

Impact of ACAT's Programme on Children and Youth – the next generation



January to December 2024



Impact of poverty on youth

Poverty in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, is a serious issue, particularly affecting children. The province has some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the country, contributing to a cycle of hardship for many families.

Key factors influencing poverty in KwaZulu-Natal

- **Historical Legacy** – Apartheid-era policies led to land dispossession and limited infrastructure development, leaving rural communities underdeveloped.
- **Unemployment and Low Incomes** – Many rural residents rely on subsistence farming, informal labour, or government social grants, as formal employment opportunities are scarce. Many people struggle to find stable jobs, leading to financial insecurity.
- **Low Education Levels** – Limited access to quality education reduces opportunities for better employment.
- **Limited Infrastructure and Services** – Poor roads, lack of electricity, inadequate healthcare, and insufficient schooling hinder development and economic growth.
- **Climate and Environmental Challenges** – Floods, droughts, soil degradation, and climate change impact agricultural productivity, further worsening food insecurity.
- **Migration and Urbanisation** – Many young people migrate to urban areas in search of better schooling and jobs, leaving behind aging populations with limited capacity for economic activity.

Effects on Children

- **Malnutrition** – Many children suffer from hunger and stunted growth due to food insecurity. Children in rural areas experience higher stunting rates (29%) than those in urban settings (26%).
- **Lack of Education** – Poverty forces children to drop out of school to work or care for siblings.
- **Poor Health** – Limited access to healthcare leads to higher rates of illness and mortality.
- **Child Exploitation** – Children are vulnerable to abuse, child labor, and even trafficking.
- **Psychological Impact** – Growing up in poverty increases stress, anxiety, and emotional trauma.

Solutions

Efforts to reduce rural poverty in KwaZulu-Natal include government social grants, agricultural and skills development programmes, and infrastructure projects. However, sustainable solutions require long-term investment in education, land reform, and job creation.

We believe that poverty in KwaZulu-Natal is a deep-rooted issue, but with sustained efforts, children's lives can be improved through better social policies and community-driven initiatives such as ACAT. We trust that this report gives a glimpse of the rural potential...



Lubanzi (10) and her sister **Siyakholwa (8)** display their beadwork together with their granny, **Siphindle Mazibuko**, who has been a member of the ACAT programme in eThekweni since 2006. Their granny says that these sisters had the privilege of growing up in a *"home which practices sustainable activities."*

Both Lubanzi and Siyakholwa are in the KNH programme, and have benefitted from the ACAT programme, by having fresh vegetables to eat produced from granny's vegetable garden. Granny also purchased a jojo tank with the money from her Savings and Loans Group. This has really benefitted her grandchildren and the entire family.

The girls help sort out beads for Siphindle's beadwork. They help her by cleaning the yard, washing dishes and acting as messengers to get things from the nearby tuckshop. Both sisters enjoy schooling where their progress is good, and they attend Sunday school at their family local church.

"In real life things don't just come your way. Since I joined ACAT I have learned that when you use your hands, you are able to chase away starvation. I will always be grateful for all that ACAT has trained me in" says granny Mazibuko."

Sindiswa Mthiya (14) stays with her mother, sister and little brother in eThekweni. She attended a Youth Basic Life Skills (YBLS) course this year and says she gained a lot of knowledge especially on business and gardening. She was so happy to receive seeds after training. Although they do not have fencing to protect the seeds, Sindiswa still planted them, and together with her mother used scrap materials to protect the seeds from goats. This season Sindiswa and her mother enjoyed eating fresh cabbage and spinach from their plot. She also helps her mother in her snack business which she runs from home.

Sindiswa performs well at school – she likes English and Natural Science. She said she would love to become a doctor. During the YBLS training she participated in the Career Guidance which helped her confirm her wishes to be a doctor. She likes to listen to music, perform traditional dance with her friends and play netball. She likes reading especially the bible she received from the YBLS training. She goes to church with her family members.

"Joining the ACAT programme changed my thinking completely. I have learned that self-help programmes enabled me to work hard to do things to sustain my family" – Annacleta, Sindiswa's mother.





Celukuthula Gwala (8) is always keen to help his mother do her craft work as part of their small family business. He lives with his mother in eThekweni, and his father works in town. Even though he is a young, shy boy Celukuthula helps his mother as a messenger, and to water the plants in their garden.

His mother joined the ACAT programme in 2021 after being trained in Basic Life Skills. It took her a long time to start a garden, but eventually she started one.

The ACAT team serving G5 members in the area realised the effort she had made to clear the surrounding bushes to start her garden, so they helped her fence her garden. Since then she has never stopped producing vegetables. Celukuthula has benefitted a lot from having fresh vegetables produced at home. He is healthy, well looked after and doing Grade 3.

He likes Maths and IsiZulu. His favourite school teacher is Mrs Ngcobo. He also loves to play soccer and traditional games with his friends.

Celukuthula's mother remarks...

"I am so very thankful to be part of ACAT in my zone. Having a proper fence for my garden was such a motivation, and since then I have seen the value of having the vegetable garden to feed my family. It's such a good feeling to produce my own fresh vegetables. Now I am also a member of a Savings and Loans Group and I enjoy the interest that I make from it".



Mandisa Phofu is 16 and lives with her mother, grandmother, uncle, and siblings. She benefited from attending the YBLS course, by receiving seed packs and now being able to working with her mother, an active G5 member, to grow and harvest crops. Mandisa is dedicated, confident, and diligent in her home duties, serving as a positive role model for her family and peers.

At home, Mandisa helps with cooking, cleaning, and washing dishes. In her free time, she enjoys watching TV, listening to music, and playing netball with friends. At school, Mandisa excels in her studies, particularly in Maths and Physics, and aims to become a Pathologist. Her favorite teacher, Miss Khumalo, motivates her. Mandisa's mother says,

"Thank you for inspiring and motivating us to do more, and to practically implement what ACAT has trained us over the past few years. I have established my garden to supply vegetables for my family, and to sell to neighbours. I enjoy growing tomatoes very much and have learned to save money in the Savings and Loans Group."





2153

Anele Ntenza from Highflats has had such a wonderful privilege of growing up in a home where he has been exposed to the ACAT programme. His aunty, Ntombifikile, is involved in implementing what they have learned from ACAT since she joined in 2017.

Anele assists his granny and aunty in gardening where they produce enough seasonally to sell. Anele attended the YBLS course and says he learned a lot from the course, especially regarding career choices. He would love to become a Hotel Manager, as his favourite subject at school is tourism.

He looks after the goats, feeds the dogs and pigs, and sells vegetables to their neighbours. He is very committed in doing his home duties. His favourite sport is soccer – he also enjoys watching soccer and listening to music.

“As a family we are so thankful for all the encouragement and training received from ACAT and through the YBLS which assists in building capacity, hope and confidence in our children. And they copy our sustainable practices all the time” – Ntombifikile Ntenza



Khulasande Silangwe (14) attended the YBLS in 2023. He is from a family that practices sustainable ways of self-help. He participates in gardening and looking after goats and cows. He also helps his mother and his father when they plough the fields. He acts as a messenger when his parents need something, and he always runs with great joy. Khulasande is an example to other children and his younger cousins (*seen on the picture*). When the harvest is ready, he helps take vegetables from the fields to sell to local customers. He loves playing soccer and watching sport on TV.

“Practicing what ACAT has trained us in, has drawn our kid’s interest to happily copy what we do. Producing our own vegetables enables us to feed our family nutritious food and to save some money in the Savings and Loans Group. Our kids will go a long way with what they have benefitted from us as parents” – Khulasande’s parents.



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These two sisters **Asanda** (16) and **Yanelisa Damayi** (15) both had the privilege of attending the YBLS in 2024. They said they enjoyed the gardening and career guidance lessons the most. Their performance at school is very good – Asanda likes Maths and Life Science, while Yanelisa likes English and Life Science. Yanelisa would love to become a teacher, and Asanda would like to be a Doctor. They were so excited to get seeds from the course. Their grandmother helped them start gardening in her neighbour’s garden because her yard was not suitable. And now the girls help weed, and collect water, water their plants and sell vegetables to their neighbours. Their grandmother remarks,

“You will never go hungry when you use the small piece of land you have for vegetable production. I am so grateful for my neighbour who allowed me to use his land. My grandchildren are a blessing, they are always willing to assist me during gardening. This year I was able to sell cabbages and spinach and made R3000 cash.”



Siyamthanda Sosibo, who is 17, attended YBLS in July 2021. He benefitted from the entire course, but enjoyed the Career Guidance and gardening lessons the most. He helps his granny with gardening, and helping fetch and feed the cows. This year they planted vegetables and sold the surplus to neighbours. Siyamthanda is now doing Grade 11. His favourite subjects are Maths and Physics. He would love to become a doctor because he loves helping people. He is very sporty, and he plays soccer with his friends at a local soccer field, but he never neglects to assist granny at home.

Siyamthanda's granny says "I don't have the strength to do all home activities as I used to, but my grandson is so helpful, from gardening, fetching cows and being out in the fields helps me a lot. Thanks to ACAT for allowing him to be part of YBLS. He came home very happy to share what he learned from YBLS. I am so happy that I am able to sustain my family and have saved a lot of money by growing and selling vegetables."

Ayabonga Sikhosana (18) has been exposed to ACAT activities around his home since he was very young and has benefited from the gardening skills his mother learned from ACAT. He enjoyed the seeds he received from YBLS and when they were ready, they harvested some, and sold the rest to their neighbours. This season they have planted maize hoping for good crop. His mother says:

"Since I joined ACAT, I have seen great improvement around my homestead. By doing what ACAT taught me is bearing fruit. I am able to sustain my family even though I am single. I am blessed to be a Community Volunteer, so I am able to help my neighbours to join the ACAT programme".



Cousins **Amanda** (16) and **Aphile** (15) Duma live with their grandmother in the Highflats area. They both attended YBLS this year and planted the seeds they received at the course and had a good harvest. At home they cook and wash clothes, clean the house and wash the dishes. They spend their spare time listening to music, watching TV, playing netball and doing Zulu dances. Their mother, Dolly, who lives in Durban says,

"I am so thankful for the opportunities ACAT has to reach out to our children. They are showing great interest in practicing what they were taught at YBLS.."



Thando Makhanya (14) lives with her mother, siblings and her granny who has been in the ACAT programme since 2019. Thando and her mother have taken the garden over from their granny since her health is not as strong as it was before. Thando credits her granny for teaching them her agricultural skills so that the whole family benefits. Thando is a very active, keen child. She helps her granny plant potatoes, and with washing and cooking. She is very confident she will pass Grade 9 and her favourite subjects are Maths and Technology. She really enjoyed being part of the YBLS and was most interested in Career Guidance and Basic Business Principles. She would love to become a nurse when she finishes school. Granny says,

"I really hope my children and grandchildren will carry on implementing what I started when joined ACAT. It is very beneficial to use ground to grow your own vegetables and you save a lot of cash while you feed your family with fresh vegetables".





Mandy Mthembu (16) lives with her mother, grandmother, sister, and other siblings. She attended YBLS in 2021 and was grateful for the opportunity, learning *"spiritual truths and Career Guidance."* At home, Mandy helps with fetching water for the household and the chickens. Her mother and grandmother generate income from their broiler business, and Mandy enjoys looking after the chickens and cleaning their house. In her leisure time, she enjoys singing and watching TV. Mandy is currently in Grade 11, and is preparing to reduce her household duties to focus on her studies as matric requires significant time and effort. Her mother remarks,

"We are so thankful that the ACAT programme does not only care for adults, but our kids as well – they are the future. My daughters were so motivated to be part of the YBLS. I am now able to sustain my family with the income I make from selling chickens. This season I have raised 100 broilers which will be sold before Christmas."



Amanda Majola (13) and her cousins are among the children benefiting from a **sector group started by G5 members.** With support from the headman and chief, they were given land to start gardens that serve multiple families in the ACAT programme. This season, they are expecting a good potato harvest. Amanda and her cousin assist with gardening, especially on weekends, and she has learned the importance of having fresh vegetables for good health. At home, Amanda helps by fetching water, cleaning the house, and assisting with the sector group, including weeding and harvesting vegetables when they're ready. Amanda also attended YBLS, where she was particularly motivated by the Career Guidance sessions, which helped her confidently decide she wants to become a doctor. She is committed to doing her home chores diligently. Her mother says,

"Having our children next to us when doing sustainable practices gives us hope that when we grow older they will continue to do the same and sustain themselves as we do."

3127



Okuhle Ndadane (14) lives with her grandmother, mother, and siblings. She has benefited greatly from her grandmother's hard work in turning their homestead into a sustainable one since joining ACAT. Okuhle has learned a lot from her grandmother, and helps by weeding, watering plants, and picking vegetables when they are ready. She also cleans and prepares them for cooking. During planting season, she assists her granny in planting spinach, potatoes, and cabbages, which are now ready to eat and sell. Her grandmother sells the vegetables in town, and Okuhle sometimes accompanies her.



Currently in Grade 7, Okuhle's favorite subjects are Natural Science and Isi-zulu. She plans to progress to Grade 8 next year and hopes to attend YBLS training. In her free time, Okuhle enjoys singing, watching TV, reading, and playing netball. She also attends Sunday school and enjoys drama. She dreams of becoming an actress when she finishes school. Her granny says,

"I have come a long way with ACAT. I have seen benefits to be in the ACAT programme, I have learned to be independent. I grasped the basic business ideas which sustain my family and I have taught my children and grandchildren."



Mrs. Mkhize joined the ACAT programme in 2021 initially being uninterested in agriculture. She was encouraged by the Zone Facilitator to start a garden, and now she is grateful for their persistence. She enjoys the vegetables she grows, which help feed her family. This season, her potato crop has been successful, and she plants seasonally since joining ACAT. Through the programme, her family has adopted healthier eating habits and she says they never go hungry. Ngidi **Swelihle**, her 12-year-old son, has shown great interest in helping his mother with gardening. He assists by fetching water for both the household and the garden, and enjoys working with his siblings and parents and has started saving! (right)



3158

Olwethu Shoji's mother, Mrs. Gwala, happily shares how when she was introduced to the ACAT programme she felt overwhelmed, but was very appreciative and interested. She realized that her existing craft business could benefit from learning about basic business practices, especially in terms of record-keeping. Having been part of the programme, she feels confident that her business will continue to improve.

At home, **Olwethu** is very supportive, assisting his mother with her craft work by sorting beads. His father also helps when he is off from work, and the craft business has become a family activity.

Olwethu also helps look after goats and poultry. In his spare time, he enjoys visiting friends, playing soccer, and watching TV, with his favorite team being Kaizer Chiefs.



Noluthando Tshozi is 17 and lives in Mophela. She enjoyed the career guidance during YBLS, which helped her decide that she wants to become a teacher in the future. At home, she assists her mother with cooking and cleaning, showing a strong commitment to her household responsibilities. She lives with her single mother and six siblings, and the loss of her father has been a challenge for the family. Noluthando has also started a hairdressing business and used some income to buy a hairdryer. The basic business lessons from YBLS taught her how to keep records of her earnings, allowing her to buy her own clothes and cosmetics. In her community, Noluthando leads a young girls' group, where they practice Zulu dance and attend the reed dance ceremony. Her friendly and committed leadership is appreciated by the community.

Sbonokuhle Magwanyana was excited to join YBLS and was pleasantly surprised by what he learned. After returning from the training, he started his own vegetable garden, using scraps like netting and metal for fencing. He received seed packs from YBLS and began planting with great enthusiasm. Despite being busy with his Matric studies, he enjoyed his first harvest, which his mother and siblings also appreciated. Sbonokuhle found the Career Guidance lessons particularly helpful, and now he is confident about his future career aspirations of becoming an electrical engineer.

In his free time, Sbonokuhle enjoys listening to music and playing soccer. His mother shared her joy about how the whole family has benefitted from his garden, saving money on vegetables. Looking ahead, Sbonokuhle hopes to improve his garden by adding proper fencing.





Sithembayena Shibe (6) lives with his grandmother, who has been part of the ACAT programme since 2012. The ACAT activities have benefitted the family, particularly through gardening and a sewing business. This year, they had a good harvest of beans and cabbage, and therefore were able to sell the surplus to neighbours. Despite his young age, Sithembayena helps her grandmother with gardening and runs errands to the local store. At school, Sithembayena enjoys Maths and English. In his spare time, he likes watching TV and playing soccer with friends. His grandmother assists him with his reading so that he improves his skills. She says,

"Self-help programmes have taught me to be self-sufficient and independent in doing my sewing business, and I save money by not buying vegetables. My business helps me take care of my children and grandchildren. I am always grateful by the encouragement I receive from the ACAT team".

3185



Zenkosi Mkhize (9) lives with his grandmother, Sibahle Mkhize, a G5 member of the ACAT programme. He helps his grandmother with gardening and runs errands for her. This season, they planted maize, beans, and onions.

Zenkosi is doing well at school, and his grandmother, a retired teacher, ensures he gets help with his reading and homework. She has never received any complaints from his teachers about his performance.



2908



Bandile Jali (9) lives with her grandfather, grandmother, mother, and uncle. She is fortunate to be raised by grandparents who are part of the ACAT sustainable program, which has helped improve their homestead.

At home, Bandile and her siblings assist their grandmother by running errands, fetching water, and bringing compost during planting. They also enjoy picking fresh fruits, such as mangoes and peaches, which their grandparents planted.

At school, Bandile is performing well and showing great progress. Her favourite subjects are Maths and isiZulu. In her spare time, Bandile enjoys watching TV, playing with friends, and occasionally doing Zulu dance. Her mother says,

"I am so thankful for all that ACAT has taught us.
If you practice it, it bears fruit
and helps transform your homestead."

Impact: 890 teenagers empowered through Courses!

During 2024, ACAT completed its programme to take its Youth Basic Life Skills courses to the teenagers in the 18 communities in which we operate. The impact has been astounding! We trained 890 teenagers! Lessons included mindset, family relationships, health and sexuality, career choices, how to establish a vegetable garden, basic business skills and the power of saving. This year also saw a strengthening of our partnership with Zoe-Life, as we piloted a Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) training in two areas. The positive feedback from the Area Implementing Committees has led to a strategic decision to expand this initiative and roll it out across all 18 areas in 2025, further enhancing the programme's holistic approach to youth empowerment and well-being.



Impact of youth training to 890 teenagers



890 Teenagers attended ACAT's Youth Basic Skills Courses
14,8 average age of participants

43% male 57% female

