

Summer 2007

image courtesy of www.bulembu.org

Bulembu: Building Sustainability

Vancouver entrepreneur Volker Wagner leads an unthinkable venture

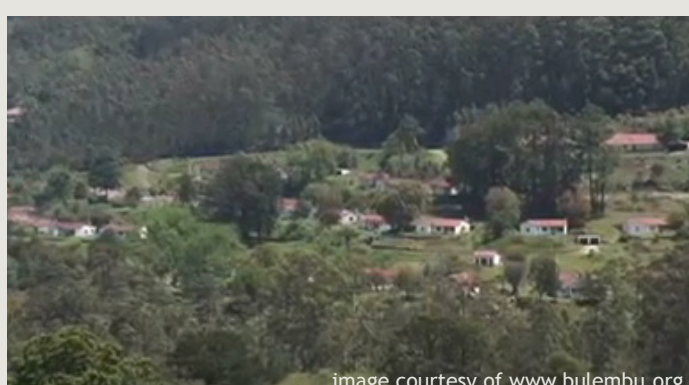


image courtesy of www.bulembu.org

Written by Vanessa Dyck

In the Highveld of NorthWest Swaziland, several bright red roofs stand in stark contrast to the lush, green forestry that surrounds them. A wealthy town before the Havelock Mine closed in 2001, these houses, schools, and other facilities were then deserted, falling into a state of disrepair that echoed Swaziland's dismal economy. Today, however, the buildings reverberate with voices of visionaries and inhabitants—a tangible symbol of hope for the future.

The now-growing community of Bulembu is a testament to the value of social entrepreneurship from a Christian perspective. Initiated by entrepreneur Volker Wagner, who is interviewed in the upcoming book *Profiles of Entrepreneurial Leaders*, Bulembu has two equally important goals: to convert the old mining town into a self-sustaining community (with over three thousand jobs, involving "the formation of small and medium businesses"), and to care for two thousand orphans within that community. Wagner believes the project is unique and daunting like few others, but definitely possible.

Wagner first heard about Bulembu while his company, Teldon, was financially assisting the opening of an eye clinic in Swaziland. He befriended the local

surgeon, who later informed him that a nearby abandoned mining village was for sale. Intrigued, Wagner investigated the situation further—and the idea of Bulembu came into being.

In 2006, Wagner orchestrated the purchase of Bulembu by raising funds in the West. He and the other founders placed the ownership of the village into the hands of Swazis by creating a not-for-profit charity. Over the last year they have built the organization with the vision that seed capital from the West will help Swazis build Bulembu's economy and enterprises to the point where Bulembu will no longer depend on donors for aid. With the potential for a wide variety of ventures—a honey farm, a timber mill, tourism, and more—Wagner projects that the transition to a self-sustaining economy will take about 13 years. Already, the project has created 300 jobs, as Bulembu Timber exports 40 large truck-loads a month and Bulembu Honey has over 500 hives.

As Chairman and Director of Bulembu, Wagner has prepared a letter that he hopes to give to every donor in the year 2020. It reads, "From the onset we set out to be unique and different within the not-for-profit world by defining success not solely on numbers... but rather by the achievement of sustainability in the Bulembu community." Further down, the letter says, "although many doubted and felt such a dream could never be realized, today all of this has occurred... because of God's grace." The letter concludes by thanking the donors for their contributions, and informing them that their money is no longer required.

But it is still a long journey to that point. Wagner feels the biggest challenge will be to create "an economic engine strong enough to support both the village and the 2,000 orphans Bulembu will care for."

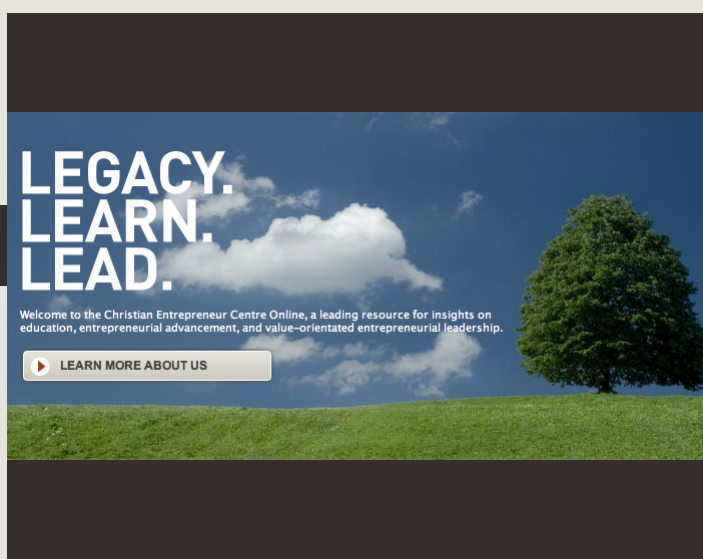
CEC Website

The Christian Entrepreneur Centre is online! Thanks to web-design group Domain7, which generously donated half of its services to this project, you can now access information about our centre at:

www.christianentrepreneurcentre.com

The site features excerpts from our books, event details, entrepreneur interview nominee forms, sponsorship options, and other helpful information.

We encourage you to view our new website and provide us with constructive feedback.



New to the team

This summer the Christian Entrepreneur Centre hired Vanessa Dyck (formerly Vanessa Wiebe) to assist with a variety of projects.

Vanessa, a 2007 TWU graduate (Communications major, Art minor, and class Valedictorian), specializes in writing, photography, and graphic design. She grew up on a grain farm near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and now lives in Langley with her husband. She feels privileged to be part of the Christian Entrepreneur Centre team.

"We have exciting ideas for the future of the Centre," she states, "and they are already beginning to come into place."

Her position involves editing publications, designing a new look for the centre, researching information for the centre, and doing some organizational work.



Upcoming Forum

The 3rd Annual *Entrepreneurial Leadership Forum* will be Wednesday, November 7th, 2007. It will feature keynote speaker Peter Legge, and will also include a short live auction, the official release of Vol. 3 of *Profiles of Entrepreneurial Leaders* (formerly the *Christian Entrepreneur* series), and comments from some of the entrepreneurs featured in the book.

We believe this event will be the largest of its kind in North America with a focus on entrepreneurship and faith. We expect over 400 attendees this year.

For more information, please visit our new website.

Seeking Approval for "The Centre for Entrepreneurial Leaders"

Part of the expanding vision for the Christian Entrepreneur Centre involves a process of re-envisioning our identity.

We believe "The Centre for Entrepreneurial Leaders" is a fitting title for our program, since our goal is to teach and empower future entrepreneurs to be leaders in the marketplace.

As you have probably noticed, our newsletter is now called "The Entrepreneurial Leader." We plan to implement the theme of entrepreneurial leadership into other aspects of our centre as well.

We would be happy to receive your feedback about these new titles, and we will provide more information in coming months.