

# ZIKULISE NEWSLETTER APRIL 2017



## Making Grass her Business

Have you heard about the wonder plant, Vetiver grass? Well this grass has grown Zanele Nosipho Mhlongo's entrepreneurial vision. And her dream extends to establishing not only one business but three!

It was in 2014 that everything came together for her. She attended a Vetiver grass weaving workshop at the Zikulise Community Upliftment Project NPC in Empangeni, Zululand. Zululand is renowned for its fine basketry where various grasses, such as Incema and Ikhwani are used. Vetiver grass is the new kid on the block.

Zanele found herself impressed with the versatility of the grass and comments, "It's so easy to grow and harvest; the plant's roots prevent soil erosion and helps with water retention. You can use all the parts of the plant, even the roots to make products. As a matter of fact the root is very sought after for the wonderful perfume it produces".

Armed with the skills she learnt at Zikulise, Zanele embarked on her journey from sitting at home with nothing to occupy her, to becoming a business woman. Zanele said, "If you work with your hands, you can achieve a lot". She produces door mats, bags, baskets and traditional Zulu sleeping mats (Icansi) using different varieties of grasses and sells them to her community and to tourists. In summer she can be seen displaying and selling her well made products at the beach market in Richards Bay. "Tourists really like my products", she says proudly.

Giving back to the community is important to Zanele. She has subsequently taught other women how to weave and they are now able to sell their products and earn a living. "It is so important to me to help women in my community just as Zikulise has helped me. Before I received the training, life was hard. Zikulise helped me to open my mind. I realised I can do anything! I began to think, what can I do next? Then it came to me, I could also sell Vetiver grass plants to rural farmers to help with their soil erosion problems. But what has got me really excited is the third thing and that is that I want to use the roots of the Vetiver plant to make essential oils. If I continue to work with this grass I know I will become a very successful business woman. It is thanks to Zikulise for giving me the confidence and skills to pursue my dreams," she says with enthusiasm.

With Zanele's determination, her business is sure to grow and before long, with the help of the humble Vetiver grass plant, her oils will be selling on the shelves of retail outlets.



**Newsletter published by  
Zikulise Community Upliftment Project NPC  
Empangeni. KwaZulu-Natal  
Website [www.zikulise.org.za](http://www.zikulise.org.za)  
Email address [info@zikulise.org.za](mailto:info@zikulise.org.za)**