

IRFF UK - May I introduce Slindokuhle Makwabe

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A story from SHINE

In a crowded school, in a crowded class, in a very poor and often neglected community environment, it is always a joy to discover a gem of a child who needs recognition and encouragement, and rises above all expectations!

May I introduce Slindokuhle Makwabe.



Slindokuhle is the second of four brothers, each two years apart in age, each with a different father, none of whom are involved in their sons' lives or contribute to their wellbeing. Mom was an exceptional academic student but started her young family at age 19. She is employed at our local Baptist Church as Pre-primary Teacher, and despite having no parents or any grandparents, tries her best with her team of boys. (My background of Slindo came from Sarah Fina, the school's Social Needs lady, who lives in the same street as the Makwabe family. She has put the 3 boys on the school feeding scheme.) Yet Slindo has the most polite and friendly manners that I've met in a child for a long time!

Slindo came across as a gangly curious child when I first became aware of him. He comes to the library every break, always offering help, seldom with any lunch, always barefoot in worn sail-type shoes. He lives in a small house in a street where 20 houses share a communal pavement tap, no ablution facilities or running water at home. His grey jacket hides a well-washed but worn shirt and pants with a broken zip. It is with much gratitude to Walmer Angel Projects and your Team at IRFF, that I have a stock of uniform items and new jerseys that I can bless the neediest learners with. Yet it does not matter how much I give to Slindo, I never see any uniform on him that I gave to him. To me, it often seems that these items are either sold to put food on the table or passed on: shoes, socks, shirts, bags and stationery. Thursday's gift of a jersey did however hit a chord: he finally owns a trademark uniform item! He was beside himself with joy, visibly growing taller.

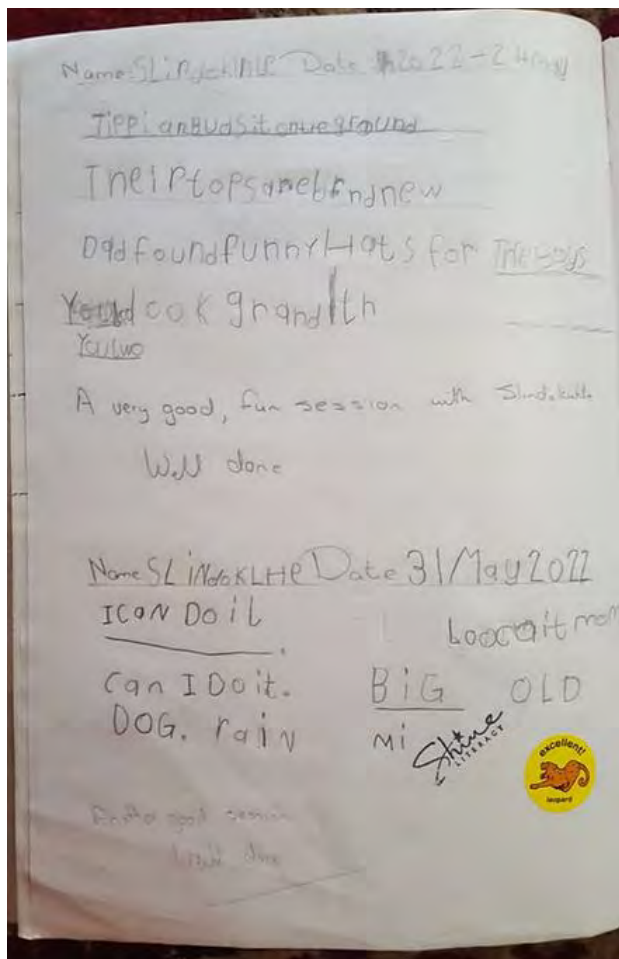
Getting to school on Friday I was hoping to bump into him, and sure enough, he was still in his jersey, a smile on his face, beaming with identity and flanked by two fellow classmates. I wondered if I would ever see that familiar grey jacket again.

Slindo has a keen interest in books and easily qualifies for our SHINE Program, being matched with an equally delightful young lady, Uyanda. According to class teacher Nolungisa Mqgantsa, Slindo is bright but bored at school. It seems that he has his Mother's intelligence. I have not met his Grade 5 and Grade 1 brothers yet - it would be interesting to compare. An ideal gift was to bless him with a donated book of 2016 Guinness World records and a Readers Digest Encyclopedia of the World. This has opened a reality to him beyond his wildest expectation! I look forward to seeing him blossom as a competent Leader in Primary School in the next few years!

Slindokuhle had a very favourable score of 89/146 in January which qualified him as a learner that knows his alphabet and understands instruction in English. He warms to stimulating games, reading books and interactive conversation on interesting themes.

The midyear assessments came as a wonderful reward:

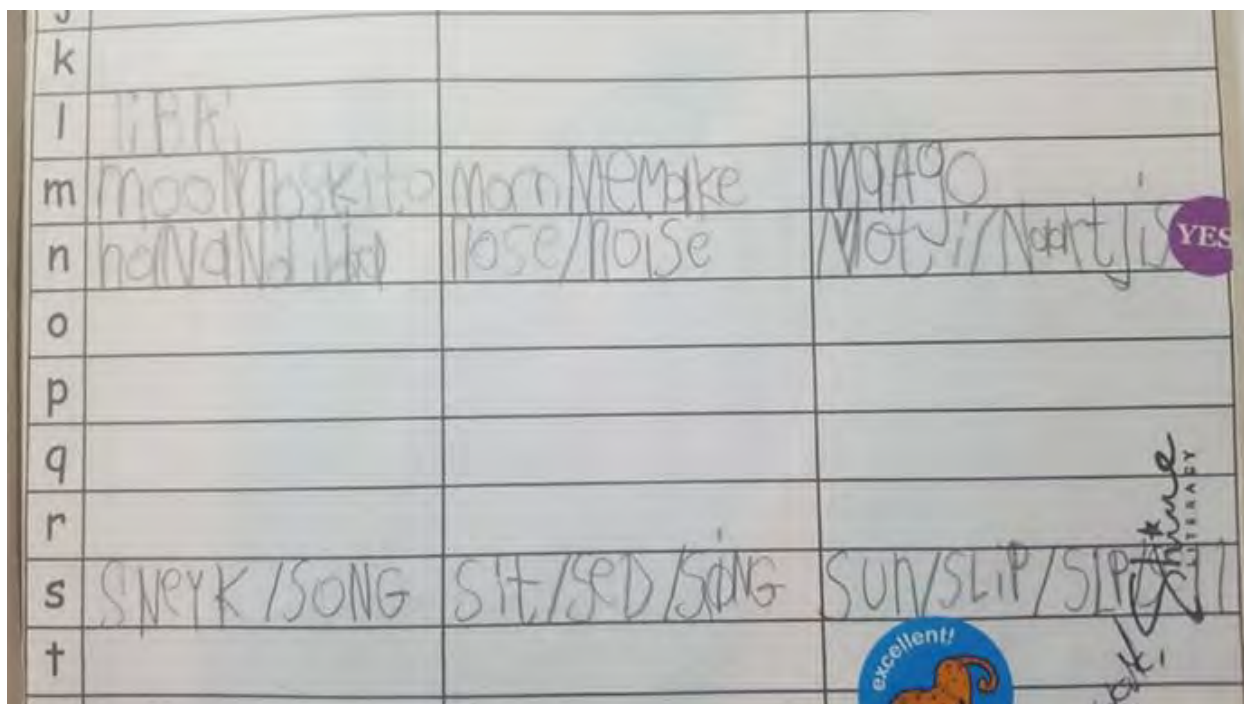
Slindo's score has come up to 127/146. He beamed with pride at the feedback! Earlier he drew a rainbow to explain his story, now he wrote a thesis!



In the Program we teach phonetic English: 'Write the sounds you hear and read the words back to me'. (We do NOT correct spelling - that sorts itself out once our learners become regular readers.) The greatest challenge in the classroom is to get the learners to attempt writing. Slindo has confidently shared

e = elefant eggs elbow empti

s = sneyk song sed sing



And my proud heart could not be more confident that he'll sort out the spacing between words soon (the Xhosa sentences are often a singular word: the verb centrally and the tenses and subject matter added on as prefixes and suffixes.) Our past SHINE learners come back often with warmth and I know that Slindo will be a Shining Star in the future.

Pat Hippert 8/22