

PERSONA DOLL TRAINING

Annual Report 2020



Persona Doll Training

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

2020 is a year that presented all NGO's with great challenges. Funding sources are scarce and programmes had to be put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is a time that calls for great resilience and dedication to the cause.

We are experiencing the unprecedented. The world we knew before COVID-19 has been permanently changed. It is a time in our lives that will be forever etched in our minds as we lose loved ones, gender-based violence increases, young children are abused, people lose their jobs and the South African economy is at an all time low.

Sadly during this time racism has reared its head in South Africa and in other parts of the world. The Black Lives Matter movement is actively advocating against racial prejudice.

It is during this difficult time that Persona Doll Training SA's work in the diversity and anti-bias space has become of great importance. We are delighted to announce that our E-learning has taken off and our beneficiaries are able to complete our Persona Doll Training and Young Parent Training Programmes online. We are blessed that our work continues with the support from our dedicated donors. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. And so, we cannot simply do more of the same.

We wish to thank all our donors and beneficiaries for ensuring that we continue to serve our vulnerable communities during these challenging times.

We wish all other NGO's the best and we are praying for a better 2021. Let us join hands and work together to advance our work and to ensure that we emerge even stronger in the future. Stay safe!

We try to stay in touch through the sharing of information and Phelisa Manyisane -Somciza and Pat Birkett have written a Corona Virus story and activities based on the Persona Doll Methodology. You can access the story by opening this link:
<https://docdro.id/tU6iHtQ>

As the world is confronted with this immense challenge, we must learn from history and recognize how crises of this caliber can alter our view of the world and our own lives for years to come.

Delores Athiemulam

Director

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PDT'S RESPONSE TO OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

As we reflect during our time in Lockdown, it has become very clear that children across our nation and in fact across the world are going to need support in processing the realities of COVID19. We believe that all the



beneficiaries of our Persona Doll Training over the past years are in a position to provide psychosocial support that will help children as they process the events of the past few months and the months ahead..

In a recent interview, Oprah Winfrey was talking about childhood trauma (poverty, violence, chaos). We were reminded that; - “children are far more sensitive to development trauma than adults – those children who are well cared for in a nurturing environment are more likely to have a well wired brain They have a greater chance of functioning in the world...”

We want to encourage all PDT beneficiaries to use their Persona dolls, to support and encourage children to ask questions, discuss their anxieties and listen to their voices as they grapple with an understanding of what is happening in a COVID 19 environment in a bid to facilitate their well-being and ultimately “a well wired brain.”

"Put women and girls at the center of efforts to recover from COVID-19"

About the author | António Guterres

António Guterres is the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, who took office on 1st January 2017.

The COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone, everywhere. But it affects different groups of people differently, deepening existing inequalities. Early data indicates that the mortality rates from COVID-19 may be higher for men. But the pandemic is having devastating social and economic consequences for women and girls.

Today we are launching a report that shows how COVID-19 could reverse the limited progress that has been made on gender equality and women’s rights – and recommends ways to put women’s leadership and contributions at the heart of resilience and recovery.

Nearly 60 percent of women around the world work in the informal economy, earning less, saving less, and at greater risk of falling into poverty. As markets fall and businesses close, millions of women’s jobs have disappeared. At the same time as they are losing paid employment, women’s unpaid care work has increased exponentially as a result of school closures and the increased needs of older people.

These currents are combining as never before to defeat women’s rights and deny women’s opportunities. Gender equality and women’s rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together.

Progress lost takes years to regain. Teenage girls out of school may never return.

I urge governments to put women and girls at the center of their efforts to recover from COVID-19. That starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power.

Measures to protect and stimulate the economy, from cash transfers to credits and loans, must be targeted at women. Social safety nets must be expanded. Unpaid care work must be recognized and valued as a vital contribution to the economy.

The pandemic has also led to a horrifying increase in violence against women. Nearly one in five women worldwide has experienced violence in the past year. Many of these women are now trapped at home with their abusers, struggling to access services that are suffering from cuts and restrictions.

This was the basis for my appeal to governments earlier this week to take urgent steps to protect women and expand support services. COVID-19 is not only challenging global health systems, but testing our common humanity.

Gender equality and women's rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster, and to building a better future for everyone.



OUR PERSONA DOLL TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES

It has been a privilege to work with the commitment and dedication of the women and men that we have met as we facilitated the sharing of the different programmes offered by Persona Doll Training SA. We have

extended our Footprint to include new beneficiaries who have shown great enthusiasm in discovering a tool to add to their existing set of skills as ECD Practitioners.

Ntataise Lowveld - September 2019

PDT has a long standing relationship with Ntataise Lowveld, having trained many of the Ntataise branches across the country over the years. Connie, the Ntataise Lowveld facilitator, had received her PDT training many years ago and was delighted to be part of a ‘refresher’ course and we were equally delighted to continue the training partnership that we had built up over the years. A total of 23 participants from pre-schools and day care centres in the broader White River area attended the training.

Some comments from the training:

- In this workshop we learned about how to be a holistic teacher, we learned that children should explore and express their feelings; how to tell a story with a persona doll and also ask open-ended questions.
- I have learnt to value other people, respect them and I have learnt a lot to be careful (in) my attitude towards other people.

Eswatini - Vusumnotfo - 26 participants - September 2019

With the support of the Vusumnotfo director we were successfully able to extend our PDT footprint beyond the borders of South Africa into Eswatini. Once the extensive paperwork for entry into the country and a 5 hour wait at the border between the 2 countries was over, our trainer was able to navigate her way to Vusumnotfo.

Vusumnotfo, despite being very close to the South African border post, is deep rural Eswatini. The Lutheran Farmer Training Centre, where Vusumnotfo has its offices is, as the name suggests, situated in a rural farming area with very few amenities close at hand. Piggs Peak is the closest town 40 km away providing only the essentials.

The ECD programme has three main focuses:

- Parenting
- Community preschool teaching
- Manage a library for community preschool teachers

Our 2-day training, which in itself was unusual as Vusumnotfo don't usually conduct training over a weekend, began with 26 participants all ECD practitioners with varying levels of training and one teacher from a primary school linked to the Vusumnotfo project. There was great enthusiasm about the dolls and it was helpful to have someone assist with translations.

Some comments from the training:

I thank Vusumnotfo for teaching us to talk politely to our children because when you shout to children, they get more confused.

One lesson I took out of the class was about the term “empathy”, where we talked about going beyond just feeling sorry for someone but further put yourself in their position, understand their situation before finding ways to help them,”

Moya Centre Offices Malkerns Eswatini - 25 participants

The group trained at the Moya centre was a mix of preschool teachers, teachers, caregivers, counsellors/psycho-social support people and kids-club facilitators. We also had someone who works for an organisation that makes educational toys from waste material and a special needs teacher.

A highlight was the participants speaking by and large the same language as me in terms of the PDT approach. Psycho-social support seems to be highly valued at Moya. Discussion and debate was stimulating and enthusiastic.

Comments from training:

- Identity is an important aspect of every person. We can use the dolls in any situation to engage children and also help them to learn on emotions and how to express them. We have to instill positive attitude in our children.
- I enjoyed ‘The who I am exercise’ - it made me discover a lot of things which I wasn’t aware of about myself. I also enjoyed practising/introducing and creating stories using the persona doll.
- I enjoyed every moment of the training especially the use of the persona doll sessions. It really ignites the ability to apply creativity and imagination in teaching and learning.
- I want to apply what I have learnt to my youth class (schools and communities). Use the persona dolls during our story telling sessions. I want to try and teach the club youth leaders on how to use the persona dolls.

Young Parent Persona Doll Training - Maranatha Street Workers Trust - Nieu Bethesda - October 2019 - 25 participants

This was the first of our extended Young Parent Persona Doll Programme, i.e. extended from 2 to 3 days based on feedback from previous training participants and trainers.

The programme aims to provide support to facilitators of young people (12 – 20 years) who are in a process of transition and change. The methodology includes working with a “young parent persona doll” as a tool that is used to encourage young people to engage in discussion, share their own realities and together find constructive ways of moving forward.

We have found our programme to be most welcomed by social workers, community health and development workers, youth group leaders and senior phase teachers.

We are delighted to be working on this programme with a new implementing partner i.e Maranatha Street Workers Trust based in Port Elizabeth, and for this programme – their new project in Nieu Bethesda project.

Their long term vision is to establish a Child and Youth Care Centre in Nieu Bethesda. Currently they run community development programmes in the suburb of Pienaarsig. They have identified a big need in the community for development programmes.

We had a mixed group of 25 participants including social workers, community care workers, teachers and a pastor. Ages varied with some of the community participants in their early twenties. None of the participants had received prior PDT training.

One of the elements that made this particular training unique was their request for ‘granny’ dolls. Maranatha’s thinking was to use the granny dolls to teach youngsters to respect their elders. In the training, we broadened the scope to include an element of empathy for the goggas and oumas who are often the primary caretakers of young children.

A real highlight was how the social workers who were in attendance, understood the principles of the PDT approach. I was really impressed by their knowledge of the issues their clients are dealing with and their general commitment to the work they are doing. As we are aware however, their caseloads are overwhelming and they are desperate for

any support they are able to get.

Another highlight were the profiles the group developed in response to the 'Who is this young person?' exercise. They were so linked to the real life experiences of the young people this group is working with.

Some comments from the training:

- *Hoe om met mense te werk en hoe om vir tieners raad te gee tydens hul swangerskap. Hoe om tieners te support en nie om ander mense te judge nie.*
- *Teamwork. Importance of a support network. Skills to work with teenagers. Creating a persona that is relevant to my clients/foster children.*
- *To communicate with people. To be patient and listen to another person. Your behaviour toward each other.*
- *Very insightful and it is training that you get taught that you keep for the rest of your professional life. Taking responsibility for your own learning. It is a nice and different approach to play therapy it can be helpful with different age groups. A lot of ideas practically to use as a professional.*
- *Very informative but needed more days. Will recommend this as a vital required training for all organisations working with the youth.*
- *Content was relevant and user friendly. Stories were real and relatable. Eye-opener to how our own biased ways can have an impact on our productivity when working with people.*
- *Awesome, it will definitely help address issues/challenges we face.*

Mthata - University of Fort Hare - August 2019 - 19 participants

This PDT training was done with the support of UFH and colleagues with whom we have a longstanding relationship with; they recruited participants and arranged all the training logistics.

One of the highlights of the training was the appreciation from the participants in allowing them to use their home language. This was evident from the number of comments in the feedback saying how people valued the respect for their language. We can never overestimate how much this means to individuals, affirming their roots and identity. Another highlight was how the teachers just naturally 'took' to the dolls. Their presentations when introducing their personas were inherently instinctive and it was wonderful to observe!

Comments from the training:

- People have things that they can be identified with. Our identities differ. There are things that other people do not know about me. Many people have suffered discrimination. Persona Dolls will help us challenge discrimination. Each person is unique and deserves to be treated with respect.

SEEDS OF AFRICA - Training of Trainers and Support - August 2019 - 10 participants

Seeds of Africa is a Non-Profit Organisation, focused on enterprise and supplier development as well as early childhood development in previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa. SOA is based in Mudersdrift, Johannesburg.

Despite all the participants not necessarily being trainers, they were one of the most engaged, interested and passionate groups I have ever had the privilege to work with.

“The week was beyond successful and I can honestly say that this training was life changing for all, myself included. It was just wonderful!” (words from the PDT trainer)

The entire week was a highlight! From the outset, the group just came together, shared openly, asked questions, engaged and challenged one another constructively.

Discussions were animated and dynamic. and in the self portrait exercise information shared was honest and in some cases very emotional.

On completion of the training on day five all agreed that their expectations had been met beyond their wildest belief; in fact one person in their feedback commented: “it was more than what I could have dreamt!”

Some comments from the training:

- I have gained a lot of knowledge through this training that has made an awesome impact in my life, myself and who I am as a person. Furthermore the opportunity that I was given from Masenze and Seeds of Africa to meet an amazing trainer that has made a great impact into my life through this training. I would like to conclude and say I am humble and thankful.
- I personally thought the course was all about dolls and playing children. Wow! The training itself is building you and empowering you as the person and to make

you empower others.

Dolls that are making a difference: <https://youtu.be/BD8UBXKzBIc>

Seeds of Africa - support visit - 17 and 18 September - 7 of the 10 participants observed

There has been such a hype around the Seeds of Africa training as the original 5-day training course was so successful and we have the added bonus of the facilitators being filmed by ENCA giving PDT much welcomed exposure. We observed some of the participants co-facilitating the training for 17 participants at a venue in Alexandra. Together they did a fabulous job.

The second day was the turn of the Seeds facilitators co-facilitating with two of the other participants on one facilitator was on her own. They had set up three different training venues and once again their planning and preparation was spot on! There were 32 participants in total.

Words from PDT trainer:

I have never worked with a group of people as passionate and dedicated to implementing the PDT approach as this group. They honestly impressed me so very, very much! It was a wonderfully heart-warming experience.

North Link TVET College - Diversity Training- 4 groups in July/August and September 2019 - 92 students trained

We would like to thank North Link College for this opportunity and for having the insight to schedule Diversity Training at the onset of the Students training and as they embark on their journey into the world of Early Childhood Development at either a Crèche or Pre Primary Facility.

Some insights into our work:

It was very evident from the start that Diversity in its broad definition was a fairly new term to most of the students, an example of this was the constant reference to 'how those people speak' clearly indicating the 'us and them' scenario referring to anyone who appears to be different. Gender stereotypes and very strong views on sexual orientation are some of the examples e.g.- strong expectations of what we expect from little boys and little girls, - i.e. little boys should not play with dolls – they will become 'Moffie's', - “a man will never ill-treat you or abuse if you treat them right first as a woman”. We were

able to broaden the general understanding of Diversity - that it is of course about race and language, but that it encompasses so much more and hence the need to listen, ask questions and increase one's own knowledge of difference.

These mostly very young people are desperate to change their circumstances, provide a life for their young children that is different to their own, provide stable homes and lives etc. It was so evident to both Trainers that they seldom focused on themselves, their own dreams and their own personal development. We commented on this, urged them to reflect on how far they had come in life and against all odds to complete their studies and not give up.



Some comments from the training:

- I've learnt a lot about diversity, the information provided to us was very interesting – I've learnt not to discriminate nor offend others. I know how to implement the anti-bias approach and how to be more open with my feelings using the methods and information given to us. The trainers have done a great job.
- We learnt about diversity and that diversity is not a problem but the problem is how we respond to it and we learnt a lot about ourselves. I would like to try and do better because this training has taught me a lot.
- I would like to suggest that this information be shared with other people and in many other places and countries as well because it is important and helpful.
- The training has been a great experience and I have learnt a lot in these 2 days – the information was clear, the facilitators were kind and understanding. The information we received was very helpful and has boosted our self-confidence and we have learnt so much about each other and other cultures. I will implement change within myself and others – I will treat and respect other people.
- Keep up the good work and I think with this training you can save many lives – I feel like after this training my confidence has improved, and I feel better about myself. I now know that you must show respect in order to receive it back.
- This training has made a change in our lives.

GENERAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AFTER TRAINING WITH 4 GROUPS OF STUDENTS

The training of these 4 groups of students was an eye opener for us i.t.o the responses and attitudes we encountered during the 8 weeks.

We are very aware that we raised topics and issues that students might not have given much thought to in the past, but they need to be addressed particularly given the fact that they are entering the field of ECD and will be in a powerful position when it comes to shaping and influencing the minds of young children.

This training was a reminder of how wounded our country is and how young people are suffering, we were especially concerned by the delay in payment of the NSFAS funding and the impact this has on students ability to pay for their final project presentations and most importantly have funds to feed themselves. (It is fantastic that the college has a feeding scheme).

Stellenbosch ECD Forum - August 2019 - 17 participants

On day 2 of the training the room was filled with sadness as we listened to people's stories of being unfairly treated and discriminated against. The Participants supported each other during this session and some offered advice as a way forward. "Whenever I do this session I am affirmed all the time that the PD Approach is a much needed training in many of our communities. I shared the information about the counselling Hub for those needing further support. " (PDT trainer's words)

On both days we had a lot of beautiful demonstrations from teachers on both creating a persona activity (introducing the doll) and creating a persona doll story (doing a story) demonstrations.

Some comments from the training:

- *I learnt how to work with children better, not to discriminate against them and treat them equally.*
- *Learned about the persona doll approach and emotional intelligence – I enjoyed the training and gained a lot.*
- *I learnt how to use a persona doll as a teaching tool and I would really like to implement what I have gained here at my own school.*
- *Learnt how to help children to express their feelings without being judged and children who are traumatized to know that they are not alone – enjoyed planning*

for different themes using a persona doll and gained a lot of information.

EARLY INSPIRATIONS

Our PDT trainer during a final support visit to one of our implementing partners, Early Inspirations in Port Elizabeth, shared the following from the discussions with the 4 trainers who are implementing Persona Doll Training:

1. Where could we slot PDT support and guidance into the Early Inspirations programme?

The facilitators have agreed to incorporate persona dolls into every training programme they run, illustrating how PDT can in fact be part of the everyday curriculum and not an ‘add on’.

2. The group was asked to capture how PDT has changed their mindset as facilitators if at all. The following emerged:

- *It has clarified my deeper calling*
- *Our differences and similarities; putting myself in other people’s shoes; humility; change maker*
- *Awareness; kindness*
- *Being able to express myself not only non-verbally but also verbally in a calm manner*

Support for our training has been a mix of income generated projects and those that are funded.

Constantiaberg Pre Primary School – training for the entire staff at the school was negotiated towards the end of 2019 and a slightly different model of delivery was decided on i.e. number of afternoon sessions to accommodate the working hours of the staff. The school funded the training and the purchase of Persona Dolls to be shared by the staff. We look forward to hearing from them as to how they are doing.

Thembelistsha Foundation – Grabouw

We were excited to explore new territories and move beyond the borders of the Peninsula to meet



a very enthusiastic and supportive Project Manager with eager ECD participants based at the Thembelitsha Foundation in Grabouw who were unfamiliar with Persona Dolls and were excited to be learning a completely new skill. Well done to the organisation for getting a diverse group together ,who engaged and participated in an awesome way. We look forward to a continued working relationship and successful implementation of the Persona Doll Approach. They will give us feedback via their Project Manager and complete a short M and E questionnaire to give us the information we need to continue offering a relevant service.



Western Cape Education Department

We were excited to support the work of the Learning Support Advisors and Teachers during a Persona Workshop in the Winelands. Practical activities helped the teachers in their groups to get to know each other at a slightly deeper level and highlighted the need for teachers to be sensitive to the diverse identities that exist within the groups of children they teach. The

activities highlighted how all of us fall prey to and are influenced by our own experiences.

We were able to link the fact that our attitudes consciously or unconsciously affect our behaviours towards individuals. Our discussions raised the importance of awareness i.t.o our own attitudes and the need for sensitivity amongst educators to not allow our own biases to influence our responses to the learners in our care.

We look forward to hearing from these teachers and advisors and how they have used their Persona Dolls to support a vulnerable group of children, - those experiencing barriers to learning and development.



With the support of the Blaq Pearl Foundation in Mitchells Plain we completed a very successful 3 day Young Parent Persona Doll Programme. Blaq Pearl did a superb job of recruiting 22 Women in and around Mitchells Plain currently either involved in, connected to or about to engage with organizations supporting young teenagers/young parents and young adults faced with the ever increasing challenges of either parenting young children,

or about to parent a child. Many of the young people in question are still almost children themselves.

It was a privilege to work with a group of women who are entirely dedicated to tackling the challenges facing the young women they work with, also not averse to the challenges young men face.

Some of the challenges facing this phenomenal group include:

- **Young mothers are very stressed**
- **Moms as young as grade 10 – attempt to change their mindset about who they are, break the cycle of ‘I am no good’**
- **Awareness, prevention counselling and support needed**
- **Change the dynamics in communities**
- **Change the negative light that young parents are viewed as**

There was great enthusiasm to implement the programme and no one seemed at all daunted by the task at hand – this mainly due to the fact that they are all already working with young parents and teenagers. Whilst the methodology of using Young Parent Persona Dolls, slightly larger and ‘dressed ‘as teenagers is different, the power of Storytelling prevails as a tool to engage in meaningful and supportive discussions.

BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK

- The content was an eye opener for me, it was fruitful and clear, bullying is definitely the subject I will look at



because learners are quick to tease each other in the schools

- I admire how the 3 legs of support namely, child, learner and educator has been continuously incorporated as a gold thread throughout the training. – the use of how important it is to not just accept diversity but constantly practice it with the aid of persona doll dynamic.
- Will definitely implement the stories in the manual and use the personal dolls to encourage and support learners experiencing different barriers to learning, especially psycho-social barriers to learning
- training was insightful, facilitators facilitated the training session very well. They were mindful, created opportunities to think beyond barriers and boundaries as well as allowing and challenging one to think outside of the box to increase development. I'm grateful for the new information and an effective tool to use in order to address issues teenagers face.
- I learnt how to deal with teenagers, each child is different, fear, trust, disclosure, referrals, teenage pregnancy, male behaviour – we could not have had better facilitators, very understanding, they engaged with each of us, made us feel special, we got the right tools – can't wait to work with you again – we need more of this to reach more teenagers
- The content and process of training was clear understandable and the group was vibrant, training was on the people's level, everything was captivating – thank you for a fabulous programme

FUTURE TRAINING EVENTS

These include:

- **Training of Trainers Programme**
- **Centers of Excellence**
- **Intermediate and Senior Phase Persona Doll Training**
- **Persona Doll Training.**

All of these events are subject to COVID19 Guidelines post Lockdown.

We would like to thank our partners and donors:

