

Report working visit Nan Nieber - March 2017

Introduction

Since two years the YEBO Foundation financially supports the Youth Facilitator Program at Lugebhuta High school. Youth facilitator Dan'sile Shongwe assists and supports the many vulnerable learners in this school.

We regularly receive reports from our local partner Mamkhulu, who provides coaching/mentoring for the YF. The reports show us the wide range of support she provides; from counselling to home-visits, from teaching about drugs to taking girls to hospital and the police.

Impact?

What now is the impact of this program on the learners and the school community? What is the added value of her work? Is it worth the money we invest? Is it worthwhile to continue the program.

Interviews

To get a clear insight, we interviewed 15 stake holders; parents, learners, teachers, social workers, members of the School Governing Body and members of the Managing Team, the Principal, her coordinator at school and Youth Facilitator Dan'sile self. We asked each of them a few short questions.

A summary of the most important and often mentioned issues.

Lilian Sifunda, nanny to the baby and mother to 14 year old Ntokozo, had been walking 5 km to come and tell us that "without Dan'sile's help her son would no longer be in school. He couldn't concentrate in school, performed badly, needed help. Dan'sile came to their home to investigate. 'I was so relieved with her help.' Both parents are not working, son had no shoes, bad uniform, not sufficient food. Dan'sile got him shoes and a shirt and makes sure that the left over school food is now distributed among the most needy.



Xolani Nkosi, 26 years old grade 12, lost parents 2 years ago. Started High school at 18. 'Ever since sisDan'sile has arrived there is a place where we can turn to for help.'



Agreeneth Mamba, 16 years grade 10, lost her mother 19th February. Her father lost his job in December, now looking for work in Limpopo. Alone at home with younger brother. 'SisDan'sile is always there for me when I need her, she means a lot. When my mother passed away my mind was disturbed, but she is always telling me things will get better, to concentrate on my schoolwork. That helps me a lot, when I think of that at home.'



Mrs O.H. Mdluli, School Management Team & teacher Afrikaans

'As teachers we don't have time to check learners at home. Educators are more focused on the curriculum. Now that she is here I can send my learners to her and I know she will assist and very important, follows up. I can see the difference in the learner in class. She made a big difference in my life as a teacher. Without this program we won't survive.'

The Yebo Foundation is all for shared responsibility and participation. In that light I raised the matter of a gradually contribution by Lugebhuta High school to the cost of the Youth Facilitator Program. She fully agrees with the point of view and will certainly raise the matter in the SMT.



Dan'sile took the initiative to gather used school uniforms. She makes lists of all learners in need of shirts, shoes etc. Dan'sile: 'Not having proper shoes and school uniform is a poignant problem for many learners. They feel ashamed because it shows their poor background and are being teased by fellow learners. It affects their performance at school and even causes learners to drop out.' The Youth Facilitator picked it up and her list shows the extent and importance of this problem, hardly known before. Now it is recognised and addressed and many learners benefit. YEBO supporters donated 150 pair of school shoes.



Mr P.W. Shongwe, member School Management Team

As a teacher he is concerned about the boys who are taking drugs near the toilets. He is impressed by the way Dan'sile addresses this topic and gives information and teaches the boys about the impact on their lives. He will also start thinking about a way to find sponsors for the YF Program and tell the Circuit office about the program.

Dan'sile will be standing by the gate checking the learners and identifies those who have challenges. It helps me as a teacher a lot, knowing she takes care'



Mrs. N Mdluli, Deputy Principal

Before Dan'sile was here the problems of behaviour were hardly solved. The parents were not coming to school or there are no parents. We wouldn't know. The learners won't tell us the truth about their home situation. They are ashamed or shy to tell a teacher. Dan'sile is more like a friend, they trust her. She will get the correct information and report to the Social Committee and to her mentor Sthembiso. If he is around he will go with her and meet the parents. They know how to deal with the situation correctly, they are well trained.

The social committee than understands the challenges of the learners and acts accordingly.



Mrs N. Guebu, member School Governing Body

'In the culture the parents are not befriended with their children, the elders are feared. The learners have befriended Dan'sile, they are open to her. That is why she can assist them. She understands, listens, gives advise. Motivates them to stay in school. Much better than running to friends and get the wrong advise.'

New project!

Mrs Guebu tells that Dan'sile recently asked the Patron of the school for a delivery of sanitary pads. It turns out that many girls cannot afford to buy them and don't go to school during their period. It causes much distress. Suddenly a new project is born! Mrs. Guebu offers the use of 2 sewing machines and some ladies from her church, YEBO offers material. Dan'sile and Mrs Ligege will assist and the 'Washable Pads Project' is a fact. Together we watch a YouTube film, it shows how to make them. The next morning I drive to Nelspruit and find all necessary fabrics and tools. The ladies will soon make a prototype and start sewing. Many happy girls will than be able to go to school. Always!!



Kate Nkosi & Nomcebo Sithole, Social Workers

They work closely with the Youth Facilitator and are happy with her. Dan'sile knows all the orphans and now they can easily identify and monitor the ones with a grant.



Zandile Takude, Accounting, young teacher.

'I had 2 boys in grade 9, they were struggling. Orphans alone at home. Dan'sile got them a uniform and a small piece job to help them. She follows up on them, that is one of her strengths. It helped them to perform better at school. If she had not been here? This would never have happened. I cannot do it. She took one of my learners to hospital and she keeps on checking! Yes, the learners are helped a lot.'



Mr.B.M. Mdaka, Principal

Before Dan'sile was here only 5% of the problems was revealed to us. Now 95% is known. Knowing learners with challenges relieves me from just guessing. The YF is touching positively and making an impact in the learners' life. That has improved performance. As a Principal I am supposed to do home visits, unfortunately I have no time. I am determined to keep this YF Program in the school, although it might be a challenge to budget for it. I also like to have a male YF, the boys are smoking dagga behind the boys toilets, and there is fighting. We appreciate the support it has really made a huge difference in the school.



Dan'sile Shongwe, Youth facilitator

'My most important job is to take care of the learners. To tell them the truth about challenges in life now and in the future. To respect their fellow learners and the teachers.' The learners also bring their medication to her. She keeps it save and makes sure they take it. One of her many tasks. Leaners from other schools have heard about her and are also coming to seek her help.

Conclusion: In this area every school needs and deserves a Youth Facilitator. The added value of her work is impressive and cherished by all stakeholders alike.