



Growing up in a time of AIDS: *Abaqophi basOkhayeni Abaqinile Children's Radio project*

Growing up in a time of AIDS

Zama, Sbusiso, Lindo, Prettygirl and Sandile; 2005

*Note that English is the second language of the children making this programme.
Transcription is direct.*

ZAMA: I'm Zamadlomo Mkhabela. I like to sing and dance. And I like to cook. Many people say the food that I cook is delicious.

SBU: Hello, my name is Sbusiso. I am 14 years old

SANDILE: My name is Sandile. I like the loud sound, like the hifi sound...
boomshiki, boomshiki

LINDO: Hi, my name is Lindokuhle. I like to dance and to sing. My favourite song is Mzekeke's song with Brown Dash. When I grow up I like to sing because I have a song that I composed

PRETTYGIRL: My name is Prettygirl. I am 11 years old.

NARRATOR: In the far north east corner of South Africa, close to the Mozambique border, is a Primary School called Okhayeni.

The school opened in 1994, holding classes under the trees for almost ten years. Today the school has seven green and white painted classrooms which border two sides of a sandy playground where the children play soccer and netball.

Through assistance from big business and NGOs, Okhayeni has had just that little bit extra to meet the needs of the extremely poor community it serves. The vision and commitment of the teachers make a further, qualitative difference.

For five months, nine children from Okhayeni Primary took part in an extra mural project run by Zisize Educational Trust and the University of Cape Town's Children's Institute. The first step was a book-making process where the children wrote about and painted aspects of their lives. The next stage was for them to tell their stories. They learned how to make their own recordings, interviewing friends and family for broadcast on radio in Zulu and English.

Poverty and unemployment are common features in the lives of many families in this area. AIDS is a daily reality, as is malaria during the

summer months.

In this stark context, some children shoulder adult burdens well beyond their years. For others life is simpler. But irrespective of background, each one of the children we met, is remarkable. This is their world and some of their stories.

- ZAMA:* Good morning. I'm Zamadlomo Mkhabela. I'm on the way to school. see lots of things, like trees, the fence of somebody's home. My school opens before 8 o'clock. 8 o'clock we start learning... I'm near the big road. It is the busy road. And we are busy walking to Okayeni Primary School. We are nearby Mam' Ndlovu's office. Mam' Ndlovu is our school principal. I see [the] office is full. I think she's busy there ...
- ZAMA:* Good day Mam'
- MAM' NDLOVU:* Good day Zama.
- ZAMA:* What is your name?
- MAM' NDLOVU:* I am Nokhukhanya Ndlovu.
- ZAMA:* And how old are you?
- MAM' NDLOVU:* I am 42 years old.
- ZAMA:* What make you like to be a manager of this school?
- MAM' NDLOVU:* I like to be a manager here because first of all, I love this place. Secondly, I love the learners. Thirdly, I am a teacher by profession. Right now I have got about 319 learners who are enrolled here this year, 2005. There are nine teachers, all in all.
- ZAMA:* How is it to be a manager that have a lot of children?
- MAM' NDLOVU:* Ah, it's challenging. For instance, since there are children here, learners from grade R up to grade 7, some of them they have a number of problems. There are those that are staying with their grannies; those of staying with their single parents; staying with both parents but unemployed. The majority of the learners are from homes where there is just [a] mother or father, some of them have died because of HIV and AIDS, some of them have died because of malaria, that's another problem that we have in this area. Well others' of car accident[s]. So when they come here, the learners, they have problems. Problems of hunger; they come without food in their stomachs. It makes it difficult. Though on the other side, we can provide something, but it is difficult for them to concentrate in class because of the number of problems that they come to class with.
- ZAMA:* What [has] this school done about the children that come to school without food?
- MAM' NDLOVU:* OK, number one, I could say that the Department [of Education] is providing them with food from Monday to Friday, nutrition. All learners are getting food. And what the school is doing, is the learners – more especially those who are from that background of having a single parent or a granny – they are getting food here at school on a Saturday and Sunday and during holidays, they are getting food here at school. So that is the little that the school is doing.

- ZAMA:** Who provides that food for the weekends?
- MAM' NDLOVU:** Hmm, Zisize Trust stationed at Ingwavuma. My dream about the school is that I would love to see Okhayeni being the big school in a sense that it has more learners, and in a sense that it has some other skills subjects that are offered here at school. I'll be very happy if that can happen here at Okhayeni. And another thing, I'm looking forward to seeing Okhayeni having an Administration Block. I'm looking forward to seeing Okhayeni having a computer room, home economics room, or a kitchen ... sewing room, and all those things. I would love to see them happening here at Okhayeni. That's my biggest dream.
- ZAMA:** And your school entered the NS competition?
- MAM' NDLOVU:** Oh yes Zama. Last year for instance we entered the Natural Science competition and learners performed very well. We've got one learner who is doing grade 8 this year by the name of Zinhle Mngomezulu who got a bursary from that competition. That was wonderful.
- ZAMA:** How do you feel when you see your school entered into [the] NS competition and win[ning]?
- LINDO:** My name is Lindokuhle. I like to play soccerball. I want to play soccer with my friend Sandile.... Do you want to know me?
- I have one parent only, my father. My mother died when I was 9 years old. When my mother [was] sick for two month[s] and then she go to the hospital, Manguzi hospital, and she rest there for three weeks and then she died, 2004. And I feel so sad because I have no mother. And my father got another, my stepmother, and I feel so happy because there is a people who could help us when we are hungry. When I am playing with my friends, I forgot that I have no mother. And when I am at home, and people spoke it [about] my mother and I cry and go to sleep...
- Everyday I sit at the *stampkok* [pump] and watch the cars. Now we see the cars that, I'm sitting there, I'm coming [here] to look at cars. That is the car that ... It's so beautiful that car! I love it! There's a car on the ... There's another car! There are so many cars there. That was a ... an ambulance. I think the ambulance is coming from Kwambuzi [clinic]... There is a big car, that is a big car, Isuzu truck...
- SANDILE:** My name is Sandile. I am 11 years old. I live at Ingwavuma in the area Bhambanana. The story I like to tell you is about my dead father. My father went to Pietermaritzburg to work in 2002. When he come back, he was so fat, and he started to be sick. And they take him to the hospital, and they come back to home, and go to *inyanga* [herbalist] to ask what's wrong. The *inyanga* says that he's bewitched. And then father go back to the hospital at Ngwelezane. He stay[ed] for a long time at hospital, until he died in January 2004. It was one week before we reopened at school.
- My life was not good because many things if I told my father, Father did for me that things...
- When I'm grow[n] up, I want to be a president who helps those who do not have the houses ...
- This is my friend Lindokuhle. He is 10 years old ... and my name is Sandile Khumalo. I am 11 years old. We go to Okhayeni primary school. We are doing Grade 6.

[kwaito singing]

PRETTYGIRL: My name is Prettygirl. I live at Ingwavuma. In my family, I live with my grandfather and grandmother, Philasande and Nomvula. Philasande is my brother. Nomvula is my little sister. I am 11 years old. The story that I want to tell you is about my father and my mother. My father died on 1993, and my mother [got] sick on 1999, and come to my grandfather. My grandfather prayed for my mum, and my mum became better. She went to Ezimbengeni, and she has a baby. The name of the baby is Nomvula, and [my] mother come back to grandfather. On 1999 my mother went to Jo'burg, come back to grandfather. My mother talk[ed] to me and tell [told] me what's wrong. When my mother was sick I would stay near to her. I wash[ed] my mother's feet, and I give Mother food. At first my mother did not want to tell me that she had HIV/AIDS. She was worried that I would not want to go to school and I would stay at home to look after her all the time. When she told me she was sick because of AIDS, I got a fright, but I was glad she told me. Now I knew how to take care of her.

Nomvula! *Uhambile!* [She has gone]

Nomvula is important to me because when my mother was sick, she said to me 'please look after Nomvula because she is small one [young]'.

Hello Nomvula

NOMVULA: Yebo...

[sing together]

PRETTYGIRL: Now I am like [a] mother to Nomvula, because I [am] looking after Nomvula, and I wash her clothes, and I go to cook food for Nomvula... My little sister is very special to me.

In the morning, I get up on 4 o' clock and I sweep the yard. And then I go to the tap and I fetch water. And I come back to home and I clean in the dining room. When I come back from school in afternoon, I go to iron my clothes and Philasande's clothes and Nomvula's clothes. I go to the tap and then I come back to home and I take the pots to cook. I cook everyday for my grandmother and grandfather. Normally we cook on the fire. When Gogo [grandmother] is sick we cook inside on the paraffin stove.

[Isicathamiya singing...]

SBU: Hello, my name is Sbusiso. I am 14 years old. I have two parent[s], father and mother. I have two brother[s] and one sister. I am going to Okhayeni Primary School. This is my group that I sing with, *Isicathamiya*, I sing a song of HIV and AIDS.

ZAMA: Goodday, I am on the way to the tap. I am Zamadlomo Mkhabela, and here I'm with Sinenhlanhla, Thandeka, Prettygirl, Noxolo, Sibusisiwe, Nokwenzeka, Nomvula, Mbumbi, Lindokuhle, Sandile, Nobuhle and Nosambulo. I see Lindokuhle's home. That's the noise for the wheelbarrow. Lindokuhle take a wheel barrow to fetch water, with a big container! This tap is near the big road, and there are some fields next to the tap, and in the field we have mealies, sugar cane and different things that are planted in the field. The water seller is here and there are

a lot of people here [who] want to have a chance to fetch water. People used to fetch water with some different containers. Some came with buckets, some have 10 litres, some have 25 litres...

- PRETTYGIRL:** My name is Prettygirl. Now I am in my yard. In my yard, I saw my grandfather, and the trees and the chickens and the wheelbarrow and the kitchen. I use the wheelbarrow for catching [fetching] water. Hello *Mkhulu*.
- MKHULU:** Hello.
- PRETTYGIRL:** I love my grandfather very, very much, because when I have problems or when I am sick, I go to grandfather and he prays for me. I love to sit with grandfather on [the] verandah because he tells us the *inganegwane*, stories. Hello Mkhulu [grandfather].
- MKHULU:** Hello
- PRETTYGIRL:** What is your name? *Ubani igama lakho?*
- MKHULU:** Peter
- PRETTYGIRL:** What is your surname? *Owakhwabani isibongo?*
- MKHULU:** Mabika
- PRETTYGIRL:** *Uneminyaka emingaki?*
- MKHULU:** *ngina 22, oh 1922. Manje ngina 85.*
- PRETTYGIRL:** *Umkhulu, uyangithanda, ungithandelani?*
- MKHULU:** *Ngikuthandela ukukondla ukhule nawe ube njengami*
- PRETTYGIRL:** *Mkhulu says he loves me because he wants to support me, and I am growing like Mkhulu...*
- PRETTYGIRL:** Every day before we sleep we sing and pray. I pray with my grandfather, and grandmother, Nomvula, and Philasande...
- [singing of prayer]*
- MKHULU:** Amen!



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