

PROJECT STARTED AFTER ZIMBABWEAN MAN DIES OF STARVATION

Film focuses spotlight on refugees' plight

MONIQUE DUVAL

A Better Life is a short film by BBC producer Anna Telford, which was screened for the first time last Wednesday (September 9) at the Michaelis School of Fine Art.

The film tells the story of the Adonis Musati Project (AMP) and the struggles faced by many refugees in the city centre and the province.

AMP started in 2007 and is named after a 23-year-old Zimbabwean refugee who died of starvation outside Home Affairs in Adderley Street, while waiting for his asylum papers.

The film starts with AMP founder member Gahlia Brogneri speaking about her experience after the death of Mr Musati.

"I really didn't know this was happening. The first I heard of it was when I saw the photograph in a newspaper and I decided to do something about it. So my friends and I gathered food parcels and started handing them out to refugees at Home Affairs and under in the bridge in Foreshore. If we don't help these people, there is no hope," she said.

'All I wanted was for my children to go to school'

The film also shows a warehouse in Woodstock, which houses between 90 and 100 refugees.

"The warehouse has one bathroom for the women and one for the men.

"It is difficult for people living there. It is noisy and people are living on top of each other," Ms Brogneri said.

Refugee Linet Mwanza gives an emotional account of her life in Zimbabwe and talks about her hopes for a better life for her children in South Africa.

"My husband worked as a civil servant but the money he was earning was too little, it wasn't even enough for him to go to work. I am so sad, I don't know myself anymore. All I wanted was for my children to go to school and a better life for my kids," Mrs Mwanza said.

Speaking at the screening, teenage Zimbabwean refugee Tafadswa Mashagwa described how he slept under Cape Town bridges in sacks and boxes, scratched in dustbins for food and was eventually hospitalised for malnutrition, before he was found by AMP volunteers.

AMP has helped thousands of refugees with food, clothing, training and accommodation.



■ Gahlia Brogneri and Zimbabwean Tafadswa Mashagwa, at the screening of A Better Life.

The organisation now has 300 refugees on its records, being helped and guided towards independence, with many more approaching them each week.

Until now, refugees have been housed in any ad-hoc shelter available.

However, a half-way house on a piece of agricultural land be-

tween Kommetjie and Fish Hoek was made available and is now home for 12 young refugee boys whom the project is helping to get back on their feet.