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SA's political parties have not been serving our democracy very well. But the bigger parties will be forced to confront their divisions after the election, writes **Max du Preez**.

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Helping hand for moms

2018-11-06 06:00

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PeoplesPost

The journey to motherhood might be an exciting one, but it is never an easy road.

However, Thula Baba Project makes it easy for mothers to take on this journey. The organisation equips mothers with the tools needed to implement the knowledge gained through free classes at partner organisations.

Caroline Isted from Thula Baba Project says the syllabus has been developed by Living Hope (an NGO based in Capri) and is taught by volunteers at the Living Hope clinics in Masiphumele, Ocean View and Capricorn. The same syllabus has also been adopted by the Zoe Project, an NGO based in Retreat, and is taught by their volunteers at their centre at the Retreat Maternity Clinic and at Mowbray Maternity Hospital.

Thula Baba Project, previously known as Thula Baba Box, was run by the Chris Otto Foundation for a while before it was taken over by Isted as a project a year ago and registered as a separate NPO in March this year. The operations are run out of private homes in Tokai.

A store and packing room has been given to them by another Tokai resident who responded to a Facebook plea when Isted's lounge could no longer cope.

Isted says their goal is to change lives by equipping mothers.

"We encourage mothers to attend antenatal and child care classes as provided by our partner organisations by providing a Thula Bucket as an incentive to entice mothers to firstly sign up and then to stay the distance and complete the eight weeks. We have created three versions of a localised 'Finnish Baby Box'. We consulted with various experts – both academics and folks in the field – to ensure that the contents of our buckets are safe and sound, practical for local conditions, and up to date with research," she says.

The three buckets cover three stages and are filled with only new items – "as an incentive gift we can't give secondhand items", and so they don't collect those – although they have an agreement with Baby Bundles (another NGO) for secondhand goods.

The first bucket, which is the Antenatal Bucket, is given after the antenatal class and covers birth and the first few months. This bucket contains some toiletries for mothers as might be required at or just after the birth and also the first nappies and clothes for the baby. The extra items in this bucket are



Gretha Venter from the Zoe Project, Trixy Lochner, Caroline Isted from Thula Baba Project and Shandra Williams with her baby.

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the wrap which encourages skin-to-skin contact with the newborn and the first colourful toy and book. The second bucket, the Baby Bucket, is given after the moms-and-babies classes and is for babies aged three to nine months. They focus less on nappies and clothes in this one – it has another book and a rather special one-of-a-kind toy. They include teething in this bucket. The third bucket is for the toddler stage and has supplies from nine months to two years old. The focus moves more to educational toys and books, and they include a first (divided) plate, a spoon, a cup and a bib, among other things.

Isted has no doubt that their work is of great value to mothers who can't afford these essential items. She adds that they are delighted about the milestone they have reached and the lives they have touched.

She says mothers are under-resourced - they either don't have the knowledge or have very little, and very limited access to information.

"These are generally not the moms who will have the means to be able to spend hours on Google, reading books from Amazon, and listening to TED talks and other YouTube bloggers," Isted explains.

To be part of the programme, mothers have to register their pregnancies before four months.

For pregnancies booked at Retreat, Hanover Park or Mowbray maternity clinics, contact Thula Baba Project's partner NGO, the Zoe Project. Mothers in Ocean View, Capricorn and Masiphumelele should contact Living Hope.

V For more details, visit Facebook: Thula Baba Project or www.thulababaproject.co.za

V To donate, go to www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/ThulaBabaProject.



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