

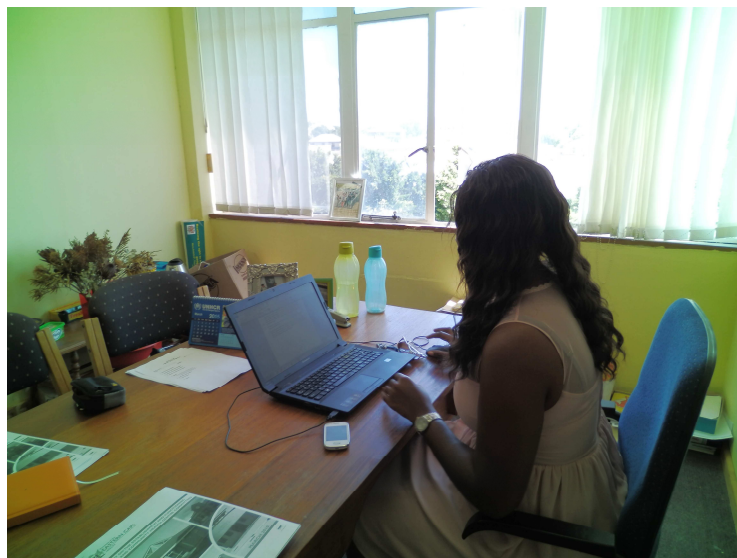
In the lead up to International Women's Day on 8 March, we are profiling some of the women involved in EU projects in South Africa who make a difference in their communities.

Zingi Sofayiya

Zingi Sofayiya is a community health mobiliser for the University of Cape Town based in Port Elizabeth. Along with her colleague Therese Boulle, Zingi works with 48 clinics and committees around the Eastern Cape to mentor them, share best practices and help strengthen the health culture in their communities.

Zingi was born and raised in the Eastern Cape and studied psychology at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. She previously worked as a project coordinator for Masifunde Development, a youth NGO, as well as interning with UCT as a project assistant in getting districts to elect the health committees she now mentors.

Zingi has created her own participatory action methods to work with the committees and help them to target and tackle the health issues in their areas. With help from funders such as the EU, she has also run health rights and policy workshops to help communities understand their healthcare rights and take ownership of their local clinics.



"This whole thing started just me and Therese in a coffee shop, then we started letting this office space just so we had somewhere to get things done. We brought our own stuff from home and this is where we are!" says Zingi. In between her work with committees she is also working towards getting her post graduate certificate in education through Unisa, "I 'm a career person," she explains, "I've always known I want to be involved with people".



After attending a workshop in Zimbabwe, Zingi took the participatory methods and applied them into her own mentorship programme. Out of the 48 committees she works with, they selected 10 for the programme with the plan that they would go out and disseminate the information. "I like interactive methods – brainstorming, role plays – it's experiential so you cover everyone," she explains.

Zingi's method involves first getting the committee to map their community before identifying the challenges and resources available. They then use the 'bean method' whereby every member gets three beans which they place on what they believe to be the top three problems in their community – this helps the group to prioritise before setting about an action plan to tackle the top issues. Finally they assess their progress.



"Visibility is so important," Zingi explains as she hands out t-shirts, "Badges and t-shirts can be used as incentive and so people feel acknowledged for what they're doing". Zingi feels that it's often a challenge to get resources for these committees, even finding appropriate venues can be difficult. "We are trying to get support from the Department but it's not quite there yet," she says, "We need greater recognition for these committees and the work they do".



"Committees are not paid to do the work they do," Zingi explains, "They are passionate so there is so much great potential. They do everything, I just walk hand-in-hand with them. They take ownership and they have all the skills so you just have to ask what they think". Here she stands pictured with the Ikamvelihle Health Committee who have used her methods to great success and have already managed to take action against the top three problems they identified in their community.

Pictured are (back row from left) Zamile Maseti, Vuyelwa Zito, Zanele Sonkqayi, (middle from left) Zingisa Sofoyiya, Sr Mofu, Mabel Mceka, Nokulunga Mkizwana, Nomfundo Maqanda, Xolelwa Mgolombane, (front) Zanele Stokwe, Nikiwe Phongolo.



"When I was offered this job I was appointed as a mentor and I had to think – what does this mean in this context? I had to put actions to my title," Zingi says, "I love seeing the initiative and the legacy being left behind, using methods that make it sustainable and let the committees be independent. In the end I've fallen in love with working with committees".