

SCHOOL VISITS REPORT:

12 May 2014 (Monday)

Besides visiting the schools to meet with our bursars, the bursary reps and principals, we were particularly excited about today's visits since we were also presenting the Mears Awards to two joint first and a second prize winner at these two schools based in Khayelitsha. The three learners concerned were the top achievers from our 2013 Western Cape Grade 10 cohort which totalled 183 learners. MAGODA Asanda Ruth from COSAT, RANISI Mondelwa from Harry Gwala High School were joint first prize winners and YAPHI Chumisa from Harry Gwala High School won the second prize! We were warmly received by the principals at both schools and they were very proud to present these achievers to the peers at their schools!

COSAT - This was our first visit to the school since they are at their new premises. The school building and grounds are neatly kept and it is evident that the learners are proud and appreciative of their school.



This was also the first time that a learner at the school was presented with a prize from the ASF. We were invited to present the prize at the assembly, where we were introduced as “very special guests that have come to present one of the learners at the school with a very special award” – No wonder the National Anthem was then sung with such gusto!.

Asanda's achievement was met with loud applause and it was immediately obvious that the entire student body shared in her joy – we could not have asked for a better motivational session. Let's hope this reflects in their June results.



Harry Gwala High School - We were unable to present at an assembly, which turned out to be for the best, since it gave us insight into the dynamics with this group.

Cooperation, caring and peer mentorship was very evident in this class. The two prize winners not only shared the same class, but also turned out to be close friends who have been engaging in friendly challenge since they started their high school careers. The Principal [Mr Mlungu] proudly said “Birds of a feather, flock together -learners from this class keep company with the girls and the good qualities of these two young women are rubbing off on them”!



Just before we left, the President of the Student Representative Council stood up to thank us on behalf of the class.

Clearly this was a group of young go-getters whose achievements did not go unnoticed by their classmates. It was wonderful to observe that there was no envy of their achievements, but rather respect and a sense of “if they can do it, so can I”.

Despite what is happening outside of the school, in the homes, in the townships – these learners are grabbing hold of the opportunity to learn, to grow. We are proud to be supportive of them and the many thousands like them.

SCHOOL VISITS (DAY 2)

14 May 2014 (Wednesday)

Intlanganiso High School

Learners Enrolled: 1261
Number of Educators: 38
Matric Pass rate (2013): 94%

Intlanganiso High School is a no fee school situated in the heart of crime-ridden Khayelitsha Township (Site C area)! There is evidence that the school is being vandalized seemingly regularly – even in the principal’s office there were gaping holes in the ceiling and clearly funds were not available to have repairs done. Despite this, the principal was in good cheer and spent about half an hour with us in general light-hearted conversation. The Bursary Representative [Mr Chepape] briefly joined us and then helped gather our bursars. The principal sat in while we had a word with our bursars; who stated that they still have not received their monies. We were informed of the reason for the delay and made sure that the learners were comfortable with the explanation offered. The principal promised to speed up the matter and confirm payment with us.

Siphamandla High School

The Bursary Representative [Ms Vuza], who is also one of the HODs at the school, is very committed and does not hesitate to go the extra mile for the benefit of the learners – in so much as she would personally drive to our offices to submit applications. She happily gathered our bursars and sat in whilst we had a chat with them. They all seemed to be coping well academically, but they made it clear that they don’t feel safe coming to school. The area that the school is situated in is crime and gang ridden. Fighting between rival gangs on many occasions has resulted in the school being closed until the situation calms down. Most gang members are boys from the area who have dropped out of school. There is not much the school management can do about it and it there seems to be no remedy to the disruption it causes at schools.



On the flip side, our bursars are exposed to and understand the consequences of misbehaving and realise that those who join gangs are drop- outs from school and subsequently don’t have anything better to do. It has prompted them to think about and have a clearer vision of what they want to become in the future. We emphasized the importance of staying in school, persevering and being goal orientated – this is what will help them reach success and become better individuals in the future! We did not have to stress this too much, since they are exposed to the alternative on a daily basis.



(Bursary Representative[Ms Vuza], Bursars and Ntuthu)



(Grade 12 bursars received the Information pamphlets)

Chris Hani Secondary School

This is an Arts and Culture high school situated in Khayelitsha [Makhaza] area. Dance Studies, Design, Dramatic Arts, Music and Visual Arts are some of the creative curriculum based subjects offered at this school. The learners participate in various competitions with other schools and take pride in their excellence – this is evident from the many trophies on display at reception and in the principal's office. The school collaborates with various institutions and are often invited to perform both locally and abroad. One such collaboration sees them in partnership with The World Children's prize foundation, sponsored by the Swedish Government. An annual awards event takes place in Sweden where a group of Chris Hani students were last year invited to perform to much acclaim.

The school seem to be well run and maintained – on the day of our visit, there was a number of workmen tidying up and fixing the fence, trimming the trees and tending the garden. The school offers a calm, disciplined environment – reiterated by the principal's claim that learners at his school are well behaved compared to other schools in the area! Gangsterism doesn't seem to be much of a problem. Drugs and pregnancy seem to be the greatest challenge within the school and despite the fact that NGOs come in to speak with the learners, a number of grade 12 girls currently find themselves pregnant. They are in partnership with a number of NGOs and have a good support and mentorship program, geared towards their Matriculants, in place. A detailed year plan for the Grade 12s is prominently displayed in the principal's office, which gives clear indication and times for various Grade 12 activities (*educational & motivational camps, extra lessons, study groups*). The Principal shows an interest and has a great relationship with the learners – both past and present. One such example is Abongile JOJOZI, who was an ASF bursary holder 2013. He is currently at UCT studying Actuarial Science and is constantly in touch with his principal..



The Bursary Representative (Ms Ntsebeza) gathered our bursars and we spent about 20 minutes with them.

SINAKO HIGH SCHOOL

This was a very brief, somewhat sensitive visit to iron out matters of compliance. We met with the principal [Mr Qinisile] and Finance Secretary/Bursar [Ms Magwaca] who pledged their cooperation. It is unfortunate that the consequence of non-compliance by the school had resulted in our not being able to take on new applications from this school for 2014. The school was invited to submit applications for 2015.

SCHOOL VISITS (DAY 3) 15 May 2014 (Thursday)

Today the focus was on schools in the Phillipi and Brown's Farm areas [Intsebenziswano SSS, Zisukhanyo High School and Phandulwazi High School]! It turned out to be quite a morning, where even our GPS could not get us to our destinations – we went around in circles, feigning confidence until we spotted someone we felt comfortable in asking for directions. It was actually quite amazing that we were ON TIME for all our appointments. We could not meet with the Bursary Representative and bursars at Zisukhanyo – June exams were already in progress! We decided to reschedule this visit. Bursary Representatives at the two schools Intsebenziswano and Phandulwazi high school were prepared for our visit and happily arranged for us to meet with the bursars.

We had informative chats with all our bursars although much of our focus was on the grades 12 and 9 learners. The grade 12s were asked about the careers they intend pursuing after matric, whether it was the career of their choice or that of their parent etc., had they made enquiries at the various institutions to find out what the entry criteria was. It was clear that career guidance was lacking, since most of them had not really given much thought to the matter, neither did they have an idea on how to begin making those enquiries. We handed the grade 12s our information pamphlet that would guide them through the process. They were also encouraged to find and use the resources around them. It was amazing that the grade 9 students were not fully aware that during the last term of this year, they themselves would be required to choose the subjects that they would continue to do in grade 10 to grade 12. Since they were in on the discussion we had with the grade 12s, they understood the importance of making the correct subject choices. We informed them that grade 9 Advice Booklets (*ASF in-house booklets designed to help Grade 9 learners to make informed decision about subjects for high school*) will be posted to them in June!



Left: ASF Bursary holders (Intsebenziswano High School)



*Right: ASF Bursary Holders and Bursary Representative (Ms mali)
- (Phandulwazi High School)*

Overall impression: School buildings are well built and neatly kept. Learners were calm and well behaved.

There are inadequate to no sporting facilities at the schools and music seems to be the only extra mural activity offered at the schools visited. Let us not take away from the fact that belonging to the school choir requires dedication and discipline, focus and an understanding of your role in the group. It is, however, unfortunate that little attention is given to physical activity.

Learners are all neatly attired, motivated and want to successfully complete their high school careers. What is lacking is proper career guidance. Many learners complete their matric year, with a vague idea of what they want to do in future.

The Principals, bursary representatives and educators at all the schools that we visited are passionate and have the learners' best interests at heart; they knew of and were happy to share their learners' success stories and the schools' achievements. Although it sometime proves to be an uphill battle, they are determined to provide a climate for children to learn. The negative impact of social and domestic issues makes it difficult for learners to focus uninterrupted. Drugs, pregnancy and gangsterism are still major problems that the schools are faced with and there seem to be no remedy that can be successfully applied from within. The schools offer nothing more than a temporary haven from these social ills.

Various NGOs offer their services and run programmes within the schools; but the reality is that these learners have to go back into their communities! And the lack of good support systems in their communities makes it difficult for them to resist peer pressure. Although some of the children succumb to pressure, there are those who are determined to stick to their aspirations of becoming better beings. So many of them dream of helping their parents get a proper home, not have to work so hard, buy food for the house, buy a proper house with electricity and water etc.

It is an eye opener, is it not – our bursars do not dream of owning cars, having DSTV or warm clothing. They aspire to have access to the bare basics – the very barest of basics!! Nothing more needs be said.