

## Jesse Laitinen, Khulisa Strategic Partnerships Manager



As we brace for the cold weather, we are very grateful for the warmth that partnerships bring. In today's hyperconnected world, collaboration is key to any organisation.

In the resource stricken NGO sector, it is often the difference between mediocrity and excellence.

In this June edition, we highlight some of the remarkable partnerships Streetscapes has forged, showcasing how they help us make a positive difference in the world. You will meet remarkable Streetscapes peers, Khanyiswa and Hilma, and read about how they are helping to make Cape Town better.

Thank you for your continued, unwavering support towards Streetscapes,

Jesse

[jesse@khulisa.org.za](mailto:jesse@khulisa.org.za)

Whilst we hope you will enjoy our monthly newsletter to you, we also welcome your feedback on:

Facebook : [facebook.com/streetscapescp/](https://facebook.com/streetscapescp/)

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## Streetscapes Tackles Graffiti with Straatwerk

In May 2023, Hilma joined the Streetscapes street cleaning team to learn the art of graffiti removal. Trained by Straatwerk in both theory and practice, the team honed their skills in the Green Point-Oranje-Kloof area.



"I was excited," Hilma said. "It was something new and I enjoyed it."

Straatwerk's "Projek OPRUIM" started as a litter clean-up service on the Grand Parade and expanded to include graffiti removal. Despite initial challenges, the service was successful and eventually led to a relatively graffiti-free area from Camps Bay to Woodstock.

Clint Porter of Straatwerk explained how partnerships like this uplift communities. "Everyone benefits," he said. "Organizations like Straatwerk, Streetscapes and many others exist to serve the community. Collaboration between them makes them more impactful than the sum of their parts."

Hilma's journey with Streetscapes started over a year ago. "I was working in the gardens, planting," she said. "Then Chantal needed an assistant supervisor and she could see that I helped her.

I surprised her and took initiative one day when she couldn't come to work. That's when she started to take me under her wing."

Now an assistant supervisor, Hilma is determined to make changes in her life. "This program gave me confidence in myself," she said. "It taught me how to communicate with others and be good at teamwork. I've learned a lot."

The team is now ready to clean graffiti in your area and are excited about their new skill.

## Outside in: Khanyiswa's transition to Chester House

Streetscapes clients, like Khanyiswa, will be the first to tell you that real, lasting change takes time. Initially, for her, getting used to the idea of an indoor life was almost unimaginable. Since she was 16, the often unforgivably blustery open Cape Town skies had served as Khanyiswa's ceiling. "I thought this is it — you'll be outside until you die," she reflects on life before Streetscapes. The outdoors always felt more like a home than a house did. Even after transitioning into Chester House a few months into the program, she would often find herself retreating to the open comfort of outdoors after two or three days.

Part of change, as Khanyiswa discovered, is sacrifice: "To really change, I had to take a step back from my friends." Part of it is hard work: "When I started Matrix [The Matrix Model of Addiction Treatment] that's when things really shifted from old friends and old habits," she explains. "That's when I realised that I have an opportunity of a lifetime here."



For years, Khanyiswa yearned for something different. Yet she lacked something so basic, it's easy to overlook its importance in everyday life: an ID. Many may offhandedly suggest (or brazenly post in a Facebook neighbourhood group) that those living on the streets have the power to change things for themselves. But that's an oversimplification at best. This is the stigma attached to those who experience homelessness: that if they wanted a job, they could get one. That homelessness is a choice. It's stories like Khanyiswa's that show how truly difficult it is to have a choice when you're living outside.

Getting an ID as someone without a residence isn't easy: many get ushered away from the Home Affairs doors, dismissed before they even have a shot to apply. Others simply lack the ability to pay the fee. "Everywhere you go, you need an ID," says Khanyiswa. "Deep down, I knew I wanted a better life, but I didn't have an ID." One of Streetscapes' key priorities is securing IDs for each and every client as well as a bank account. It's these seemingly small securities that bring back a sense of dignity to clients, unlocking the picture of what life could look like one puzzle piece at a time. "I was hearing people's stories about Streetscapes and I thought, 'This is what I've been thinking about for years.'" Finally equipped with an ID, Khanyiswa was earning a salary for the first time at 35 years old. "I grabbed the opportunity with both hands."

Khanyiswa's ascent within Streetscapes was swift. Her journey began with working on bin projects, contributing to the cleanliness of Cape Town's inner-city streets. She then transitioned to working in the Roeland Street garden, and later in the laundry. Her hard work and dedication eventually landed her the role of assistant supervisor at Roland Street Garden.

As Chester House sought a new house coordinator, someone saw potential in Khanyiswa. "They were looking for someone who knew the path of homelessness. House co-ordination makes people grow. And I had to grow quickly," she explains, "It wasn't easy at first because people were used to Fiona [Khanyiswa's predecessor at Chester]. "But then they got comfortable with me. As much as I respected them I got the respect back. It's been a really smooth ride ever since." Khanyiswa is also the cook, and takes pride in ensuring every individual feels welcome and safe, regardless of their race or gender. This is their home, after all.

"I think what helped me is from knowing the experience, it would make me better at this," she notes. In Khanyiswa's first three months as a Chester House resident, she didn't have a bed: "I wanted to sleep on the floor." Now as house co-ordinator, when someone new arrived who didn't want to sleep in a bed, she could relate. "He'd been on the streets for 20 years and he said, 'Please Khanyiswa, I just want to be outside.' And I understood that. I'd been there. And I think because I understood, he felt he could be more comfortable."

But the new role hasn't been without its challenges. "Last year was really tough for me. No one believed that I could do it. People were saying, 'You were a drunk.' It made me really second guess myself. But the support that I got from Streetscapes is amazing." Like so many of her peers at Streetscapes, Khanyiswa now has a healthy support system in the community she's built *inside*. "So far 2023 has been amazing. The relationships I have with everyone has been amazing. From my supervisor to the social workers to the peers, people make you feel like you are worthy."

## Thembi's Gardening Tips for Winter



Even in the midst of a cold and wet June, the produce at the Streetscapes gardens is thriving. The leafy greens are a vibrant shade of green, while marigolds add pops of orange around the garden. Chilli peppers continue to fruit, adding splashes of red and yellow.

Working in the garden during the winter months can be challenging due to the extreme weather. However, by following a good sowing and planting calendar, you can spend most of your time indoors while waiting for the right time to harvest.

On days without rain, take the opportunity to do some work in the garden. Now is the best time to move any plants, trees, shrubs, or roses that are planted in the wrong place. While doing so, cut some leaves or branches from the plant and feed it with kelp liquid fertilizer to reduce transplanting stress. Apply garden phosphate to your lawn and it will reward you with lush new green growth.

To keep your soil healthy and warm for plants, cover it with organic matter or cover crops. This will also help suppress weeds and prevent soil erosion.

You can still plant broad bean seeds, carrots, radishes, beetroots, onions, cabbages, cauliflowers, and kale seedlings. All seedlings are available at all our Streetscapes gardens.

## If you found this newsletter interesting...



Dear reader,

If you found our newsletter interesting and entertaining, please consider passing it on to people you know who would appreciate gaining a greater insight into the plight of the homeless, and the positive change that Streetscapes, as well as other organisations, are making to transform the unhomed into valued, productive members of society.

Together, we make a difference!

They can visit our website to be included in our mailing list at [streetscapes.org.za](https://streetscapes.org.za).

Or they can email us at: [info@streetscapes.org.za](mailto:info@streetscapes.org.za), and we'll do the rest!

Yours,

The Streetscapes Newsletter Team.