

“It is my dream that Lonwabo won’t end up in the backyard – my prayer is that it will be out there for people to see it. Then my dream will be fulfilled” Thandeka, January 2017



Proposal: Lonwabo: A Special Need for Special People

CREATING OPPORTUNITY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN



Introducing Lonwabo Special Needs Centre

Lonwabo Special Needs Centre in Mfuleni, near Cape Town, is managed by Principal Thandeka Mafila. Thandeka embarked on her calling to care for, and educate, special needs children after hearing an inspirational radio interview with Lindela in Khayelitsha in 2008. Lindela's plea for someone to reach out and help special needs children in Mfuleni touched Thandeka's heart – it was her defining moment (see appendix for Thandeka's story).

Lonwabo Special Needs Centre has grown into a facility that lovingly cares for 37 children between 0 and 18 years of age. It is one of the very few centres of its kind, providing essential support to parents and children with special needs living in the poverty-stricken communities surrounding Mfuleni. As a result, the demand for places is very high.

The Centre is currently located behind the Mafila's home. Insufficient space and increasingly stringent health regulations make it difficult for Thandeka to meet the regulatory requirements for the centre to be registered.

It is time for change.

THE OPPORTUNITY

2018 will mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Lonwabo Special Needs Centre. Starting Chance is working to acquire a large piece of land in Mfuleni on which to build a new special needs centre for 60 children between the ages of 0 and 18 with a broad spectrum of special needs from severe to profound.

Starting Chance submitted an application to purchase land from the City of Cape Town early in 2017. The application should be successfully concluded by the end of the year. The new state-of-the-art centre will include a medical clinic for children with specialised equipment for physiotherapy and occupational therapy. It is intended to start construction in 1Q 2018.

Our goal is to create something special to mark the 10th anniversary of a remarkable journey – but to complete that transformation we need to tackle another challenge. That of transporting special needs children to and from the day centre safely.

THE NEED

During 2016 Thembasile Mafila was on his daily rounds picking up special needs children from the surrounding communities when a pick-up truck/utility vehicle hit him. The driver of the vehicle was working for a parastatal company. Although he was to blame, he denied that it was his fault to protect his job. Thembasile lost the claim to have his vehicle repaired. For a



year Lonwabo has had to use a small pick-up truck to transport learners to and from school. The children cannot sit – they have to be lain in the back which is covered by a canopy. After a year of financial challenges the Mafilas have managed to repair their vehicle – but it will not be adequate to support the new centre that is to be built.

Because so few children can be transported in the smaller vehicle the day starts early for special needs children at Lonwabo. Thembasile begins collecting them from 0530h because he has to make so many trips and traffic is hectic. It also ends late in the day for the same reason.

Starting Chance wants to change that. We need to be able to provide Thembasile and the special needs children with a better, safer form of transport. Ideally we need a good-quality, reliable second-hand minibus. It will transform the lives of the children and the Mafilas who dedicate long hours every day to enabling parents to ensure their children are safe while they either seek work or make sure they can retain the employment they have already.

The Mafilas have looked at a variety of different vehicles. Their belief is that a Hyundai minibus is best suited to their need because it offers sufficient space to enable car beds to be used for larger children who are unable to sit.

By providing a second-hand Hyundai minibus in good, roadworthy condition Stichting Wilde Ganzen would be reducing the need for multiple trips each day, making transportation more efficient, and safer and making Thembasile's life so much less stressful.

Please consider helping us to bring Thandeka's dream to life!

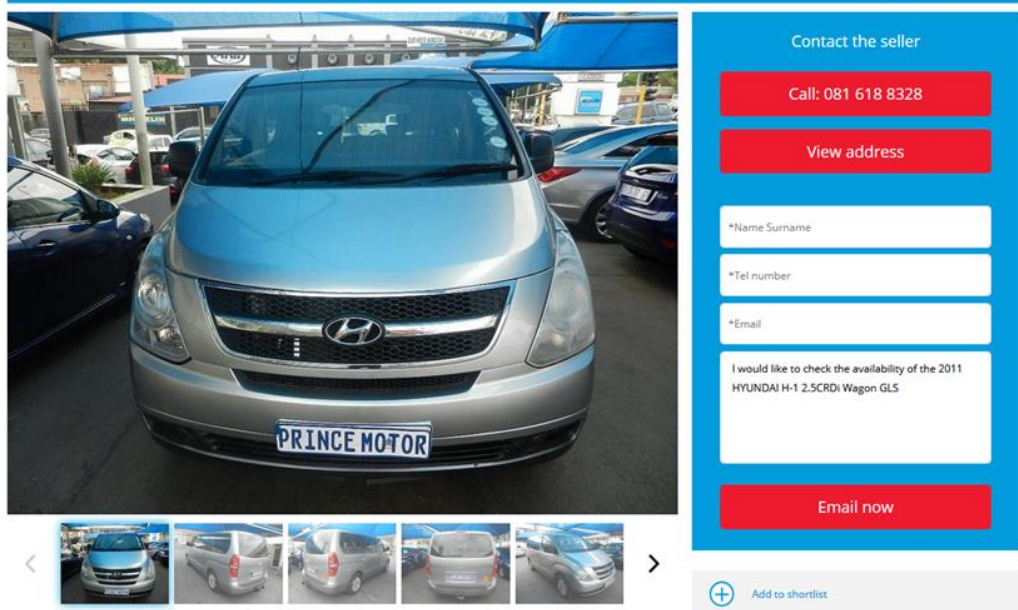
Dr Ian Corbett, Chairman

Starting Chance Trust Registration No IT002472/2015
NPO Reg No 164-217 • PBO No 930051444 • VAT Registration No 4450272614

BUDGET

A second-hand Hyundai H1: R235 000 (see proposal cover for example)

2011 Hyundai H-1 2.5CRDi Wagon GLS for sale R235 000 incl. VAT



Contact the seller

Call: 081 618 8328

View address

*Name Surname

*Tel number

*Email

I would like to check the availability of the 2011 HYUNDAI H-1 2.5CRDi Wagon GLS

Email now

+ Add to shortlist

The objective will be to obtain a fit-for-purpose, reliable vehicle for child transport. Starting Chance will undertake to seek opportunities to optimise the value derived from the purchase by approaching Hyundai and any other credible supplier of second-hand vehicles to seek their support for Lonwabo Special Needs Centre as a CSI project between the parties involved.

Our aim will be to maximise the “bang for the buck” – by obtaining a newer vehicle for less or a 2011 model for less so that any surplus money can be invested in acquiring safety equipment for transportation of children.

Running Costs:

Starting Chance will proactively seek the support of Hyundai (and other CSI opportunities) to reduce the financial impact of operating the minibus.

Fuel: Lonwabo Centre.

We will also approach fuel suppliers and see whether we are able to obtain support for Lonwabo Centre to offset the cost of fuel.

Every soul that is on earth came from a woman. The whole nation depends on women. If women are just sitting and doing nothing, there won't be any change. There won't be any progress; nothing will happen if we are doing nothing. So as women we must stand up, look at the opportunities, and do something. Thandeka Mafila, 2017

Thandeka's story (as told to Starting Chance).

I was born in the Eastern Cape in the rural areas. My father was working in Johannesburg in the mines and my mother was a housewife, and my father didn't take good care of my mother and us so I went to my mother's home and was raised by my grandparents. Life was not easy, by then all the family was living in one place, in one house. Nobody was getting his or her own plate. Food was put in one big dish and we'd sit on the floor with a spoon and you must be fast as you can so you can get enough food. If you can't eat fast you'd always be hungry. It was worse when my parents passed away and I went to my uncle and his wife. I was the only one who wasn't their child and I always tell my children I used to slave for a plate of food and I had no clothes; the only thing I had was my school uniform.



But I told myself I would never let circumstances shape my future. My future depends on me so I had to be patient and stay under those circumstances as long as I was given the chance to go to school up to my Matric. After I passed Matric I couldn't go to school any more. I had to fend for myself. But I had a dream. I wanted a degree but I would have to wait. One of my friends asked me why I'm going to do a degree and I said I'm doing it to fulfil my life, because from my young age, my uncles were graduates –there were events, graduations and all that, and I saw them wearing those gowns and I wanted to be one of them. So it's a promise I made to myself that I will never die without a degree. Even if I graduate today and die tomorrow, I'll die a graduate.

So I came to Paarl to stay with my uncle who promised to take me to tertiary level education. But when I came here I found he had a spaza shop and he wanted me to work there without earning a cent. I used to wake up at 5am and was the last one to go to bed at 11 or 12 o'clock.

Then I met my husband and we got married. He used to come and buy cigarettes there every day and that's how we met. After I got married I got the freedom to do whatever I wanted to do for myself. So I got a job at the surgery; I was a receptionist and medicine dispenser and then I worked in a spaza shop.

One day – it was on a Friday – I was listening to a lady [Lindela] from Khayelitsha on the radio who was running a centre for children with special needs. She was talking about the problem of the shortage of facilities and then she came to a point when she was pleading for someone in this area to start a day-care because there was nothing here in Mfuleni for the children. She gave out the phone number and I took it; I didn't have any intention of opening a centre but I took the number because I was worried and touched by what she said. I decided to phone her and ask if she had somebody respond to her request. She told me I was the first person to phone. We met and she persuaded me to open my own centre.

I came back and told my husband. I prepared the flat behind our house and then I went to see some parents who were desperate for help with two special needs children. So, on the 6 October 2008, on a Monday, it was my first day to operate a centre for children with special needs. And I was worried because when I saw these two children they were severely physically disabled, and I didn't know how I was going to cope. I was worried the whole weekend.

My granddaughter was at crèche at that time. I think she was three. But she was still very young and she said to me on Sunday night, "Grandma, I'm not going to crèche tomorrow. I am going to help you with these children because I can see how worried you are." I said OK. I went to fetch the children very early and I arrived with them at my place and she was already awake – not even washed, she'd only brushed her hair and was in her night dress – and she came out of the house and went straight to the back of the flat and she started singing, dancing, clapping, and playing with these children. So that very first same day the children were happy in the centre.

So that's how I started Lonwabo Special Needs Centre. I went on with the two children for the whole of October. By November, there were four children. It was very hard, I had no knowledge of dealing with them and I didn't even know the diagnosis of them. In 2009, January, Lindela phoned and invited me to join the Western Cape forum for people with special needs in Maitland. They provided me with therapists like OTs, physiotherapists and speech therapists; they worked with me, the children, and the ladies who were helping me. So we got training, and that's how we grew up, they mentored us, they trained us, and then I knew a lot of things.

Today, my day-care has xx special needs children. I also take care of my other brother's four children in Welkom. His wife died from HIV, when their youngest child was 10. After his mother died the child became sick and they took him to the doctor and they found out that the child was HIV positive from birth. Nobody wanted to tell him what was wrong with him, I had to go from here to Welkom to sit a 10 year-old child down and tell him he's HIV positive, and that he must take treatment for the whole of his life. It was a very difficult responsibility – the hardest thing I've ever done. I went there because there was no one else who would do it. I felt it, it was too heavy for me but I had to do it. I went there and I had to stay for three months taking him to the appointments up until he accepted taking the anti-retrovirals.

I'm also raising a child. That child turned one in December. It's my daughter's child; when she passed away the child was six months. That child is now with me fulltime – a small baby. Nobody is going to carry it if I don't carry it. I am the chosen one to carry it and there's nothing I can do about that.

I have heavy days. And I have days when even the people who are close to me – sometimes even my husband – tell me that the way I am stressing is not good for my health; my husband says, "You don't get stressed from your children, you don't get stressed from me, you are stressed from other people's problems, because these children are other people's problems and responsibilities but you took those problems and those responsibilities and you made them yours." I would listen and I would feel so bad, my heart would be so sore, because they are telling me that now I must stop what I'm doing. But I don't care even how hard it is, I don't have a day that my heart says to me you must stop doing this. Every time it's hard I just say to God, give me strength and give me a way, because I cannot stop what I'm doing.

My absolute dream is to see Lonwabo growing from a day-care into a school for children with special needs, here in this area. Because there's no school for children with special needs here, they are transported to other areas.

My advice for other women we must make it a point that when we get old or die we leave a legacy. A woman mustn't just live for herself; there must be things that you are going to be remembered for.