



For immediate release

Jacob Lief, President and Founder of Ubuntu Education Fund, moderates panel on Early Childhood Education at the 2011 Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting

New York, NY: September 21, 2011

"Starting Off Right: Early Childhood Education" a CGI Action Network, met this morning to discuss the proven need for high-quality early childhood education as a way to give children all over the world a better chance of success. Ubuntu Education Fund is committed to this goal and will soon launch its own Early Childhood Development program.

Besides Jacob, the other high-level experts on the panel were Marta Arango (Co-Founder and Director, International Center for Education and Human Development), Gary Knell (President and CEO, Sesame Workshop), Carolyn Miles (President and CEO, Save the Children), and George Rupp (President and CEO, International Rescue Committee). This was the first time CGI's agenda included early childhood education.

Jacob and Ubuntu Education Fund have long advocated for, and provided, comprehensive world-class interventions for disadvantaged children. Ubuntu has honed its holistic development model for 12 years, and is widely recognized for its success in adapting international best practices in South African.

The Ubuntu model is predicated on community involvement, results-oriented programs, and excellent staff.

Ubuntu began as an educational project, and grew organically into a comprehensive community institution housed in the award-winning Ubuntu Centre in the heart of Zwile Township in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Pencils were not enough when children had no school uniforms. School uniforms were useless when children with HIV were too sick to go to school. HIV medication was not enough when there was no food to help digest it. Health and nutrition were not enough when families were poor and unstable. Families were limited in what they could do to augment the work of an overworked, under-resourced education system. Ubuntu works with hundreds of children, and concentrates deeply on each child to provide every possible support on the pathway out of poverty. This is the Ubuntu model.

Thousands of township children have been Ubuntu clients: children like Bonga, who had to study in a tavern because he had no light at home; and Mandiswa, who couldn't concentrate at school because of abuse at home. Bonga got a lamp, and is now in university. Mandiswa received counseling, and is excelling in her studies.

Former clients are in university, and working at productive jobs. Now that it is stable and successful, Ubuntu is poised for its inevitable next step: a formal Early Childhood Development Program.

"If the foundation of a house is not strong, there will be some cracks," said Veliswa Jontana, an ECD staff member.

For 12 years, Ubuntu has spent thousands of hours working directly with teachers, administrators, families, and students in the townships. It has partnered with over 30 local schools and invested millions of dollars in these institutions. With this experience and with solid research help from institutions such as Kip McGrath Education Centre, the ECD program will help township children get as good a start in life as any children anywhere. Ubuntu's teachers are from the community. They have access to the same tools and training as practitioners in the world's capitals. They are uniquely positioned to provide the best holistic early childhood services for orphaned and vulnerable township children and their caregivers.

Jacob's role as moderator of the CGI panel comes exactly two years after Ubuntu made a commitment at CGI's 2009 Annual Meeting to "bring the future to the children of South Africa" by bringing a state-of-the-art facility to further our holistic approach. One year ago, Ubuntu kept its promise and opened the Ubuntu Centre, which provides everything from a full-service clinic to nutritious meals and after-school programs.

"At Ubuntu, it's not about how many children we reach; it's about how deeply we reach each child" said Jacob Lief.

As the distinguished panelists at the Action Network meeting agreed, effective early intervention is the surest route to success. Ubuntu's holistic model ensures that the children in Port Elizabeth's townships get just that.

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