

# Professor Elain Vlok of the Clover Mama Afrika Trust

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Celebrating its 16th year in operation, Clover Mama Afrika earlier this year revealed its new logo - a refreshment of its corporate identity that serves to reinforce its African roots while celebrating its strong, fearless 'mamas'. The new identity aims to communicate the passion, trust and spirit of *ubuntu* that both the Clover mamas and the Clover Mama Afrika team have embraced.



We chatted to Professor Elain Vlok, Clover manager of the Clover Mama Afrika Trust, to learn more about the conceptual elements behind the new logo, how the brand has evolved over the years, and how being a proudly African brand is incorporated into Clover Mama Afrika's operations.

■ *As brand custodian for Clover Mama Afrika, what does your role entail?*

**Prof Elain Vlok:** It takes a ton of commitment, passion and perseverance to run this project and reach a goal and then to maintain its success. I embarked on this project 18 years ago, and it has changed the lives of so many individuals, including my own, and continues to do so.

“ At the centre of everything we do is the wonderful women we carefully select and train to better both themselves and their communities who we affectionately call ‘mamas’. ”

■ *Clover Mama Afrika recently unveiled its new logo. Could you share with us the conceptual elements behind the new design.*

**Vlok:** The new logo really embraces the project; from the image of the fearless Mama Afrika, to its bold and vibrant colours, it embraces the project narratives of:

- the willingness and selflessness to serve communities,
- the embracing of creative expression,
- a willingness to explore outside oneself for answers, and

- an openness as a function of compassion

The refreshed corporate identity is contemporary but holds onto the project's slogan "Ukwakha Isizwe" meaning, "building and nurturing a nation". It serves to reinforce our African roots, while the new identity serves to communicate the passion, trust and spirit of *ubuntu* that both the Clover Mamas and Clover Mama Afrika team work with each day.

“ The new logo embodies the spirit of ubuntu. It serves to represent our Mama Afrikas - She is Human. She is Woman. She is She. ”

#### Why the need for a new logo in the 16th year since the organisation's inception?

Vlok: We needed a new logo to represent where we've been, while refreshing the look and feel to take the project forward with passion while better representing Clover Mama Afrika.



#BehindtheBrandManager: Natasha Mkhize, brand and marketing manager at Curro  
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#### How has the brand evolved over the years?

Vlok: When we started, we had no idea we would have mamas all over our beautiful country. We didn't know the impact we'd make. Today the project has grown from strength to strength and each of our mamas continues to make us proud.

Clover Mama Afrika has now established a reputation for being one of South Africa's most innovative and sustainable corporate investment projects. The project currently has 27 operating Clover Mama Afrikas who collectively manage 141 income-generating projects and 39 added-value projects.

I want to appreciate how far we have come, acknowledge what we have dreamed of and accomplished, and to use this new milestone to set a tone of passion, positivity and commitment for 2021 and beyond.

#### How is being a proudly African brand incorporated into Clover Mama Afrika's operations?

Vlok: Being African is at the centre of what we do – we've built this model on the strong African women of our country, without them, the project would not be as successful as it is.

These phenomenal ladies are at the heart of the project, act as pillars of strength in their communities. These mamas are incredibly special ladies who already make a difference to the people around them and want to empower others to become self-sustaining too. We focus on each and every mama's strength at her centre, help her and guide her, so she can run her centre in a way that is uniquely 'her' and what her community means to her and what she represents.



Professor Elain Vlok, Clover manager of the Clover Mama Afrika Trust



#BehindtheBrandManager: Gerry Thomas, the man behind Krispy Kreme SA  
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#### What have been the most successful channels for sharing Clover Mama Afrika's brand message in the market?

Vlok: Continued print, online media coverage and broadcast interview opportunities have really worked wonders for us over the years and we are always so grateful for any type of publicity that we secure. Our PR company and social media team are amazing and many of our supporters follow our journey in the media and via social media. Community media serves a special purpose as it communicates the wonderful work that the Clover Mama Afrikas are doing in their communities, further entrenching their pride.

■ *What have been some of the vital tools and trends of your trade?*

Vlok: Upskilling our mamas so that they can in turn upskill those around them in their communities is definitely an ongoing trend at Clover Mama Afrika. Mamas are trained numerous times every year and we also visit each and every one of their centres across the country to ensure they are implementing the vital tools they have been taught, and running their centres to the best of their abilities.

During the various lockdowns we shifted to virtual training as well. I would say a critical tool is our evaluation – we have to ensure these ladies are serious about their progression so we take this very seriously.



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■ *As brand custodian, what's the best part of your job?*

Vlok: Apart from spending a lot of time going into the field and finding suitable Clover Mama Africas, my task is to keep them motivated, as all of our Clover Mama Afrika's need a pat on the back for what they are doing as it is such selfless work.

Our Clover Mama Afrikas receive training in hairdressing, welding, basic sewing and art, from various professionals, however, I am training them in cooking and baking, mosaic, quilting, cake baking and decoration. As quality is very important to me, a lot of time goes into quality control of the goods they are making. Ongoing visits are administered so as to clearly judge and see first-hand how their centres are doing, and this takes a lot of time.

In short, I just love what I do.

## ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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