



The Eersterivier Projects Organisation (EPO) is a registered non-profit organisation and forms an umbrella body for different projects dedicated to the upliftment of the community in the Eersterivier area of the Tsitsikamma region in South Africa.

The EPO creates hand embroidery pieces that are made and incorporated into various products. Their story began in 1997/1998 when Hettie de Klerk voiced the idea of a woman's club where the farmer's wives can get together with the women that lived and worked on the farms.

The idea of empowerment through embroidery led to the birth of the Eersterivier Projects Organisation when Leoni de Lange en Ansie Loots taught a few women to make embroidery potholders in 2003. The first 200 potholders sold out in a matter of weeks!

Today this project involves more than 110 people that were previously unemployed. The area includes Clarkson, Woodlands, Tsitsikamma and Suurveld farming area as well as the town of Kareedouw.

The completed items are for sale at various farm stalls, from Eersterivier to Cape Town, as well as curio shops in PE, Plettenberg Bay, Knysna, Stellenbosch and Cape Town.





The EPO is managed by a Management Committee consisting of 5 members, and meet once a term. The management team meets every two months, and every month there is an operations meeting, discussing the process/plans for each month.

Leoni de Lange is the only person who is employed by the EPO on a permanent basis. All the other members of the management team are voluntary.

Other projects:

The EPO also opened a computer training centre where 120 children (from Grade 0 to 7) benefit from this project. They also have a vegetable tunnel with training on how to plant and grow their own vegetables, which grew into a feeding project for the community.



Quilters became involved:

In June 2018, a few quilters from St Francis Bay and Humansdorp joined some of the embroiderers in Kareedouw for a sewing bee, where they were taught to use their left over scraps to do improvisational piecing.



Thereafter, Sewing @ the C (Antoinette Kriel), together with the Eersteriver Projects Organisation, offered a challenge whereby an embroidery block from the EPO had to be used to make a small article (e.g. placemat, potholder, cushion, bag). Some quilting stitches had to be incorporated, connecting embroidery stitches with quilting stitches.

The “Connecting Threads in Kareedouw” exhibition showcased the work of the joined participation from quilting groups from St Francis Bay and George, as well as the embroiderers from the Eersterivier Projects Organisation. The entries were judged by two SAQG Accredited Quilt Judges and were on display at the Dias Quilters Guild’s Spring Show in Port Elizabeth in October 2018.



(EPO entries)



(Quilters' entries)

Leonie de Lange managed to visit the exhibition in PE with three of the embroiderers, who were very pleased with the awards they won!



(From left to right: Nicoline Kamineth, Rosaline Ruiters, Leonie de Lange and Samuel Scheepers, who also won Viewer's Choice with his entry)

Contact:

EPO Operations and Marketing: Ronelle Coetzee – 082 404 1445;

epomarketing@igen.co.za

www.epo.org.za

Facebook: Eersterivier Projects Organisation