



AFRICA FOUNDATION

empowering communities • enabling conservation

COMMUNITY LEADERS EDUCATION FUND

Phumlani Mlambo's story

Funding education: In 2008, South Africa's national unemployment figures stood at 22%. In rural areas such as the Umkhanyakude district where the Africa Foundation operates, these figures are reported to be as high as 75%.

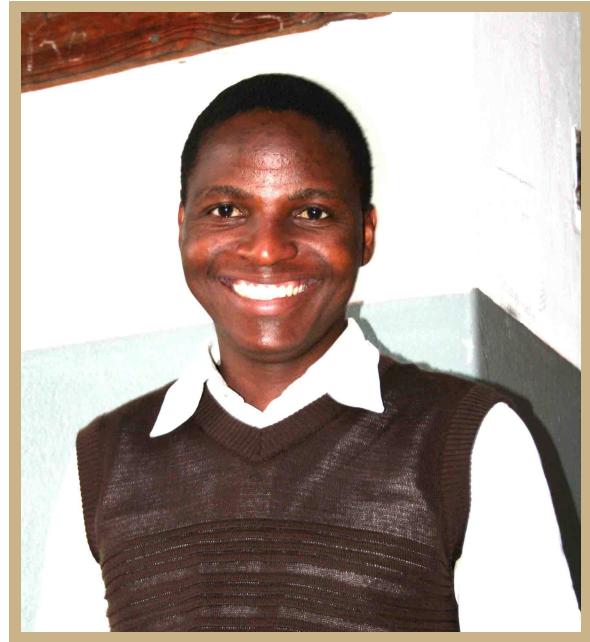
The Africa Foundation's efforts since 1993 have been largely focused on strengthening education facilities on the ground and produce a new generation of economically productive adults. So far more than 60 000 children have benefitted from 120 additional classrooms and other resources. But one of the greatest challenges remains keeping skilled people with professional qualifications in rural areas.

Shining stars: Launched in 1995, the Community Leaders education Fund seeks to help school leavers who show exceptional academic talent and diligence by offering them a chance to pursue tertiary education. Through the Buyisela program, the graduates are not required to pay back the loan but instead to return to their communities and plough back their new skills.

Battling the odds: For Phumlani Mlambo just finishing school was a challenge. As one of eight siblings that forms part of an extended polygamous family of 25 children, money for education was always a struggle. But he had a determination that defied his destiny.

"I was always teased as a child for not being hip. I could not play soccer well and never knew much about the latest pop culture. So I chose to excel in what I knew I could do well - my studies."

Word of mouth: In a conversation with an older boy from his school, Phumlani learned that Mandla had obtained a bursary from the Africa Foundation. "Mandla guided me through the process. He even helped prepare me for the interview," says Phumlani.



"Apart from all his strong ideas about what the challenges are for today's youth, he bowled us over with his enthusiasm and charisma."

Isaac Tembe Development Manager, &Beyond

Buyisela - 'giving back': In his first year, Phumlani achieved the highest score out of 1 500 students. The CLEF scholarship is reviewed by a committee every year and subsequent funding is only available to those who pass well. Phumlani's three year degree was entirely funded by the Foundation based on his academic results and positive attitude.

After three years at the University of Zululand, Phumlani recently graduated with distinction in a Bachelors of Education and Tourism and returned to his old school - Mduku High - as a teacher. "I recognize how the &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve has created so many jobs for our people and I wanted to learn the tourism industry."

Phumlani has already registered for a Postgraduate degree in Psychology and social Support services and hopes these new skills will help him support some of the social challenges he sees in his community. "I won't stop studying until I become a professor."

Despite his busy schedule as a full-time teacher and part-time student, Phumlani is already planning how to launch a career guidance counseling desk at the Mduku Digital Eco Village. "I want my students to have the same chance I had at higher education."