

Spring of Hope's Women in Entrepreneurship Program - graduation pitch finale



Program participants flanked by A Spring of Hope's partners and executive management (above left) and the top 3 winners with A Spring of Hope's Joanne Roy Young, Gail Auguston-Koppen and Nelly Mofokeng



A Spring of Hope's maiden Women in Entrepreneurship Program (funded by Itirele Foundation Charitable Trust), launched on a high note as part of the Women's Month celebrations in August 2023 in Open Gate, Acornhoek.

The program started off with an intensive three-day bootcamp. The 31 highly engaging young women, all of whom are running micro-enterprises, some still in ideation phase, were exposed to the fundamental concepts of setting up and running a sustainable business. This intervention included exploring new business opportunities and value chains.

The enthusiastic cohort of participants had the opportunity to put the lessons learned into action, supported by mentors and over a period of three months. This culminated in a 'Dragon's Den style' pitch competition and certification.

The special occasion was attended by A

Spring of Hope International's board member Gail Auguston-Koppen and CEO Joanne Roy-Young who shared their pearls of wisdom about commitment and staying the course. Resilient as ever, contestants fielded the judging panel's questions with grace, keeping them on their toes!

Each participant received a Business Management Training Certificate. After much deliberation, the judges announced the top three businesses that scooped the much-needed cash injection to the value of R25 000. This will be used to take their businesses to the next level.

The first prize winner, Charity Nyathi from Sigagula in Acornhoek, received a R12 000 business voucher to boost the manufacturing of her moringa beauty product range. Second prize winner, Mapusha Weavers from Maromeng in Acornhoek, received an R8 000 business voucher to scale the weaving of their floor and wall rugs, along with

other crafts. Third prize winner, Langutani Khoza from Sigagula in Acornhoek, received a R5 000 business voucher, towards equipment to manufacture scented beeswax candles and air diffusers.

In acknowledging their unwavering commitment to the program, Executive Director at A Spring of Hope SA, Nelly Mofokeng had this to say: "As our first cohort of the Women in Entrepreneurship Program I must say that we couldn't have asked for better cohort to kick-start this program. As you prepare to step into the next phase of your career journey, moving on to bigger and greater ventures, never stop learning and lift others as you rise, because each one of us has role play in building thriving communities".

A Spring of Hope is an international NGO that provides rural South African schools and communities with clean water sources, permaculture gardening methods, waterless sanitation solutions, feeding

kitchens, entrepreneurship, and life skills.

The availability of an adequate supply of clean water, when coupled with ongoing training and technical support, has been shown to improve health conditions, combat poverty, and promote education for students, as well as to create a source of financial self-sustainability for communities.

Established by mother and daughter team, Joanne and Brittany Young in 2007, the organisations work has directly impacted over 80 000 individuals in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, through support from Thulani Lodge, corporate and individual donors.

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Malaria: the silent killer and ways to defend against it

Malaria, a deadly and persistent tropical disease, continues to plague communities in many parts of the world. This parasitic infection, transmitted primarily through the bite of infected Anopheles mosquitoes, remains a significant global health concern.

Malaria is caused by the *Plasmodium* parasite, of which five species are known to infect humans - *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium vivax*, *Plasmodium ovale*, *Plasmodium malariae*, and *Plasmodium knowlesi*. Of these, *P. falciparum* is the most deadly and responsible for the majority of malaria-related deaths worldwide, and indeed in South Africa.

When an infected mosquito bites a human, it injects the malaria parasites into the bloodstream. These parasites then travel to the liver, where they multiply and mature. Once mature, they re-enter the bloodstream and invade red blood cells, causing them to rupture. This cycle of infection, multiplication, and red blood cell destruction, leads to the characteristic symptoms of malaria.

The symptoms of malaria can vary in severity and presentation, making diagnosis challenging. Common symptoms include - high fever, chills and shivering, sweating, headache, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, muscle and joint pain, anaemia (due to the destruction of red blood cells), enlarged spleen, and in severe cases, jaundice.

If left untreated, malaria can lead to severe complications, including cerebral ma-



laria, organ failure, and death. Vulnerable populations, such as young children and pregnant women, are at a higher risk of developing severe forms of the disease.

The mosquitoes are most active during the night, so the risk of infection is highest after sunset and before sunrise. However, malaria can also be transmitted through blood transfusions, organ transplantation, and from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding.

Preventing and controlling malaria is paramount, especially in endemic regions. There

are many effective safeguards against malaria. Sleeping under insecticide-treated bed nets is one of the most effective ways to prevent mosquito bites. These nets create a physical barrier and kill mosquitoes on contact.

Spraying insecticides on the interior walls of homes can reduce mosquito populations and their ability to transmit the disease.

Taking antimalarial drugs, such as chloroquine, artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs), or prophylactic medication, can be effective. However, drug resistance

is a growing concern in some regions.

Timely diagnosis and treatment are crucial to prevent severe malaria. Diagnostic tests, such as rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) and microscopic examination of blood smears, help healthcare professionals confirm the presence of the parasite.

Educating communities about the importance of malaria prevention and control, the use of bed nets, and seeking prompt medical care can significantly reduce infection rates, and in the African context is probably one of the most important parts of the holistic prevention protocol.

Eliminating mosquito breeding sites, such as stagnant water, and using insect repellents can reduce mosquito populations and minimize the risk of transmission.

The development and deployment of a malaria vaccine, like the RTS,S/AS01 (Mosquirix), show promise in preventing infection and reducing the severity of the disease, particularly in young children.

Ongoing research into new antimalarial drugs, mosquito control methods, and innovative prevention strategies is essential in the fight against malaria.

This disease remains a formidable global health challenge, particularly in tropical regions. Understanding the infection, its symptoms, and how it is transmitted is crucial in the battle against this silent killer. The effective safeguards, as mentioned above, are essential components of malaria control efforts.