

PROJECT PORTRAIT

Micro-entrepreneur support
#70 (2012)

What is this project about?

The project took the form of business support for The Clothing Bank, a local NGO based in Cape Town. Their goal is to empower unemployed mothers to become financially independent by setting up own micro-businesses buying and reselling clothing. The NGO sources excess clothing from large retailers for participants and offers relevant business/ entrepreneur training

The process

The Clothing Bank approached the UCT Knowledge Co-op in search of volunteers to act as mentors to the budding entrepreneurs. Through regular one-on-one meetings they would facilitate their understanding of new concepts such as budgeting, accounting, record-keeping and problem-solving skills.

It was necessary to find volunteers with basic business knowledge and time and transport flexibility. With the aid of Greg Macfarlane, an enthusiastic GSB student, over 30 volunteers were recruited and introduced to TCB.

Participants of The Clothing Bank typically have limited business knowledge and little education, yet they have to operate their businesses in a challenging environment. The volunteer support was meant to help them develop new skills and perseverance. This requires teaching at the appropriate level, and the ability to articulate difficult concepts in a manner that can be easily understood.

After some months The Clothing Bank decided that student volunteers were, as a rule, not well suited for this role.

The project was completed in **January 2013**.



Clothing Bank participant in action

To **reference** this Project Portrait, cite UCT Knowledge Co-op as the author.

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The Knowledge Co-op at the University of Cape Town

The UCT Knowledge Co-op aims to make it easier for community partners to access UCT's skills, resources and professional expertise. It helps initiate joint projects that benefit both the community partner and the university. The Co-op links community groups with appropriately qualified staff and students at UCT, and supports both partners throughout the project – from initial planning to final product.