

STEP UP



Kayamandi is an old township which sits perched on a hill overlooking the prime real estate of Stellenbosch in the Cape Winelands District of the Western Cape.¹ Stellenbosch Town is 50km to the east of Cape Town and is - after Cape Town - the second oldest town in South Africa.² The town is home to Stellenbosch University which was in the apartheid years the intellectual home of the Broederbond, the powerful group of Afrikaner elite who controlled South Africa prior to democracy in 1994.

The origins of Kayamandi are linked to the racist separate development policies of the apartheid government and the white farm owners in the Winelands district. The township started in 1918 when an isolated population of farm workers, who owners did not want to live on their land, moved to the first Black area in Stellenbosch. This was followed by the development of the Du Toitville housing scheme in the 1920s. From 1941 to 1953 Kayamandi was established and expanded. The residents were predominantly families and single male workers brought to Kayamandi specifically to work on the farms or factories of Stellenbosch. It was also during this period that the first superintendent, H.D.R. Blok, ran Kayamandi. In 1966, the nine largest employers in the Stellenbosch district including Stellenbosch University, the town administration, several vineyards and a fruit packing company united to erect 38 hostels in the township. The name Kayamandi is derived from isiXhosa language, from khaya meaning "home" and mnandi meaning "nice".³ Many of the 24 246 residents of Kayamandi today live in shacks made of corrugated iron and wood scraps. The predominant language spoken is isiXhosa.⁴ The stark contrast between the wealth of Stellenbosch with its pavement cafes and quaint boutique stores versus the extreme poverty of the informal settlements of Kayamandi is a microcosm of South Africa's inequality.

Step Up is an emerging LDA based in Kayamandi. It has a strong youth development focus and has piloted the YouthBank. The LDA also attends to clients needing assistance with cases of unfair labour practice and unfair dismissals by local employers.

1. Miller, J. (2019). Unequal Scenes - Stellenbosch / Kayamandi. Retrieved October 15, 2019, from Unequal Scenes website: <https://unequalscenes.com/stellenbosch-kayamandi>
2. Stellenbosch Local Municipality - Overview. (2019). Retrieved October 15, 2019, from Municipalities of South Africa website: <https://municipalities.co.za/overview/1210/stellenbosch-local-municipality>
3. Rock, David (2011). The Location Shall Be Called Kayamandi: A History of Kayamandi (MA). Stellenbosch University
4. Frith, A. (2019). Census 2011: Main Place: Khayamandi. Retrieved October 15, 2019, from <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/167012>

FAST FACTS

NAME: Step Up

LED BY: ELBRE JACOBS

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY THE COMMUNITY: unemployment, gangsterism, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy

MAIN ACTIVITIES: Youth bank; Advice Office

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I GAVE UP GANG LIFE FOR GOD AND GIVING BACK TO MY COMMUNITY



Sharoleen Morris - Administrator at Step Up.



Gladman Maqwara (Paralegal), Sharoleen Morris and Elbre Jacobs (Coordinator).



YouthBank participants Tashnine Philander, Rodeniah Philander and Antovinia Philander.



ELBRE JACOBS

ELBRE JACOBS TURNED AWAY FROM HIS LIFE AS A GANG LEADER AFTER HE SAW HIS FRIEND DIE OF A DRUG OVERDOSE. HE TURNED TO GOD AND DECIDED TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO BEING A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS THROUGH HIS WORK AS A PARALEGAL AND YOUTH COUNSELLOR AT STEP UP.

In the 1990s just before the bells of freedom rang in our beautiful South Africa, I was a young nine-year-old boy playing in the streets of Worcester with my friends. It was just before sunset and "clock in time" for our parents. A few gangsters passed us. Minutes later a man wearing blue working gear with a black backpack on his back, rode past us on a blue bike. The gangsters robbed and killed the man. We saw it happen but couldn't do anything because we were afraid. I have never felt so helpless and disappointed in my life. I wanted to help the man so badly but I was powerless. I made a promise to myself that when I became a man I would dedicate my life to help others, especially those who were voiceless. After that incident my life took a real bad turn.

My mother was diagnosed with neck cancer and my father lost his work due to drinking problems. I started using alcohol at an early age and was used by older people to do their dirty work. After my mother died my sister had to take over the role of mother and father. Our only income was from the childcare grant. My mother made me promise her that I would finish school just before she died. Our family lost a lot of things even our house because my father was tricked into signing documents. He didn't have a full understanding of what he was signing. Because of these struggles at home, I joined a gang and became the leader. We used to use drugs. One night a good friend of mine died because he overdosed on drugs. His parents were asked to come to the hospital and give the doctors permission to turn off the life support machine. Right there the

picture of the man on the blue bike came again to my mind. Just like that my friend had 'no voice'. I decided to change my life. I needed to be a voice for others. I needed to help the helpless, give hope to the hopeless.

In my matric year, gangsters attacked us. My friend ran away, but they grabbed me and put a gun in my mouth. I just asked the Lord to give me one more chance at that time and He granted it to me. They released me. In fear of my life I ran to Montague, where one night at an open-air church service I gave my heart to our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

Later I met Olin Kiewiers who was actively involved in Advice Offices. He introduced me to the community development field. At last I felt happy. I was free from the guilt I was carrying. Every time I help somebody, I feel complete. I found my purpose being a 'voice to the voiceless'.

I moved to Stellenbosch for work purposes, doing substance abuse programmes in schools and farms. In 2011, the organisation I worked for closed due to lack of funding. I wanted to give up on life but the voice of the Lord told me to start this organisation STEP UP Association which stands for Serve Train Educate Plan Uplift and Provision. We started off with no funding for three years then the National Development Agency (NDA) started funding us for a year. After that we were stranded again. We approached SCAT who offered to help us. Our office almost closed down, but with the support of SCAT at a critical time in our organisation we are still functioning with more funders on board.

Now we serve people from all areas in and around Stellenbosch. I am a paralegal and mediator. Seeing clients enter our office helpless but leaving with a smile of satisfaction makes our work worthwhile. My focus is on youth development as I see on a daily basis youth who are involved in gangsterism and substance abuse. I see girls as young as 13 years old getting pregnant. Unemployment and a lack of skills also play a role in youth joining gangs and teenage pregnancies. Our services help decrease the problems youth are facing. We reach more than 300 youth with our Youth Camps, 100 people with our Leadership Skills workshops, and we reach about 500 participants with our Labour Act workshop. Our passion is to save and develop young people, giving them opportunity and hope.

A young man visited our office after he was unfairly dismissed without any compensation. We handled his case and he received the money that was rightfully owed to him. He first became a volunteer and is now a permanent worker at our offices. He is also part of the annual Dullah Omar School of training for paralegals and is part of SCAT's capacity building workshops. We, STEP UP Association, managed to give a voice to the young man and now he is giving a voice and hope to many other young people. The organisation played a potent role in my life. I found my own voice and become a qualified paralegal and mediator. The work we do in the local community and amongst youth is bringing a visible positive change to their lives. SCAT played a vital role in the organisation by given monetary, emotional, and mentoring support through their capacity building and good governance workshops. SCAT helped the organisation to grow and get access to other funders. I am so grateful to SCAT for giving us a voice to give a voice to the voiceless!!!!

