

Profile of South African Sitting Volleyball Athlete Leonardo Gladile

Leonardo Gladile lives with his wife, Anam, and his two young girls on the outskirts of a squatter camp about 40min from Cape Town. He moved to Cape Town from the Transkei, a remote and rural area in South Africa. He and his wife have not been able to find work and have been surviving for years off disability grants. They are proud people and take care of their home, a temporary shack made from wood and tin sheeting. Each day Anam cleans the inside of their house and Leonardo sweeps the back yard, a small area that is constantly blown over with beach sand.



Leonardo with his family outside their home

Every week Leonardo religiously makes the journey to Cape Town for Sitting Volleyball training. He stands on the side of a main road, often in the dark, waiting for transport to pick him up and then return him home late at night again.



Leonardo at Training

Despite huge difficulties, Leonardo makes almost every single practice. He shares his passion for the sport with others and has encouraged potential players from the townships to join the sport too. For Leonardo this is more than just a game and exercise.....Sitting Volleyball gives hope and purpose.

“My life is suffering.....I want to show something more for my wife and kids.”



Linathi (6 years) and Luhle (4 years), Leonardo's children

Leonardo trains hard. Each morning early he does a stretching programme in his home and, when he can, he walks to a friend's place and borrows his two dumbbells to do strength exercises and the effort really shows, as he is bulking up.

Leonardo does not speak English very well, but he takes care to share the joy that Sitting Volleyball brings him:

"Sitting Volleyball means I get to know more people."

"It teaches people to co-operate."

"It gives hope..."



Khayelitsha squatter camp