

## ITHEMBALIHLE - PLACE OF HOPE

Ithembalihle (Zulu for 'Place of Hope') is run by Thandiwe & Husband Shipho within the rural community of Sankontshe. Thandiwe felt called to the area to support those infected by HIV/AIDS & Poverty. Originally she built a small house and church, but the project has grown over the past few years and GAGA has been there to help and assist all the way.

Since the summer of 2012, 'Spirit of Africa' have been working with us and we now share a 50/50 funding relationship in support of Ithembalihle.

Ithembalihle started with very humble beginnings. Thandiwe (read more about Thandiwe's background below) and her husband moved to Sankontshe in 2008 and built a small house for themselves and their family, as well as a small church to service the surrounding community. Before they knew it, they had taken in a number of orphaned and vulnerable children, and were feeding/supporting other destitute community members on a daily basis. GAGA first met Thandiwe in 2009 and from there our relationship began.

Thandiwe was struggling to cope with the needs of her community, and had already exhausted her resources, so to begin with GAGA started to fund the monthly running costs. We next decided that we needed to improve the facilities at Ithembalihle and the decision was made to raise funds to build a new building for the children staying there. We built the new dormitory with a volunteer building team from the UK as well as a local workforce (you can read their blog here). More recently a pre-school has been started at Ithembalihle. Most children have to walk 3-4 km to get to school and this has resulted in many not attending, so the school is a vital asset. There are now about 30 children attending and the numbers are growing. GAGA and Spirit of Africa are now funding the running of the school.

During our relationship with Ithembalihle all developments have been led or championed by Thandiwe or her surrounding community. We have only assisted as and when necessary. The pre-school has been running for a year and only now have we started to assist at the beginning of 2013. Because Thandiwe and Ithembalihle are still relatively new projects mistakes and problems have arisen, so it has not always been plain sailing. However, what is important is that we have always overcome them together and have strived to encourage a sense of ownership and independence.

Ithembalihle has many purposes and serves its community as well as it can. In most cases it has become a transient home, a place to rehabilitate, find shelter and safety, and where necessary stay and call home. The majority of children staying at Ithembalihle are girls; however boys have also become residents. Whilst at Ithembalihle they are cared for, fed, and given the opportunity to continue their education. In most cases a child will move back with relatives or they may stay for periods of time whilst relatives are unable to care for them. Either way Ithembalihle continues to live up to its namesake and we will continue, along with the support of 'Spirit of Africa' and YOU to help.

**Thandiwe** was working as a Sales Development Manager for FEDICS, a large outsourced catering company, when she became ill. Thandiwe had a good job with a medical aid, so she visited doctors and specialists who could find nothing wrong with her physically. Out of desperation Thandiwe approached her local church in KwaMashu, an area near Durban in KwaZulu Natal, and asked the members to pray for her. She developed a strong sense that she needed to be in Sankontshe, where she was to help people afflicted by poverty and HIV/AIDS, so she used her own money to build a small church and house on a piece of land allocated to her by the local Councillor. Many people flocked to her, initially for prayer, but her strong practical nature, and her compassion resulted, in

GAGA – Goodwill & Growth for Africa UK

Reg Charity 1092028

[www.gaga-uk.org](http://www.gaga-uk.org)

01789 772686

[info@gaga-uk.org](mailto:info@gaga-uk.org)

her taking many of these people, both adults and children into her home. She became completely responsible for all of the needs of this group of people, as well as others who spend the day on her property, as they know it is a safe and caring environment where they will be helped with whatever they need, be it shelter, or a slice of bread.