (just)giving them some of my produce. However, as time went on, one of our CVs reminded me that I need to think like an entrepreneur or else I will go down the drain. I used to save in a stokvel where the money is distributed among the members every December. But since hearing about ACAT’s method of saving for the future, I have joined a savings and loan group. My aim is to fight poverty and live a lifestyle that is simple but sustainable. I also want to expand my garden to allow me to supply vegetables locally. ”

# ACAT's approach



## Impact

January – June 2024

**340**

New group members trained through the Basic Life Skills Course.  
155 group members in progress.

**153**

New group members have already started vegetable gardens

**207**

New group members started income generating activities

**612**

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

- 55% females; 45% males; (0,16% other)



**Bongani Dlamini** joined the ACAT program in 2023 as he felt he wanted to increase his knowledge of planting. He says:

*"Before joining the programme I would buy vegetables from the shops. Now I plant and eat with my family. I also sell to the community. My life is now so much better than before although I still want to improve."*

He also explained that his family has become closer as they now work together. He dreams of selling his produce to big supermarkets like Boxer.



**Sphelele Hadebe** says that he enjoyed attending the YBLS training in 2023 and taking part in the career guidance day. He started his garden after attending the course, and says he is happy to be contributing to the food at home. His mother helps him with the gardening. He would like to plant more vegetables to then sell to the community.



**Phindile Mbhele** from the Simunye group joined the program in 2023. She says:

*"Before joining ACAT, I had a difficult home life and I lacked the knowledge and confidence to do what I am now able to do. My situation at home has improved because I have learned the skills to do proper book keeping which is helping my business grow. My aim is to join an Savings and Loans Group as I have seen the benefits from being a member of a stokvel".*

**Ntombifuthi Nxumalo** is a member of the Ulimo group, formed in 2023. She says:

*"I am so happy that I no longer buy vegetables from the shops because I now plant on my own vegetables. I now plan to start a business to support my family".*





**Agnes Mjayakho** is a member of the Sizakancane group. Following the BLS training she started a small garden which has grown bigger, and is now she is able to sell produce to the community. In addition to her vegetable business, Agnes has also started a sewing business, and purchased calves. She is a member of an SLG and the Area Implementing Committee.



**Nelisiwe Thwala** of Ulibolwethu group joined the program in 2021, with the desire to increase her knowledge in business and planting. She has since started her own business, which she reports has improved her financial situation. Nelisiwe has joined a SLG, and is now helping others in her community improve their knowledge.



**Xolisile Mthebu** joined ACAT in 2014 and is a Community Extension Officer (CEO.) She is also a member of an SLG, which she was able to borrow from in order to purchase a fridge. Her plan in the next two years is to start selling to big supermarkets.



**Xolisile Mbongwa** joined the ACAT group last year. She reports that it helped her to realise that she can make a living without being formally employed. She started a small garden, and then realised that she enjoyed selling. She now buys items such as clothes, blankets and running shoes which she sells to the community. Her dream is to grow her business until her name is well known.



**Mbovu Nene** from Loskop, is a second-generation group member. She saw how being able to provide for her family gave her mother a sense of worth, and thus she decided to join as well. Mbovu planted cabbages and other vegetables such as maize and potatoes which she sells to the community. Mbovu's mother sells broilers and now Mbovu is raising indigenous chickens which she plans to sell.



**Nhlanhla Nkala** joined the programme last year (2023), because he wanted to learn to be productive with his time. Despite feeling that he wouldn't be able to produce anything, he planted beans and sweet potatoes. After seeing his harvest however, he now feels inspired to plant more and expand his garden.



**Nathi Sithole** is an old member, but is still an inspiration to many. Not only does he feed his family from his garden, but he also sells his vegetables to the community. After selling three calves, he was able to buy a van, which he uses to sell his produce. He also supplies schools with vegetables.



**Thabile Dlamini** is a CV. She has been an inspiration to many people who have seen and learnt from her and have now started planting as well. She plants pumpkins, spinach, cabbages and potatoes which she uses to feed her family. She sells the surplus to the community.





This group is from the **Bhekumbani zone**. They are learning how to make liquid manure to encourage members to use to increase soil fertility in their gardens and fields. In these workshops knowledge is also shared on growing plants using sustainable practices.



This group from **Cabazini zone** gather together with the aim of working together and learning from each other about how to plant fruit trees. Each member was encouraged to have a garden at home. These G5 members had just finished their BLS training, and are looking forward to putting their learning into practice.



This group called **Bhekumbali 1**, gets together to discuss saving, and strategies for growing their businesses and the economy.

The group was formed following the members participation in the programme which helped them establish their businesses and build their homes.

They say that joining the programme has had such a positive impact in their lives and that of their children. They are all now part of the SLG, and saving money for their future.





The G5 members of Imbeka zone had a workshop on how to make "Vicks" and "Sta-Soft", with the aim of establishing their own businesses thereby earning an income. They were very happy to receive their BLS certificates following the training.



Sizakele Dlamini from the Mbokodo zone, Ethekwini, joined the Phaphamani Group in 2023 following her retirement. She attended Basic Life Skills Course which was held in her zone. She says:

*"The BLS course opened my eyes to the fact that I could produce my own vegetables. I now grow and sell vegetables that I used to buy! Through the sale of spinach to my neighbours, I earn approximately R800 per month. I have learnt how to make cough mixture which I also sell. This regular income has enabled me to save a little every month into my Savings and Loans group. I am saving to buy fencing materials, to meet the needs of my family and achieve my dreams!"*



Sizwe Mpungose, from the Amandlabasha G5 group, Inova zone Ethekwini, has started a thriving business. This chicken and egg business is keeping him so busy that he has hired a young man, Pendukani Shangase, to help him. Mpungose currently has 30 chicken layers from which he gets 10 - 11 trays of eggs a month. The eggs are sold for R80 per tray of 30, which are quickly sold due to all his weekly orders.







**Thandolwethu Tenza** is from the Highflats area, and has a small business selling chips and sweets. He says:

*"My love of business started after watching my grandmother growing and selling vegetables. I started my own business in 2023 using the savings from pocket money that his mother gave him for school."*



These three ladies are representatives of **Silwanendlala Savings and Loans Group** at Mhlabashana zone in Highflats. They joined the programme in 2020, and say:

*"We have one thing in common, the passion to fight poverty. We became group members with the desire to improve our lives, including home improvement and healthy lifestyle changes."*



This is **Funani Dzulisa** from Mhlabashana zone in Highflats. She joined the programme in 2020 in order to improve her farming methods to enable greater farm productivity. She says:

*"Look at my a amadumbe and maize crops. They have improved in quality since using the new farming techniques that I learned in the programme."*

**Nonjabulo Maphela** is from Gomane, Impendle. She had tried to start a business and maintain a garden, however her attempts had not been successful. Eventually, after hearing about ACAT from one of the G5's, she decided to join in the programme in 2023, with the hope of reviving some of her past agricultural ventures including vegetable production. Following the training, she says:

*"The knowledge I acquired from ACAT has been invaluable, and I applied it in my garden. Since then, I planted cabbage, beans, and strawberries in a section I walled off for her vegetable garden. My concern is water, even though I use grey water from baths and clothes/dishes to water my garden. I have been introduced to the Saving and Loan Group (SLG). The members around here began saving in May 2024 and I am excited to join this savings club. I want to use my savings towards my clothing business."*



**Thambalihle Mhlakwane** is a single woman, whose passion is clothing tailoring and design. She is very proficient and previously had an established business in Durban where she was even supplying her outfits out of the province. Her business unfortunately ended due to abuse within her marriage causing her to leave her business and relocate to Impendle. In Impendle she heard of the ACAT program from one of its group members in the Gomane Zone and in 2023, she participated in the field training.

As evidenced by her visible success, the training inspired her to reconsider her tailoring business. In addition, she planted a vegetable garden, citing the advantages of being able to harvest and sell extra produce to her neighbours. We are hoping that she will join the G5s and use her experience to help others who wish to pursue tailoring as a business and/or career. In the future, Mhlakwane wants to be self-sufficient and increase her business and clothing production. She reports that she has no regrets about working hard during her life, and that her objective is to contribute positively to the community. She also plans to join the savings club.





**Nomasotho Dlamini** is the daughter of the late Pastor Dlamini. She completed her matric in 2020, however due to a lack of financial support, she was unable to complete her tertiary studies. Then she became pregnant. She says:

*"I then decided that I wanted to make farming my occupation. The knowledge I got from attending a Youth Basic Life Skills training course gave me a kick-start to achieve my goals. I know that farming is not an easy venture and that I need to acquire more knowledge in this field. Following my training at an adult BLS course, I reinvested my child grant money and bought and planted 300 seedlings of cabbage. My goal is to supply some of the local shops in the area. I have completed some market research, and I have made progress with getting my produce into the stores. My dream is to acquire more land where I may actively work toward being a commercial farmer. My mother is a member of the savings club, and she is encouraging me to join the club as well."*

**Gugu Ncobo** wants to continue to maintain a vegetable garden and is making steady progress toward ensuring a sustainable garden. She says:

*"Previously I found maintaining a garden to be challenging because I worked alone. Now I am in the programme and socializing with others in it, I have the drive to keep going. My life and goals have taken a different turn since becoming a group member of ACAT in 2023. I lost a lot of time because of my lack of knowledge about potential business ideas prior to the training."*

Gugu also says:

*"The ACAT training has helped me to think like an entrepreneur and I now have big hopes for my future. From this garden, I has been able to make additional money, contributing to my income at home and I am planning to extend my garden after seeing this benefit. I welcomes the ACAT concept of saving and loans, although I currently save in a stokvel, I thinks that the ACAT model is preferable as it considers the future and unforeseen circumstances."*

Gugu's group of 7 members, which is currently being formalised, have agreed to start in July 2024.



**Lindiwe Mbambo** of Taylor's Halt has been a part of the programme for 3 years and during that time, she has greatly improved her house. A major change is her established vegetable garden which includes strawberries and amadumbe. She had never had a garden before. Within her group she learned how to make fabric softener which she sells. She says:

*"The ACAT training I received has helped me to raise my family's standard of living. I have been able to increase my income from the sales of softener, amadumbe and cabbage which makes about R1600 per cycle. I use this money to improve my house and save in my savings and loans group. I have witnessed how hard work does pay off. My family now has fresh vegetables and eats three meals a day. Prior to my involvement in ACAT and with training, we were only able to eat once or twice a day."*



**Nobuhle Mhlengu** of Taylor's Halt Area in the Khokhwane Zone had to overcome various obstacles to joining the ACAT group when her spouse expressed disapproval. She joined the group in 2020, without her husband's consent. She now reports that her husband has given her permission to engage in any activities that promote her personal and family's well-being after witnessing how much she is doing to improve their home and children. She says:

*"A woman told us that she couldn't believe that a garden could generate cash to add to her home capital. While most of my neighbours were appreciating my garden, I was duped into thinking that I could take pride in giving them some of my produce. However, as time went on, one of our CV in our zone reminded me that I need to think like an entrepreneur or else I will go down the drain. I used to save in a stokvel where the money is distributed among the members every December. But since hearing about ACAT's method of saving for the future, I have joined a savings and loan group. My aim is to fight poverty and live a lifestyle that is simple but sustainable. I also want to expand my garden to allow me to supply vegetables locally."*



**Nokuthula Zuma** of Taylor's Halt in Khokhwane zone has a dream to build a business which she can one day pass onto her children to continue. She had been running a tuck shop but without much success. When she joined ACAT in 2020, and attended the training she realised some of the mistakes she was making. Despite being illiterate she was able to grasp the training to improve her tuckshop business. She says:

*"I want to be focused and make my tuckshop grow into a store; I heard that I must take pride in what I do. I am not good in recording things but I have engaged my daughter to help me."*

Her daughter is now being supported and taught by one of the CVs in her zone on how to do basic business records with the hope of maintaining and increasing the business productivity. Following this they will be encouraged to start a savings club with the objective of saving money to grow their small enterprise.





**Vumani Mncube** is the son of Mr. Mncube of Taylor's Halt, Machobeni zone, who passed on earlier this year. This young man was coached by his father on how to be a productive person and farmer.

Vumani is ambitious and aspires to become a commercial farmer building on to the farm that his father left. He says he read the ACAT manual, and then started consulting the ACAT team who taught him new techniques. He has already expanded his father's farm, as the field where he planted cabbages is larger.

He has 50 layers, and harvests 50 eggs every day. Vumani explained that he buys a tray of thirty eggs from his egg production every month for his family, and that he has customers from within the community who make orders for his eggs throughout the month. Furthermore, his cabbages are being sold within the community by the tuckshops at a wholesale price.

The money from these sales has been a great motivator for him to continue with his business endeavours. Another motivator is watching his family happily enjoying his fresh vegetables and eggs. His goal is to grow his farm into a commercial farm providing produce to the local market.





**Andile Mthethwa** joined the ACAT programme in 2022. Following the ACAT skills course he was inspired to start his own garden with an aim of feeding his family. His garden however grew so well that he turned it into a business. Andile is now a member of a Saving and Loan group (SLG).

**Pastor Mdlalose**, from "Christian Faith Ministries" in Emondlo, poses with his church members. They are promoting the growing of gardens on church premises. With help they receive from Emondlo Implementing Committee, they have been able to grow a garden in their church from which they support their surrounding community through the donation of vegetables to families in need.



**Awethu, Sbhongakonke and Mpilo** are members of ACAT's collaboration with KNH. They live with their granny and work with her to sell the vegetables that she grows in the garden. They feel that their granny has taught them how to be successful. All three are a great help to their family.

**Letta Simelane** joined ACAT as a G5 member in 2022. She says: *"Before joining ACAT I had tried unsuccessfully to produce vegetables, and so I decided to start another business. Following my BLS training I am so grateful to report that I have learnt new skills which have helped me combine with my previous business of grass mat production. I now sell my produce locally."*



**Isaac Ndaba**, of Siya Vuka group, was retrenched in 2020 due to the COVID lockdown. He was unemployed with no purpose until he attended the ACAT Basic Life Skills training in 2022. During this training he was motivated to start a business of selling vegetables from his garden and smaller grocery items. He is now able to feed his family from his garden, and sell the surplus to his community.



**Sifiso Mdlalose**, a member of Siya Vuka group joined the programme in 2022. Following his training he started his own small vegetable garden. His love of farming has developed, and he has expanded his garden to allow him to sell healthy vegetables to his community all year round.



**Zinhle Gumede** from Zwelisha zone joined ACAT ILP programme in 2021. She joined the programme with the intention of learning business and gardening skills. She grows vegetables primarily to feed her family, but also sells the surplus to her neighbours. She uses a wheelbarrow to carry her produce around her neighbourhood when selling her vegetables. She is currently raising broiler chickens and when they are grown she intends to sell them to create additional income. She says:

*"I attended a BLS course where I acquired gardening and business knowledge. Now I am able to produce fresh vegetables for my family from my own garden. In addition, I earn more income by selling broilers. I save monthly in my local SLG and I plan to use my savings to improve my business."*



**Cebisile Nkosi** joined ACAT ILP programme in 2023. After her training she started her garden. Despite living in an area which doesn't have enough water for irrigation, she has practiced the grey water method to take care of her plants. She reports that her family are no longer starving, as they now always have access to healthy food.



**Zanele Nkwanyana** of the Salusiwe group in the Mvuzini zone, joined ACAT ILP programme in 2020, in order to acquire farming and business knowledge and skills.

Before joining ACAT she had tried to farm but struggled due to lack of knowledge.

After the Basic Life Skills training, she changed her planting methods following the new process she had been taught, and she was able to produce a healthy crop. She says:

*"Attending ACAT training course opened my eyes and gave me an insight. I now have learned how to improve soil fertility using organic manure. When my produce is ready I sell it to the community and use the money earned from these sales to stock my tuckshop where I sell items that are needed by the community."*



**Lindiwe Cebisa**, from the Hlomendlini zone in Izingolweni, is scouting for pests and diseases in her field of potatoes. She grows many potatoes to feed her family and then sells the surplus to the community members. She is grateful to have become an ACAT group member in 2022. She says the quality of her potatoes greatly improved after using the new farming techniques that she learnt from the workshops offered by the Izingolweni extension team.



This picture shows a **'sector group'** from the Hlomendlini zone in Izingolweni. This group joined the programme in 2022, and were fascinated by the concept of working together to fight poverty. In this picture they are weeding in the field of potatoes that they planted at the beginning of the planting season. They say they are excited to be members of the group, because they encourage each other through sharing ideas and saving some of their profits from their produce sales. Beside working in the sector, the members of this group have planted their own backyard gardens at their homesteads. The names of the members are as follows; Zithombile Cebisa, Zanele Mthembu, Ziningi Mdunjana, Beatrice Jama, Lindiwe Cebisa and Thokoza Shezi.



**Zimiphi Malunga** from the Hlomendlini zone in Izingolweni practices mixed farming. She is standing in her amadumbe and banana crops which she decided to plant due to the demand in the area. She says:

*"Some of my clients come as far as Izingolweni town to purchase my produce. Our group name says it all – "Hluzingqondo" which means to open your mind.*

*You see, some of the ACAT workshops I have attended have played a significant role in my life. I am now able to improve the condition of my homestead from both the savings and profits I receive from the sale of my harvest."*





These 3 ladies are doing something called "Lilima", where community members or neighbours come together to help to help each other farm without expecting payment. This is done in good spirits and promotes the spirit of "Ubuntu". The three ladies included in this picture are Ncamsile Ncama from Siya Phumelela G5, Balungile Cele from Senzokuhle G5 and Nokuthula Khawula from Sibasha group. They are planting sweet potato cuttings and they have been in the programme since 2017.

**Thkozile Shezi** is also a member of the Hluzingqondo group from the Izingolweni area. She was introduced to the programme by her neighbour when Thkozile asked her how she grew such excellent vegetables. Her neighbour invited her to attend one of the home food security workshops that were conducted in her zone and after attending the workshop ,Thkozile immediately looked for and found four people that she could start a G5 with. She is now able to pass on knowledge to other people about growing vegetables. Thkozile explains that she still remembers very clearly the month she joined ACAT, March 2023, which was a turning point in her life. She is now proud to boast about her success.



**Sibongile Ncama** from kaNdunu zone in Izingolweni joined the programme in 2016. She says she is glad to be a group member as she has learnt a great deal from the programme. Her initial aim in joining the group was to learn about growing vegetables. However, she reports that becoming a group member led her to Christ. Prior to being saved, she did not enjoy going to church, however now she has accepted the Lord as her personal Saviour.



G5 member **Doris Mbotho** from Izingolweni area grows maize and potatoes which she sells to the community. In spite of her age, Doris plants her field independently, only requiring assistance during harvesting. Learning about new agriculture techniques and the spirituality part of the programme is why she signed up, and this is what has been keeping her going as a group member since 2016. Her homestead is often used as an example of what a sustainable homestead looks like, during the exposure visits of new groups.



'Savings and loans' is one of the key components that keeps the passion burning in most groups.

In this picture, the SLG members from **Dlovinga zone** at Izingolweni, are carrying out their monthly activities of saving money, and/or taking loans, depending on their needs. The members of the SLG understand the benefits of saving for their future, rather than simply saving in a stokvel (most common in communities). The members of this group include Thembeni Mkhwanazi, Nompilo Mlambi and Norah Ncama.



**New group members** are excited and happy after receiving their certificates of attendance at the completion of the BLS. They say they are grateful to have been participants in the area training.

**Zandile Mazubane**, a G5 member from Izingolweni, has chosen to grow banana trees as it is a fruit that is in demand in the area. After studying the market and determining this, she took the initiative to plant and grow banana plants in order to meet the supply demand of her customers.



"Practice what you preach." Community volunteer **Zamani Gambushe** from the Godloza zone in Izingolweni, is preparing land for planting vegetables. Like other CV's, he works in the community, especially in his zone, to spread the gospel and to help community members overcome poverty. In these pictures Zamani is showing a deep trench gardening technique which he has used. This is a technique taught by ACAT in order to conserve moisture in areas affected by drought.

This '**sector group**' at **Mahlubini zone** in Izingolweni, joined the programme in 2022. This group works hard at making beadwork which is used by ladies in their traditional attires. The sector group meets every Wednesday to work together. In addition to the beading, they also sew dresses as well as plant together as a group.



**Amos Hlophe** joined the programme in 2019 as a member of the Ikhuba G5 group, in the Sqoqweni zone. He retired from his job years ago due to injuries sustained in a car accident. He says:

*"Even though I still go to the doctors, working in the garden helps me to remain active and gives me a purpose. I plant crops and vegetables which support my family through providing food for them, as well as an income from sales of the surplus. This feeling of success has encouraged me to become a "Community Volunteer" (CV) with the aim of helping other community members, who may also be sitting at home, without a purpose. I encourage them to start gardens and give themselves access to healthy fresh food."*



**Kate Chonco** joined the Intaba group in 2023. She reports that even though she is 70 years old, there is still much she can do to improve her life and that of her family. She works hard to produce vegetables in her garden which she gives to her family to eat, as well as selling to her community. She also raises pigs to sell for pork. The money from her sales helps to support her family as she is the only breadwinner.

**New group members** are trained how to make a deep trench in a workshop. A deep trench is a method of planting in which moisture is preserved. It is essential new members learn and understand the benefits of this method, as many areas in the rural communities do not have access to enough water to irrigate crops. Members are also taught how to make their own liquid manure, to improve their soil's fertility.





**Gugu Madlala** from Bombo Zone in Mzumbe has belonged to Zamokuhle group since 2016. She reported one of her reasons for joining the programme was to improve her quality of life after witnessing the improvement of other's lives around her after they had joined ACAT. She explained the main changes she saw was the establishment of vegetables gardens and the start-up of small businesses. At this point there is no-one formally employed, and her family are solely reliant on government grants.



**Nokuthula Duma** from Thuthuka group at Mzumbe joined the programme in order to start growing her own vegetables rather than buying them. She hoped to increase her knowledge and skills so that she will be able to have a business of her own, planting and selling vegetables. She now loves growing her vegetables despite challenges such as the monkeys destroying her plants. She is very happy that she learnt how to start a business and now, in addition to vegetables, also sells airtime and chips.



**Ntombifuthi Sithole and Ntombiza Maxoxo** from Mzumbe in the Nyonyana Zone, work in a 'sector group'. Following their BLS training, they were eager to get started and they used their savings to purchase some brush cutters to start a business.



**Thulisile Bhala** from Ndunge zone joined Inyanda group in 2019. She was keen to learn how to grow a larger crop of vegetables in order to supply the local schools after hearing about a shortage in the market causing the school principal to have to go to the city to buy supplies. She reported that the business workshops opened her mind to other opportunities, and she started a knitting and grass-mats making business. Her business is now doing so well that she is able to take care of her family from the proceeds. She plants 'amagceba' (a type of grass) that she uses to make sleeping mats. She also grows crops including maize and beans which her family eat, and she is able to sell to the community.



**Londiwe Cele**, of Zenkosi group joined the programme in 2017 with a desire to acquire knowledge and agricultural skills to grow crops on a bigger scale. Her dream was to supply the local market with her produce. She now grows a large number of potatoes which she packages and sells to the nearby supermarkets.

**Nomusa Cele** from Dingimbiza zone, Ubumbano group, joined in 2018 with an aim of generating an income, through the use of agriculture, to support her children. She now has a vegetable garden where she plants mealies and beans for her family's consumption and for sale.





**Yekeleni Mchunu** is a member of the G5 Sizakancane Group. She says that her vegetable garden helps her support her family as she is now able to sell the produce and buy what her family needs. She says:

*"I was very impressed when I heard about the programme, especially the fact that training is completely free, and that they are encouraged to share information amongst themselves and even to non-group members. I love the spiritual aspect of the programme. The bible I received when I became a new group member was the first bible that my family has owned and I treasure it."*



**Bongekile Ndima**, a group member from the Nkande zone in Nquthu, joined the programme in 2023. She says she joined because she was tired of buying vegetables from the market. She had asked another ACAT group member who she had seen was planting vegetables all year round to help her to start a vegetable garden. The G5 briefed her on how to plant, but also told her to join a group of 5 in order to get support from other group members. Bongekile then joined the Khabindlala group and started growing her own vegetables. Her garden is now doing so well that she is able to sell the surplus to the community. She is very proud of her achievement and feels so grateful to the group member who that influenced her to join. Besides growing vegetables, Bongekile is also enjoying the benefits of being a member of the savings and loans group, where she saves her profits and then takes out loans to upgrade her homestead.



**Mpumelelo Buthelezi** is a 'community volunteer' (CV) from the Machanca zone in Nquthu, who is leading by example. She grows enough vegetables to feed her family as well as to sell to the community. Her garden is so impressive that most garden practicals for the programme are conducted in her garden. She receives much support from her family members who help her with her vegetables and other crops. Mpumelelo also has a thriving baking business.



A "community volunteer" (CV) **Zama Nkosi** from Mathambo zone at Nquthu area, joined the programme in 2020 and is leading by example. Zama grows and sells vegetables throughout the year. Besides the vegetable garden, she also runs a tuck shop business. She lives in a small community of about 1000 people who are predominantly maize farmers. She has noted that many young people do not offer support to their parents with the farm work, however Zama is different from her peers. She was trained at ACAT to be a Community Volunteer (CV) and now works in her community as 'an agent of change' to support and develop it, using different methods taught by the programme.



This boy is from **Nquthu**. He has a passion for growing vegetables and he reports that he always works alongside his grandmother in their garden. When asked what does he wants to become when he finishes school, he always says that he wants to be an agriculturist, and that he wishes to own a big farm where he can grow his farming business.





These photographs were taken during a **workshop on how to make a deep trench**. The group members were so excited to learn this way of planting because in their area they experience water shortages. Each member was given an opportunity to plant some seedlings. The children too learn from the more experienced ones.



**Phindile Ntshangase** joined ACAT in 2023; her groups name is Sikhulanathi. She attended the area workshops and received training which motivated her to start planting her own garden. Now she grows and sells spinach and cabbage to her neighbours. In addition to the vegetables, she also sells sweets and chips. She says she is very grateful to ACAT for training her in how to grow crops and vegetables using sustainable practices and encouraging her to start a small business. Her dream is to become a successful business woman.



**Linden Zulu** joined the ACAT programme in 2023. After receiving lessons from ACAT, she changed the way they eat at home. She has now trained her children in healthy living. She plants fields of maize and pumpkins for her family, and sells the surplus. She has learned how to make pumpkin juice for her family too. Her family is now enjoying healthy food from her own garden. She also bakes and sells cakes as well as raising broilers to sell. She says:

*"Joining this programme has opened my mind. Now I am able to feed my family from my own garden."*



**Minenhle Xulu** joined the ACAT program in 2021; his group name is Kuyenzeka. He joined in order learn agricultural skills and move him out of a life of poverty. Now he grows spinach and cabbage which he sells. He also plants a big fields of potatoes during potato season. He harvests and sells them to his neighbors and to the street vendors. This has improved his quality of life. He says:

*"I was able to grow such a crop as result of all the knowledge I gained during the one-week training in the area."*

**Insikayethu Sector Group** was formed in 2023 with the aim of growing mushrooms to sell. The group members grow and sell mushrooms to the street vendors and within their community. Through their meetings they teach each other how to make fruit mince cakes and carrot cakes. They use firewood instead of an oven. With the help of Mr Mdlovu (also known in the area as "Mr fruit trees") they planted fruit trees in their homesteads, from which they now produce fresh fruit juice.

**Nonhlanhla Mazibuko** joined Thathunyawo group in 2019 and after attending different workshops. She started planting crops and vegetables in her area, but experienced difficulties and thus moved to another zone. In her new zone, she continued to plant fields of pumpkins, maize and other vegetables. She was able to sell her pumpkin harvest and to make pumpkin juice for her family. Through her increased income, she has invested in livestock and she now has 10 sheep which she aims to sell.



**Thandeka Mdlalose** joined the ACAT programme in 2022. The name of her group is Siyabonga. Prior to joining ACAT she was unemployed and frustrated with having nothing to engage her. One of the G5 members invited her to attend the workshop on how to start a small business. After attending the business training, she was inspired to start a hairdressing business. This business has grown and the female staff working at the nearby hospital use her salon. She aspires to become a prominent businesswoman.





Following the completion of the BLS course, various workshops are organised for group members. The members chose themselves what they would like to learn, for example, in this picture they are learning how to plant a fruit tree. This workshop is extremely helpful as many group members do not realise that you can grow produce other than vegetables, such as fruit trees, at their homesteads.

**Babhekile Khoza**, from the Umthombongashi G5 in the Ehlabathini Zone, joined the programme in 2023. She says:

*"Joining the programme has helped me significantly. I now succeed in everything I do. I thank God for my success and that my husband and I work together. I run a sewing business while my husband focuses more on their agricultural business, planting large fields of white and yellow maize as well as sweet potatoes, amadumbe, peanuts, jugo beans, sorghum and pumpkins. I use my yellow maize to feed my chickens. This year we harvested 20x20 liters of beans! I also have another business selling broiler chickens. The main thing that motivates me to work hard is that I produce my food, and that I don't spend a lot of money on groceries. I don't have to buy most of the food".*



**Khululiwe** joined the ACAT programme in 2021 after attending a BLS course. She developed a passion of helping the community and started the process of becoming a 'Community Volunteer (CV)'. She says:

*"I desire to see my neighbors poverty stricken lives changed. After attending a Basic Life Skills course I planted a garden using the deep trench method. From this I was able to feed my family and earn an income through sales of the surplus produce. I also started another business where I sold health products. It failed because people took products from me on credit.*

*I then started an agricultural business and requested a place in the community to plant amadumbe because my homestead was not suitable. This business has been successful and I now sell amadumbe at a market in 20 litre buckets for R180 a bucket. People like to buy them in bulk, and I can sell 20 buckets on one day. I now have plans to expand my garden to allow for increased production. I have also started selling eggs.*

*Through this ACAT programme I feel spiritually renewed and I understand the word of God better. My wish is that everyone could have their eyes opened and their lives transformed!"*

**Mduduzi Mthembu** joined the Umthombongashi group in Ehlabathini in 2023 after losing his job. He says:

*"Life was not easy. I had to move back home and find a way to earn an income to support my family. Being a member of the G5 has been very helpful in my life because of the lessons I received on the BLS course. I felt my eyes were opened to the importance of life. There are certain things that we look down on that are keys to human life. After joining the programme, I started a small business at home, selling electricity and airtime and other basic products like bread, sugar, salt and candles. My business has been very useful to the neighbours, because we live far away from town any local tuck shops. I enjoy planting and Basic Life Skills training has helped me to grow strong produce. I wish to meet other people similar to me so that we can form a co-operative which will be useful to, and improve our village."*



**Siyamukela Ncanana** loves to grow vegetables and fruit trees so that his family can stay healthy. He says when he grows up he wants to be a farmer.



**Ziyanda Zondo**, is is extremely keen on farming. He is shown in his plot where he practices what he learns from his mother who is a G5 member. When he grows up he wants to become a farmer.



**Alda Majola** joined Masakhane G5 in 2023, in order to improve her quality of life. She likes the programme so much that she encourages other members of the community to join the programme. She is an active member of the group helping the other members, and she promotes vegetable garden establishment within her zone. She has realised the importance of taking care of her garden, and how this improves the nutrition within her family.

**Ntombenhle Gumede** joined Siyaphambili group in 2023 to gain knowledge in farming to lift her out of poverty. She was influenced by G5 members who were already benefiting from the ACAT training programmes. Before joining the group she tried unsuccessfully to farm by herself. Now she is planting big fields of maize, and has a thriving vegetable garden in which she plants spinach, cabbage, carrots, beetroot and lettuce for her family's consumption. After attending the basic business skills workshop in the area, she started selling the surplus to make an income. She also raises piglets to sell and sells pork to add to her income. Her dream is to become a successful businesswoman.



**Thandi Chili** joined the ACAT program in 2013. She is passionate about beadwork and runs a profitable business where she makes and sells items that her community needs.

**Nene Zungu** is a member of the Bambanani group who joined the ACAT program in 2013. She grows chilies, cabbage, spinach, green peppers and other vegetables. She also makes and sells grass mats to her neighbours. She gets orders from people who live in the city who buy her products in bulk and then sells them in town. Her business is doing very well.



**Doreen Khoza** joined Siphamandla group in 2022. Her businesses include sewing and a tuck shop. She also grows and sells vegetables, keeping some for her family's consumption. Her business is doing very well. Her sewing business includes making and selling traditional attire and she currently has many orders. She also rents the attire to people for their special occasions. Doreen's tuckshop is supported by the local people as she demonstrates good customer relations and business skills. She saves money in the local SLG.







**Thandokuhle Thwala** is a CV in Shayamoya. He is a very active community member as he moves around helping those in the programme who need help. He plants a variety of vegetables which he consumes with his family, and sells the surplus to the community supplementing his income.



**Nokuthula Khanyile** from the Emdwebu Zone joined ACAT last year and already reports her life has changed. She now plants vegetables and maize and made R480 from selling her spinach and cabbage. The programme has shown her that she can make money from her garden and she is very motivated. She has decided to become a community volunteer and has started attending the workshops.

This new group from Emdwebu are always looking for new skills that can add value to their lives. In this picture they have just learnt to make fabric softener. This they sell to the community members thus providing them with an income.



**Manqoba Duma** is a CV in the Shayamoya Zone and is a member of the Izethembiso Group. He joined the programme 4 years ago. His garden is exemplary. He plants for his own consumption and sells the surplus. He is very passionate about the programme, and always encourages people to see the value of the training.



**Sthembile Zungu** is the ZF in Shayamoya. Her dedication has seen the zone develop and improve as there are many people who now benefit from the programme. She has a garden which feeds her family and also provides an income from surplus produce sold. She reports that sales from potatoes help her a great deal financially. She likes to teach others from her garden.



**Smangele Langa** is part of the Vukuzenzele Group from Emdwebu, Okhahlamba. She joined the programme last year and is already starting to see the benefits. Her garden now provides her with fresh vegetables which are good for the health of her family. She is planning to increase her garden so that she can start selling produce.



Prior to joining ACAT, **Agatha Mkhize** was struggling to purchase food for her family. She says:  
*"When I joined the programme, I did not have much hope. I was happy to learn the truth about Jesus Christ. And then I also enjoyed learning about how to eat properly with nutrition. I have now started my own garden which produces fresh vegetables, which is good for my health. I hope to be able to start selling my vegetables soon."*



**Nelisiwe Sithole** says:  
*"I have always been interested in business, but struggled because I did not know about bookkeeping. After joining the ACAT programme, I learnt about bookkeeping and I am already starting to see the difference in my business. My tuck-shop is starting to grow. I also sew pillow-cases and bed covers by hand to sell to the community. I really feel my businesses are now going to expand."*

**Nonhlanhla Hlongwane** of the Chagwe Zone in Vulindlela, believed that she could not produce good quality vegetables in her garden. Then she heard about the ACAT BLS training. After attending it she started her own small garden. She is very happy with the progress and is already thinking of how to expand the garden in order to start selling her produce.



Before **Philile Ndlovu** joined ACAT, he was unemployed and struggling to buy food due to the expense of it. She says:  
*"Being part of the ACAT programme has restored my dignity as I now know that I can improve my life. I have started planting produce and I know that it will be a success because I am following the guidelines I learnt at the training."*



**Ndumiso Sokhela** says:  
*"The ACAT programme gives me the opportunity to do what I like. All I needed was the skill and knowledge to do it the right way. After being part of the ACAT BLS training, I prepared the vegetable beds and started planting. I work with my friends, and I want to encourage them to have their own gardens too."*

Group member **Maneli Shabalala** says:

*"I have started to see the benefits of being part of the programme. I now sell my vegetables to the local community. I have also invested in livestock which I am looking forward to turning into a business. I am so grateful for the programme, because it has made me realize that I can create a good life, without depending on other people."*



*"I am so grateful for the programme, because it has made me realize that I can create a good life, without depending on other people."*

