

Jesse Laitinen, Khulisa Strategic Partnerships Manager

Spring is such a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can be. We celebrate the season of renewed contracts with CCID, City of Cape Town and Comic Relief enabling us to serve those most in need. Spring is also about fresh ideas. A new project funded by a UK Foundation is allowing us to develop a new holistic housing model that treats waste as a resource; saving electricity, saving water, healing our planet and communities.



This time of the year is good for us also to reflect on what brings about personal change. Oprah says the greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change their future by merely changing their attitude. By providing a nurturing environment rich with opportunity, Streetscapes changes lives, allowing people to reach their best potential. We also want to recognise and celebrate clients like Renita who shows change is not only possible but can happen in a short period of time.

Yours in Partnership
Jesse

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Renita's story of hope

Renita's unbounding optimism can take you aback at first, after all, this is someone who's spent the majority of her youth braving Cape Town's elements on the streets, caring for her mom and son. 'I was living with my foster parents but home life wasn't normal without my mother,' she says. So Renita left the warmth of housing to seek out love from her mom, who was living on the streets of the CBD. Here, Renita took up the role of mother and nurturer as she hustled for money to get food and help her mom through periods of drug withdrawal. By the time she turned 22, Renita had a son, and with that, a new mouth to feed and mind to grow. For a while she desperately tried to balance it all - the hustle, looking after her mother and taking care of her baby's needs - but by the time her son reached three, something had to give.



That's when Renita first arrived at Streetscapes. 'When I met the garden I felt this is where I belong, with the veg, the flowers, the trees... I just love the oxygen. I thought, "there, I'm breathing again."' September will be Renita's fourth month in the programme and she's achieved a lot since then. She spends her days tending to the garden where she loves watching the spinach grow and learning how to imbue the soil with nutrients and make her plant babies grow abundantly. 'The garden and my babies need me,' says Renita of her budding spinach, leeks and mint. She's fascinated with different types of plants and she carries the knowledge she picks up every day home with her to teach to her son. 'At home, I teach him how to plant. We have a calendar to see when the seeds will grow,' she explains. 'What I'm learning from Streetscapes is not just for my future, but for my son and for a better life for my mother.'

All this is a far cry from the quiet, solemn Renita who entered the programme. She's since built a solid friendship group within the Vredehoek community and they frequently get together for braais and social activities like Netball. 'I love waking up and coming in because it puts a smile on my face and it makes me feel different to how I felt before. I have hope for my future,' she says with that beaming smile.

We chatted to Kuilsriver manager Thembi Macata on what's good to grow now

'Growth is slow in winter, as plants show down or go dormant with the cooler weather, but the arrival of spring means new buds. **This is the perfect time to tidy up, re-shape your fruit trees and perennial herbs.** Cut back your rosemary and lavender, dead head and remove yellow leaves.



'Remove weeds as they appear, and apply a thick layer of compost on all your beds. This act suppresses new weeds, providing nutrients for strong and vigorous growth. Mulch with bark, chicken straws or peach peeps. This control soils temperature on hot days and reduce evaporation

'Start your vegetable garden now with our organic seedlings: This is the best time to sow your summer-loving seedlings. Get your lettuce, dill, basil, spinach, chives, parsley, kale and green mustard at our Roeland garden and Kuilsriver farm.

'Produce wise, this month we have delicious crisp lettuce, spinach, beetroot, mustard green leaves, coriander, kale, cabbage, brinjal, spring onion and our famous free-range eggs.

'Spice up your water-wise garden by adding our **interesting and colourful succulents.** We have a wide range from aloe vera, Portulacaria afra, spekboom, Aeonium 'purpuria', Eurphobia tirucalli, Firesticks, and many more.

'If you reside in a small apartment and don't have space for garden, don't fret! Our succulent window boxes have up to 5 different varieties in a box that you can keep on your window sill or on your stoep.'

Jesse on secrets of our success with hard to reach people



We believe it's important to communicate the ways that we help clients develop in their journey at Streetscapes. This month, Jesse talks on Behavioural Change, one of the key pillars of our programme.

'When you've been on the streets for a long time and someone approaches you for help, it's often too soon to offer things like a place to stay or rehab. The lifestyle you've been living is exhausting - the city residents are frustrated because you're going through the bins, you're working from morning to midnight... You're not ready for a big change to your housing or your substance use. But if we offer income, work, that's appealing. We don't push our clients in any direction, but they start to see other people working for us who are happy in housing, people who have been where they are, that's when they start to make a move to get off the streets.

'Our approach is three pronged: firstly, we're client centered, so we focus on what the client's goals are when entering into the programme and then put together a plan to support them to achieve their goals. It's about creating sustainable change that feels manageable to each individual. Secondly, we focus on harm reduction. We take a look at the areas where people are risking their success in the programme and in getting off the streets and seek to reduce that behaviour. Finally, we strive to get them into good housing placements that work for them.

'However, behavioural change isn't just important at an individual level but a community one too. We encourage the people of Cape Town to engage with our clients at our gardens. They can tell you all about the produce, what's growing and when, and you'll have plenty of fresh plants, flowers and succulents to admire. We've built a fantastic community and we want to open it up to the city and give everyone the opportunity to try our eggs, take home one of Renita's spinach bunches and get a succulent pot to brighten up your windowsill this season.'