In South Africa, numerous communities face the challenge of extreme poverty, compounded with the impacts of HIV and AIDS. The country has one of the worst Gini co-efficiencies in the world (10.6). South Africa has an unemployment rate of 25%. South Africa has an illiteracy rate of 24% among adults. Between 6 and 8 million adults are not functionally literate. A comparative study conducted by the National Research Foundation indicates that scientific and mathematical literacy amongst South African students is the lowest internationally. Studies also show that learning in a second language which is not your mother tongue is known to impair the assimilation of knowledge. Despite progress made since South Africa’s democratization in 1994, schools and educational facilities in disadvantage urban township and rural area communities remain marginalized. Schools in these communities are often plagued with the challenges of drug abuse and alcoholism, teenage pregnancies and gang violence. The average learner to teacher ratio is 32.6 to 1. Schools in disadvantaged areas have been known to record lower matric pass rates than schools in more affluent areas.

With the aim of enhancing education, development and creating opportunities for youth in disadvantaged communities in Gauteng, HPP South Africa initiated 3 Humana Youth in Action Centres under the Dell YouthConnect Program in the communities of Doornkop, Munsieville and Simunye in early 2010. The program has created a framework for young people between the ages of 15 and 20 years to develop their potential and to play a meaningful role in their communities. The centers have focus on providing computer skills, math and science skills to young people and give them chances to prosper and grow while searching for future education and employment opportunities. In 2011 the program continued with a center in Durban in the township of Clermont.

The program HUMANA YOUTH IN ACTION has been well received in all 4 communities. All centers have proven successful in building good relations with the community and local authorities, who strongly support the continuation of the program with a second year. The Learners’ Program implemented at the

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1 www.warmafrica.com
2 www.money.cnn.com
3 www.nrf.ac.za
4 www.unicef.org
centers for 100 young people has had a marked impact on the participants’ lives. Youth participants have benefited through having gained computer literacy skills and new academic skills which will serve both to improve their schooling and academic performance and also to increase their chances of finding meaningful employment. Participants have also gained a new confidence in their abilities to effect change by realizing the contribution they are able to give to the community. They have participated in community activities such as organizing the popular Saturday Clubs for children, as well as through carrying out community outreach activities on Fridays.

Having witnessed the impact of the program on participants in the communities of Doornkop, Munsieville, Simunye, and Clermont HPP South Africa wishes for the continuation of the program within existing communities and extend services already offered. In order to broaden the training of the young learners, HPP South Africa has introduced 40 educative lessons to contribute to the young people’s general education and to raise awareness and discussions about their role as citizens of South Africa.

The centers will be open to youth and learners who want to learn to use computers and to participate in the program. Support will continuously be offered to learners who will come to finish their matric. Learners from the first program cycle can continue for a second year to improve and advance on their existing computer skills. Learners who did not succeed with certain subjects during the first year will be given the opportunity and support to redo them and thereby improve their chances to continue education or get a job. During the second year of operation, a new activity in the 3 existing centers will consist of including 2 weekly afternoons for local secondary schools students, where they can use computers to pursue their studies. On the other 3 afternoons, the centers will be open to youth in general, who will enroll in 4 weeks programs consisting of 18 lessons. This activity will allow learners access to internet to do research on their studies and to learn to use the most common computer programs like excel, word and power point and facebook.

The center will impact the lives of 5,000 young South Africans. Besides the 100 young people in the core group, between 500 – 1,000 school children will participate in computer classes in the afternoons, and 3000 people from the community will be reached in Friday Actions to nearby schools and work places
with HIV/AIDS prevention messages.

GAUTENG AND KWA ZULU NATAL
Gauteng Province contributes to approximately 33% of South Africa’s National GDP. Although the per capita GDP in Gauteng is higher than the national average, it still experiences high level of poverty, with 45% of the population in this province earning an income below the poverty level. While 40.6% of residents have completed high school, only 12.6% of the youth go on to acquire a education beyond high school. A consequence thereof is a lack of specialized skills, and a high unemployment rate among young people. KwaZulu Natal is one of the important centres of economic activity in South Africa and has the highest number (59.9 million) of people in the country and there is also a highly mobile population, with rural people moving between the Province and the Gauteng Province. Here, unemployment stands at 37.5%, with approximately 63.9% of the people living below the poverty line. Again, the youth are the most affected by the situation, impacting on their education, schooling support and their ability to find employment. Drawing from the success of the program thus far, it is envisaged that the youth in community Pinetown will gain much needed support and opportunities not only to better their own lives, but also by taking on a big role in contributing to their community and break the cycle of poverty.

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6 www.elsenburg.com