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Ingapakathi – My Inner World

Overview

Over a period of two months, Madelize van der Merwe (from the Carinus Art School) guided 18 orphans and vulnerable children to express their inner world using crayons, chalks and paints. All of the participating children were between the ages of 7 to 10 years old.

The workshop itself forms a part of a broader life skills programme offered by the Raphael Centre for children affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS.

The Raphael Centre aims to give vulnerable children and orphans *hope*, as we feel this is the most important factor in living a proactive and positive life. We want to empower these children in overcoming their social vulnerability. Having started by helping the children to express their wishes through their artwork, we want to continue to equip them with the confidence and skills to realise their dreams as adults.

The artworks was exhibited at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown from the 27th June until the 7th of July 2013. It shared the children's heartfelt wishes for their lives and was responded by bliss, admiration and inspiration as well as motivation for future projects by its visitors. There were sold postcards containing pictures from the children's art work which helped covering expenditures from the project.



The success of this project is a result of the kindness, caring and collaboration of many community members and businesses, such as Carinus Art School, Classic Framers, PG Glass, Aloex, Cash& Carry, Wordsuntame and several community members.

1. Process

Beneficiaries: OVC age group 7-10 years (Number of children: 18)

1. Art workshops from beginning of May until 21st June 2013

- 8.5.-19.6.2013 1 x week Wednesdays
- 24.6.2013 artwork celebration
- Venue: Raphael Centre Hall
- Activities: self-portray, copying pictures with flowers and animals, talking about and visualising most important wish, colouring-in black and white photos (portray of children). Here, the main work was the visualization of the children's most important wishes

Aims:

When working with vulnerable children and orphans the Raphael Centre aims at creating "hope", as this is the most important internal condition to live a pro-active life. The children attending our program are "vulnerable" as some of them are orphaned by AIDS or HIV-positive themselves, respectively are living with parents who are living with the virus. When working with them we want the children to overcome the social status of being "vulnerable" per se.

The art project: Being aware of their wishes, we want to equip the children with confidence and skills to transform their wishes into perspectives and fulfilling their dreams as adults. Additionally, we intend supporting the children in discovering their talents, promoting self-expression and self-confidence.

Coordination, facilitators and volunteers Arts Workshop:

- Ndumi Pinyana (translator, coordinator), Anne Loeffler (coordination)
- Madelize Van Der Merwe (art teacher from Johan Cariness Art School: coordinator of the project),
- Tracey Prenter & Nokukhanya Ntombela (master students psychology, Rhodes Psychology clinic)
- Rachel Landale (volunteer),



Outcomes:

At the end of the workshop, each child could accomplish an art-map containing a self-portray, a couple of free paintings, and a self-designed copy of paintings of flowers and birds. During the first sessions Ms van der Merwe let the children exploring and experimenting with the available material: crayons chalk and paint. The main work formed was expressing and visualizing the most

important wish. All the children could complete their art-work in the last workshop session. The last meeting appeared to be special for all of us as we were visited by the Grahamstownian band "Wordsuntame". The artists came to introduce themselves to the children as they committed to provide music entertainment during the exhibition opening (see below).

From each art work presented at the exhibition there has been made 20 picture postcards.

Both, its art-map and a postcard with a written personal note connected to their wish were handed over on Monday, the 24th of June to the children. Here the Raphael Centre staff, the workshop facilitators, as well as the children gathered in the hall of the Centre to celebrate the children and their work.



Picture: the arts room



Picture (left): Nokukhanya (psychologist clinic) with one of the children - the photographs (in the back) later have been coloured in by the children and were used for the individual info-box (name, age, wish) at the exhibition

The workshop was visited and reported about by Kayla Roux, a journalist from the local newspaper Grocott's Mail.

Finally, the children and their parents were invited to join the exhibition opening on the 26th June 2013 at Carinus Annex in Grahamstown.



Picture: Art Work - Celebration

Quotes from children attendees about their most important wish:

“I want to finish school so that I can work. Then I want my own car and house to share with my brother.” (Silindokuhle(m), age: 8 years)

“I want to be a paramedic and drive an ambulance. I want to help others, especially people who’ve been hurt or are ill.” (Kamva (m), age: 7 years)

“I want to have a nice, big house when I grow up to share with my family.” (Abulele (fm), age: 9 years)

“I want my own car that I can drive my sister around in. I also want to work at Hi-Tech like my brother.” (Lithalethu (m), age: 7 years)

“I wish for a special person to be my best friend.” (Jade M. (fm), age: 8 years)

“I wish for a lot of flowers, stars and love. I also wish for a long live.” (Melissa (fm), age: 10 years)

“I wish for lots of friends who love me.” (Jade P. (fm), age: 7 years)

“I wish for a long prosperous and happy life.” (Vanashree (fm), age: 8 years)

“I want to finish school and be a school principle when I grow up. I want to buy my own house to stay in with my family.” (Sinelizwi (fm), age: 8 years)

“I want to be a school teacher when I grow up. I want my own house to stay in with my parents and siblings.” (Elam (fm), age: 7 years)

“I wish that the sun always shines so I can play outside with my toys. I also want to drive a car when I grow up.” (Axolile (m), age: 7 years)

“I want to be a police woman or a soldier when I grow up. I also want my own car and house to live in with my family.” (Latitha (fm), age: 7 years)

“I wish for a good weather always when I go to school. I want to be a teacher when I grow up.” (Kamvalethu (fm), age: 8 years)

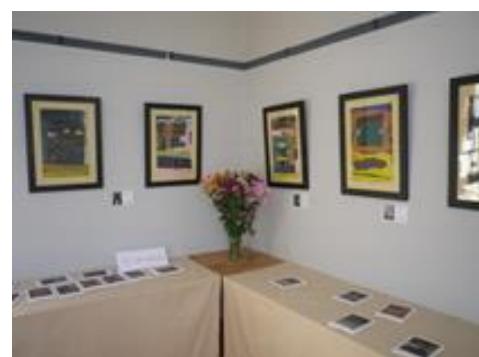
“I want to finish school so that I can be a lawyer when I grow up. I want to have my own house to stay in with my family.” (Avile (fm), age: 10 years)

“I want to be a police woman to keep peace and arrest criminals.” (Msindise (fm), age: 8 years)

“I want to finish school successfully, get a good job and buy a sports car. I would love to be a salesman selling cars.” (Aphiwe (m), age: 10 years)

“I would love to go on a long holiday with my family.” (Thandokazi (fm), age: 9 years)

2. "Ingapakathi – My Inner World" – Exhibition from 27th June until 7th July 2013



Aim:

Frequently, orphans and vulnerable children are socially marginalised and publically perceived as "lost children" – being likely candidates for "street children" without hopes and no future. Here, we want to intervene: With sharing the children's heartfelt wishes with the public and presenting their talents equally with other artists which exhibited their work at the National Arts Festival we intended to challenge Grahamstown's public opinion and idea of children affected by HIV. Also, when displaying their internal positive world of hopes and dreams it was aimed at stimulating the Grahamstownian public's sense of support when providing these children a life skills program that is meant to provide a convenient base for developing and pursuing their ideas and wishes for the future.



The artists



In the exhibition

Coordination, Planning and Facilitation of Arts Exhibition:

- Ndumi Pinyana (translator, coordinator), Anne Loeffler (coordination)
- Madelize Van Der Merwe (art teacher from Johan Cariness Art School: coordinator of the project)
- Justin Kourie (design post cards and poster - volunteer)

Exhibition Opening

The exhibition and its opening took place at the Foyer of Carinus Annex building in Donkinstreet (Grahamstown) on the 26th 2013. The children and their parents have been the main focus during the opening. Further, there were invited all the community donors and sponsors of the project (see next section) and the Raphael Centre Management Committee. The local band "Wordsuntame" attended to voluntarily entertain and celebrate the art work with the children.



Picture: opening words by van Niekerk

Program:

1. Opening and speech: Annalie van Niekerk (director Raphael Centre)
2. World Untamed (music performance)
3. Refreshments

The Grocott's Mail was invited and reported about the exhibition in the article "Childhood Dreams on Display" the following day: "One of the most inspiring art exhibitions was officially opened at the Carinus Annex (...) the eve of Festival."¹ Further, we advertised over Facebook, the Newsletter of Grahamstown Parents Network, and the daily Festival Program Newsletter. Also, we invited public via posters and flyers spread at festival venues and supermarkets.

¹ (<http://www.grocotts.co.za/category/section/news/community?page=14>)



Parents listening to speeches



Enyoing the music performance

Outcomes:

The following ten Festival days Raphael Center staff and volunteers took shifts to watch the exhibition room, selling the picture post cards and answering many questions about the project, children's work as well as the children's program at the Raphael Center to interested guests.

From 520 picture post cards during Arts Festival we could sell 261 for Rand 5.00 each. Frequently, visitors were interested in buying the children's art work itself and even the name and info boxes (see appendix).

The visitors showed great respect and astonishment for the children's talents and their future ideas and wishes. Some of them memorized their exhibition experiences in our guest book (see appendix).

2. Way Forward

Challenges:

We feel we can save transport costs when placing the workshop activities at one of our pre-schools in the township community in the future. This would reduce our project costs drastically.

Art work:

The children's artwork was displayed again at the Mandela Day Exhibition at the Rhodes Department of Community Engagement on Thursday, the 8th of August. In the meantime, all of the pictures have been sold. The intake helps funding the art-project 2014: Art with Recycles. The work will be hosted by National Arts Festival 2014 at Carinus Art School again. Further, one of the exhibition visitors suggested offering the National Post-Office the art work as themes for post-stamps (see appendix). We will investigate this option.

Exhibition - Guest Book - Extract - Quotes:

"The kids are amazing! Beautiful experience. Love it! Love them!" (Madelize van der Merwe)

"Love the pink and the yellow together." (Janet)

"This is a great project. I hope there will always be enough support for the work to continue and give hope and love to the children." (Aurela)

"Very colorful and interesting." (Carol)

"Art on Stamps" (Gert)

"Lovely to see real kids art at Festival" (Chris)

"Hope all your dreams come true" (Wietsa)

"Good to see what the kids can do and how they react to love and can feel wanted" (Jenna)

"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to see this work." (Chiman)

"Stunning concept and beautiful to see. Look at better exposure to show everyone this amazing work of art from these children". (Family Smith)

"Great work, keep it up, God bless!" (Ntaba, Teacher)

"Very nice exhibition and displayed nicely". (M. Rogers)

"Cheerful and hopeful. Lovely work and great to see, bring some postcards into town." (S. Paphitiy)

"Beautiful and heart warming. I am sure this will be a memory that stays with the children indefinitely and will create a sense of pride and happiness. Congratulations to those who organized this concept." (no name)

Very nice art for children in age 7-8 old. Some works are great! Wish them the best. Thank you! (Viktoria)

"I think this is a super idea. The children are great artists. Keep dreaming big (children) and one day your dreams come true." (Lithiha, Gr. 7, 12 years)

"What lucky little children to have the opportunity to do such beautiful art" (Hubert).

"We all want "roots". Most of them want to be able to buy a house when they have grown up! We wish them well and that through their support system they grow and prosper". (Mark and Babs)

"Wonderful concept – vibrant colours – good creative use of children's art" (Carol and Mike)

Examples Art Work

Paintings *Msindise*, *Melissa* (2), *Aphiwe* 2, *Lithalethu* (2)