



fun  za

**Annual  
Report  
2018**



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Design and layout by Tony Pinchuck  
pinchuck@gmail.com • 082 782 8997

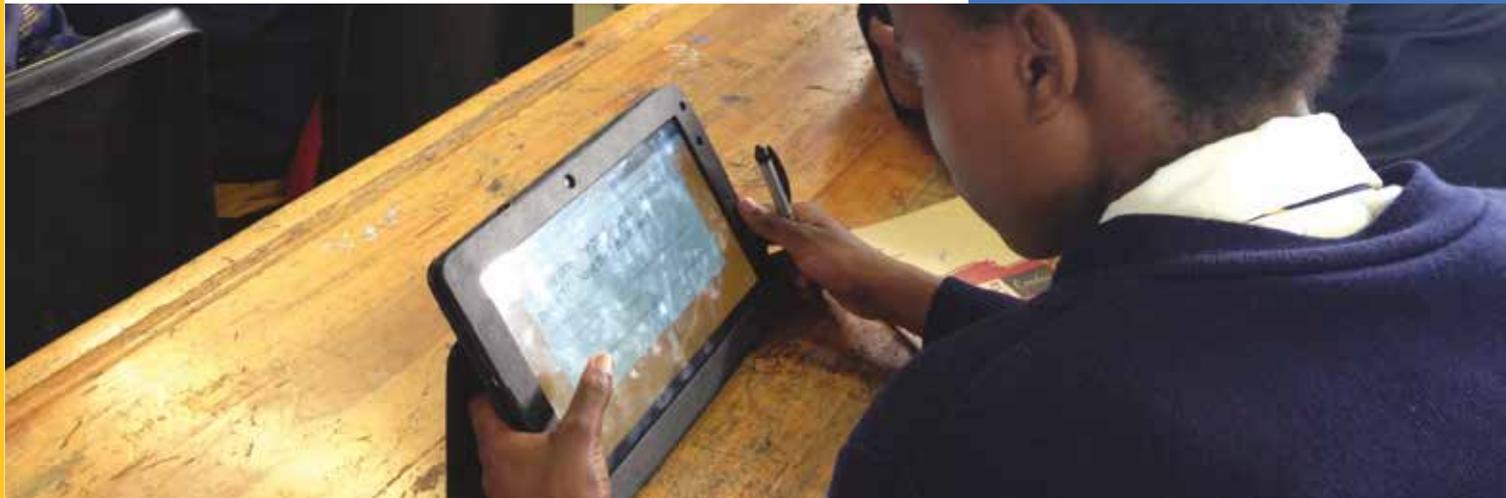
## Innovative approach

**T**O PROMOTE LITERACY, FUNDZA FOCUSES ON THE ‘PLEASURE’ ASPECT OF reading and writing. Studies show that reading for pleasure is a powerful indicator of a young person’s future success. Reading fiction is also linked to increased empathy, creativity, and an understanding of cause and effect, as well as the more obvious skills of language and vocabulary development.

FunDza is getting books and stories – both in print or electronic format – into the hands of teens and young adults from under-resourced communities. It is also encouraging young people to explore their creative talents and start writing too.

FunDza works formally through groups and informally, reaching people through the use of mobile technology. FunDza’s programmes are reaching thousands of young South Africans nationwide, and are having an impact on attitudes towards and behaviours around reading and writing. FunDza is:

- Building the Family network: FunDza supports schools, libraries and youth groups nationwide with exciting reading resources and writing workshops.
- Growing the Fanz community: FunDza’s online portal - fundza.mobi - gets thousands of teens/young adults into the daily habit of reading and writing.
- Partnering with Friends: FunDza is customising its offering to deliver bespoke reading/writing solutions for a range of partners.



## Who we are

**T**HE FUNDZA LITERACY TRUST believes reading stories and books can change lives. But the vast majority of SA youth do not have easy access to relevant and exciting reading content. FunDza is changing this.

FunDza creates, collects and shares content that resonates with young South Africans through mobile phones and other channels at low or no cost to the end-reader. And, FunDza encourages young people to write their own stories too.

Through its innovative work and improved literacy, FunDza is growing generations of educated, empowered and engaged young citizens and future leaders.

## Proud achievements in a tough operating environment

**F**UNDZA IS PROUD TO BE FULFILLING ITS MISSION OF getting young people reading for pleasure and writing for expression and meaning. We know that this is vital, as our country's low levels of functional literacy continues to act as a choker on the potential of our youth. Without a literate youth population, South Africa will be unable to achieve the social mobility and economic equity we need for a vibrant healthy and growing society.

In the year under review, FunDza started a process of strategic revision and renewal. Given that the organisation was in its seventh year of operations, it was important to take stock of where we had come from and how we wanted to move forward in fulfilling our mission. This self-reflection and introspection is important too given the challenging economic environment and the changing areas of focus of funders. The review is ongoing but our strategy (see the Executive Director's report) is to consolidate and to strengthen the organisation in order to prepare for future growth.

As a board, we are proud of the achievements of the organisation and the impact that it is having. In the 2017/18 financial year, FunDza reached around 800,000 readers through print or electronic means. Responses from individual readers or beneficiary groups frequently confirm that reading and writing with FunDza is making a difference in their lives: by improving language skills, boosting confidence, increasing enjoyment, and encouraging discussion and reflection.

The year was a remarkable one for the Trust: it received three major awards, pointing to its successful impact and strong performance.

In June 2017, FunDza was awarded the inaugural Joy of Reading award, an international award, sponsored by Systematic and the Next Library Festival, for its innovative work in popularising reading for pleasure.

On International Literacy Day, 8 September, FunDza was named as a recipient of the prestigious UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy 2017. This honour recognised FunDza's work primarily with SA youth - particularly out-of-school and rural youth.

Finally, in November, FunDza received a Gold Award at the Impumelelo Social Innovations Awards, after a rigorous selection and evaluation process.

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in readers' lives: improving  
language skills, boosting  
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We are proud of these achievements. Looking to the future we can see that there are many opportunities for refining our offering and becoming even more relevant and vital.

However, our future plans are always constrained by the funding available. FunDza operates on a tight budget. During the 2018 financial year, the changed strategies of core funders have meant that FunDza's work is largely falling into a funding gap. Many of the funders interested in literacy are turning their focus to early grade literacy interventions,

while those interested in the youth market are looking at job creation schemes. These are obviously vital interventions; however, we know that the vast majority of young people in our country have been under-served by traditional education, and their low levels of literacy will mean a difficult future. In addition, these young people are becoming our future parents, and their low functional literacies have intergenerational impacts.

Due to prudent financial management, FunDza has built up reserves. These will help the organisation navigate the future as we develop new funding streams and seek opportunities for income generation.

Limited financial resources can also be a boon. The constraints focus attention on how to do more with less, on how to become more discerning in terms of programmatic output and impact, and on how to become increasingly creative and innovative. We believe we have the necessary internal resources to weather this difficult phase as a strong and impactful organisation.

Part of this belief is due to the dedicated staff who provide the organisation with great heart and muscle. As a board, we are so proud of their efforts and appreciate the passion and vigour they bring to their work.

Thank you too to the funders, partners and organisations that play a role in our development and that work with readers and writers in communities. Without that support, we would not be able to have a measurable and sustained impact. And, thank you too to the readers and writers who are an integral part of FunDza. We would not exist without you. The feedback we get serves as a huge motivating force for us all.

**Siki Mgabadel**  
Chairperson

## Providing leadership and oversight

FUNDZA'S FIVE TRUSTEES PROVIDE THE ORGANISATION WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION, governance and oversight. The experience and expertise of individual board members ensures that FunDza has skills in terms of entrepreneurial business expertise, strong financial management, nonprofit corporate governance, media and messaging, literacy development and education, and technology usage for social good. Given that FunDza aims to be an innovative, impactful and trusted organisation that is able to deliver vital services in the literacy sphere to South African youth, these skills are put to good use.

The board meets at least three times a year to discuss strategy, measure progress against the organisational aims and objectives, understand the external risks to the organisation, and provide fiduciary oversight and support. During the 2018 financial year, the board met in July 2017, November 2017 and February 2018. In addition, some board members participated in the team-building and strategic idea creation sessions in May and June 2017. At these meetings, FunDza's values and short-term objectives were set.



**Siki Mgabadelo**  
*Trustee: Chair*

Siki is a business journalist and independent producer. She has hosted PowerFM's Powertalk, SABC2's Big Debate on 2 and works for Summit TV. Siki won the Telkom ICT Journalist of the Year and Sanlam Financial Journalist of the Year (TV Category) awards in 2006. She has a Bachelor of Journalism (Hons) and is currently working towards her Masters through Wits University.



**Mignon Hardie**  
*Executive Director and Trustee*

Mignon has a passion for small business development and has previously managed a number of start-up enterprises. She has a BA from UCT and an MBA from Stellenbosch University, for which she was awarded an Old Mutual Gold Medal. She was shortlisted for the 2011 AMBA International MBA Student of the Year award and the 2013 AMBA Entrepreneurial Venture Award.



**Steve Vosloo**  
*Trustee*

Steve is passionate about using technology in education. He is working for UNICEF in New York. He has led the mobile learning programme at UNESCO, Paris, held the position of head of mobile at Pearson, and was a fellow at the Shuttleworth Foundation. In 2007 he was a research fellow at Stanford University, focusing on youth and digital media. He holds a Masters in Information Systems, UCT.



**Rethabile Mashale-Sonibare**  
*Trustee*

Rethabile is the Director of Thope Foundation, a non-profit providing primary school support programmes to young girls in Khayelitsha. She is also co-founder of Molo Mhlaba, a low-fee-paying independent girls school specialising in STEAM education also in Khayelitsha. Rethabile holds a Masters in Social Policy and Management from UCT and a PhD from the University of Stellenbosch.



**Xolisa Guzula**  
*Trustee*

Xolisa is a lecturer in multilingual and multiliteracies education at University of Cape Town. She is an early literacy specialist with experience in early literacy/biliteracy teacher and community training. In addition, she is a storyteller, author, translator and materials developer. She is currently completing her PhD through UCT, researching children's translanguaging and multiliteracies practices.

## Looking to the future

IN 2017 FUNDZA STARTED A BROAD STRATEGIC REVIEW IN ORDER to shape its internal structure to better meet the demands of our beneficiaries, and to offer a more cohesive range of services. We now have reading, writing and learning programmes that we offer to our three main stakeholder groups:

- FunDza Family (the network of beneficiary groups we support countrywide);
- FunDza Fanz (the readers and writers we reach through technology);
- FunDza Friends (the partners we work with on specific literacy-focused projects).

This annual report follows this format in terms of its reporting.

FunDza's mission is to reach disadvantaged South African youth, aged 13 to 25 years, and to build a culture of lifelong reading and writing. In order to do this, we need to get a couple of things 'right'.

Firstly, we need to ensure that these young people we target have access to exciting reading materials that inspire reading for pleasure. We've learned that locally-created content – particularly that written by young writers – has the highest appeal as it is relatable and it speaks to the issues that young people face. In addition, sourcing and curating content that speaks to the challenges of our youth is important.

Related to this point is the need for us as a country to provide space for a multitude of voices, and to allow for a diverse range of stories to be told. One of the ways we have been doing this is through our mentorship of aspiring young writers of both fictional stories and non-fiction blogs and feature articles.

Secondly, we need to ensure that these materials can get into the hands of young people at no or low cost to the individual. We know that young people living at the Base of the Pyramid have little disposable income, and until they start to see the value of reading in their lives, they are unlikely to want to make an investment in reading materials using their limited resources.

This means that materials need to be freely accessible – whether in print format or electronic. As such, reducing the amount of data required to access our online library and ensuring broad reach through zero-rated initiatives such as FreeBasics.com is key to our success.

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between reading and writing  
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Thirdly, we need to close the loop between reading and writing and give young people access to spaces through which they can develop their writing skills.

Reading is like 'breathing in', while writing is like 'breathing out'. Through writing one can practice one's critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills. In school, there is little focus on writing for meaning, and this lack is expressed in our

learner's poor performance in their matric exams, in which – according to the 2017 National Senior Certificate Diagnostic Report – 'many learners performed poorly in questions that demanded analytical, evaluative and problem-solving skills'. Throughout this report, there is an emphasis on the need for learners to be taught effective writing skills that practice skills of logic, and to practice writing in paragraph format.

Part of our strategy for the next few years is to develop programmes that will focus more specifically on writing as a learned skill and a creative outlet.

Finally, we need to provide opportunities to make language learning fun for our young people. We aim to influence attitudes to reading and writing, as well as behaviours regarding these. We know that the most effective means is to tap into intrinsic motivation – i.e. young people learn because they want to learn (not because they should). Finding ways to incorporate fun into our programmes – whether through competitions, games, or interaction and excitement – is key to our success.

Our future plans include refining the support provided to our Family, and making the writing programme a far more vital element of this; expanding the reach of our Fanz programme in partnership with others, and also by making a range of exciting improvements to the online delivery platforms; and, targeting a broader range of Friends.

In terms of the latter, we believe that FunDza is uniquely positioned to be able to offer reading for enjoyment and writing for meaning services to young job-seekers who may not have the necessary literacy skills to easily access employment – we do plan to focus on this group in future years and design specific interventions that speak to this need.

**Mignon Hardie**  
Executive Director

## People with passion and purpose

FUNDZA'S STAFF INCLUDE PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE IN THE literacy and education fields; creative writing, journalism and content development; as well as financial management and marketing and public relations. In addition, FunDza believes it is vital to nurture talent and provide job opportunities to young South Africans so that they can gain professional experience and broaden their skill set. FunDza is proud to provide work and training to a number of young up-and-coming future leaders.

Apart from Mignon Hardie, the Executive Director and Trustee, the following staff were employed during the 2018 financial year:



**Phoebe Sibomana**

*Office administrator*

Phoebe initially interned for FunDza in 2012 whilst completing her honours in Social Development at UWC. She worked in various capacities at FunDza, ending up as Office Administrator. In July 2017, she started working for Biblionef.



**Rosamund Haden**

*Content developer*

Ros is a prolific writer of children's, YA and adult literature. As the main content developer for our online programme, Ros ably takes on the challenge of ensuring fresh and exciting content for the fundza.mobi site every single week.



**Nandipha Tshabane**

*Beneficiary liaison*

Nandi is passionate about youth and community development. With a natural gift for inspiring others, Nandi has become the face of the Family programme – supporting beneficiary groups around the country in their use of FunDza



**Dawn Wilson**

*Finance & HR manager*

Dawn brings 20+ years worth of nonprofit financial management experience to FunDza. She ensures that FunDza's books balance and that its records are up to date. Importantly she's a voracious reader, who is keen to contribute in many ways to FunDza.



**Shelley Bolle**

*Marketing and stakeholder relations*

Shelley is a passionate marketer and promoter via social media. She has had many years experience in the nonprofit sector and brings creativity and energy to her work. We said goodbye to Shelley in July 2018 when she embarked on new challenges.



**Dorothy Dyer**

*Literacy specialist*

As a former English teacher and as a writer, Dorothy brings vital literacy and education skills to the organisation. Her extensive knowledge is invaluable in our programme work and she is frequently the lead in projects with our 'Friends.'



**Zimkhitha Mlanzeli**

*Fanz editor*

Zimkhitha first came into contact with FunDza as a reader, and then as a Fanz writer. Since 2013 she has been editing the work of aspirant young writers, encouraging them to develop their creative skills. She also manages the growing team of intern editors.



**Alonzo Naude**

*Beneficiary administrator*

Alonzo loves working with youth and seeing people succeed. He joined the organisation as the Family administrator. He has been involved in many aspects of the organisation, and has since become the new Office Manager and Data Collector.



**Sonja Kruse**

*Community outreach officer*

Sonja, aka The uBuntu Girl, is passionate about building bridges in SA. With FunDza, she has inspired many young people to read and write through workshops and events. She has led the False Bay College Reading for Enjoyment project.



**Veronica Boyi**

*Writer and editor*

Veronica joined FunDza in 2016 to complete her workshops experience as part of her journalism studies at CPUT. She stayed on for 2017 to edit the Fanz writing work, write a variety of blogs, and to administer the Fanz writing submission process.



**Tamica Mopp**

*Intern*

Tamica joined FunDza as an intern whilst taking a break from her studies. She managed the weekly children's story on fundza.mobi, assisted with social media and edited Fanz writing. She left in November 2018 to pursue her studies full-time.



**Lukhanyo Matshebelele**

*Intern*

Lukhanyo had also worked as a Year Beyond volunteer. At FunDza, his interest in IT and keen eye for detail meant his skills could be put to good use as the main technical uploader of fundza.mobi content. And, he's a great writer too!



**Yoshiaki Nagasawa**

*Volunteer intern*

Thanks to a scholarship from the Japanese Government, Yoshi joined FunDza for six months. His background is human rights law. But his interest in technology led him to devote his time to building an offline version of fundza.mobi - fundza.lite!



**Ndibulele Sotondoshe**

*Writer and editor*

Ndibulele first interned at FunDza during his final year as a journalism student at CPUT. He since joined FunDza full-time to work as a feature writer of the Inspiring Tomorrow series, and to edit the writing of young Fanz writers.



**Kauthar Gool**

*Intern*

Kauthar worked as an intern for FunDza from July to December 2017 to fulfil the work-placement requirement of her journalism diploma through the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She wrote blogs and articles and edited.



**Refilwehape Mofokeng**

*Intern*

As a Year Beyond volunteer in 2017, Refilwe knew about FunDza and applied to become an intern for 2018. She assisted in the Family programme and wrote a variety of blogs as well as editing Sesotho and Sepedi Fanz writing submissions.



**Sive Sibenyga**

*Intern*

Sive joined FunDza for a six-month internship ending in March 2018. He was involved in the writing, editing and co-facilitating reading and writing workshops with Family groups. He also represented FunDza during National Book Week.



**Aimee-Claire Smith**

*Volunteer intern*

Aimee-Claire interned for a three-month period after matriculating. She is an enthusiastic and aspirant writer keen to use her writing and editing skills for the common good. She left in May 2018 to pursue an internship in Johannesburg.

## Building a strong foundation

**F**UNDZA'S CORE OPERATIONAL WORK IS contained in its Foundation programme, which aims to build a firm base from which to operate. This programme focuses on strategic planning for the future, building a resilient and dynamic team, securing and using funding effectively and efficiently, building relationships with donors and partners, reflecting on our work and measuring our impact, telling our story, and ensuring that we have the necessary resources in place to achieve our goals.

In terms of this programme, one of the main objectives for the 2018 financial year was to be able to tell the FunDza story in a compelling way to garner recognition for the organisation and build new partnerships. At the same time FunDza needed to develop resilience within the FunDza team and ensure continued prudent financial management of resources. The following was achieved:

### Strategic planning

In May and June the organisation underwent a series of strategic development interventions with the assistance of external strategy consultant Mignon Keyzer. The first sessions were focused on the overall vision of the organisation and the articulation of organisational values to underpin its work. Through these sessions FunDza was able to redefine its offering in terms of the new programme areas that were focused on the beneficiaries as particular stakeholder groups



– rather than the activities of the organisation. This realignment resulted in the new programmes: FunDza Family, FunDza Fanz and FunDza Friends.

In January 2018, FunDza welcomed a team of iGold Consultants to the organisation to run a two-day workshop that focused on building internal resilience. The consultants helped staff think about how they - as a small team with big plans and ideas - could be effective, particularly given the constrained and difficult funding environment. The two days were helpful from a team-building perspective and helped all staff members to recognise the value that each individual added to the team as a whole.

### Human resource development

During 2017 and 2018, FunDza had a number of interns working in the organisation. It was critical that these young people received adequate training and support in order for them to be productive members of the FunDza team. The staff received formal training in editing, writing, and IT skills development (in particular training in Excel). In addition, informal workshops were held to promote better writing and facilitation at workshops.

Staff were all involved in the strategy sessions and this was of great benefit for many of the young interns as it was their first introduction to strategy development. Their creative ideas and passion for social development were critical to the outcomes of the sessions.

### Financial management

For non-profits working in a social development sphere, the future funding environment is always uncertain. Thus, ensuring that there are sufficient checks and balances in place is essential to eliminating wasteful expenditure. FunDza's finance manager Dawn Wilson has been consistently bolstering internal systems and donor reporting mechanisms to ensure that funding is spent in line with the right budget allocations. FunDza uses SAGE's online accounting package and has been successful in getting this to report on donor spending too. This has created greater internal efficiencies and ensures broader transparency.

FunDza received another unqualified audit from its auditors, John Lightfoot and Associates. The audit is available on request. In brief, the organisation received income in the form of donations, service contracts or other income of R4.69-million, and its total expenses for the financial year were R4.72-million.

### Relationships with donors and partners

The DG Murray Trust was FunDza's initial major grantmaker, coming on board when FunDza was a mere infant with big dreams. The DGMT supported FunDza for almost six years, at the end of which both parties had agreed to a cooling-off period beginning March 2017. In the interim, FunDza had secured funding from another core donor, Omidyar Network, for a two-year period. Unfortunately, the end of this grant happened in December 2017, and due to internal strategy changes at Omidyar Network, it was unable to make further grants to FunDza.

FunDza has been hard at work to try to find alternative funding streams bringing on board eight new smaller donors during the course of the financial year. It will, however, need to secure other large core donors in the years to come in order to sustain its operations and significantly scale its impact.



FunDza spent much of the financial year drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Basic Education. The negotiation of this agreement took many months of effort and it was signed in May 2018.

## Awards and accolades

FunDza was proud to have received three major accolades during the course of the year. These included winning the inaugural Joy of Reading Award, an international award that seeks to recognise excellent projects promoting reading for pleasure. Mignon Hardie, executive director and trustee, received the award from Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands at the Next Library Festival in Aarhus, Denmark, in June 2017.

Then, in September, FunDza was awarded the prestigious UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy 2017. Mignon Hardie travelled to the UNESCO head office in Paris for the awards ceremony on 8 September 2017 – International Literacy Day. Nandi Tshabane also travelled to China to receive a Confucius statue as part of the celebrations. This is a major achievement as

again the award is an international one that honours projects from around the globe. We are proud to have been recognised on the world stage.

In November, FunDza received a Gold Award at the Impumelelo Social Innovations Awards for its impact in getting young South Africans reading and writing. FunDza is pleased to have received local recognition for its innovative work too.

**17** CONFERENCES ATTENDED  
**24** NEWS ARTICLES  
**3** MAJOR ACCOLADES  
**6** RADIO INTERVIEWS  
**2** TV APPEARANCES

## Marketing and promotions

FunDza continues to broadcast information about its work through its social media platforms on Facebook and Twitter, and its regular newsletter to subscribers. In addition, it has become sought-after to present at conferences and events. During the year, FunDza staff delivered papers at 17 conferences, it appeared in 24 news articles and members of the team were interviewed on the radio six times. In addition, it was featured in two TV/video broadcasts.

One of the joys of winning the Joy of Reading Award was being able to share that joy! In the month of September, FunDza ran a major 'Joy of Reading' campaign to celebrate its readers. Every day during the month of September, FunDza celebrated through its social media channels a person/group of people that it had reached. Each person/group received a FunDza book and marketing material giveaways. View the recipients in our Special Report: Spreading the Joy of Reading.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

FunDza believes that to be a learning organisation, it is essential to continuously monitor and track one's progress. Apart from collecting a mass of data across all programmatic areas, FunDza also conducted five M&E studies. These were: an external report on the Fanz writing programme; an evaluation of the organisational theory of change; a second evaluation and a re-working of the Fanz writing theory of change; an external study by Lean Data of FunDza's Fanz readers, Fanz writers and Family groups; and a survey of the FunDza Fanz readers in December 2017. Results of these are referred to in this annual report.

In conclusion, while it is clear that the operating environment is tough for FunDza, and indeed all non-profits within the education sector, the organisation remains well-positioned for future growth given its focus on internal resilience-building, and due to its careful financial management of resources. In addition, its focus on tracking and monitoring its work means that it is better able to tell its story and appeal to funders who are wanting to have a measurable impact in the youth development space in our country.

## Supporting our online readers and writers

FUNDZA'S ONLINE LIBRARY PRODUCES AND DISTRIBUTES local content to thousands of readers daily. Every week there is a brand new original local story, and every weekday new content is added such as blogs, articles, interviews and readers' own essays, poems and stories. FunDza is accessible to readers using any device that can connect to the Internet. There are various ways of accessing the platform – through the responsive site: <http://live.fundza.mobi>, through FunDzApp (Android app available on the Google Play store), or through the app on the FreeBasics.com platform which is zero-rated by Cell C.

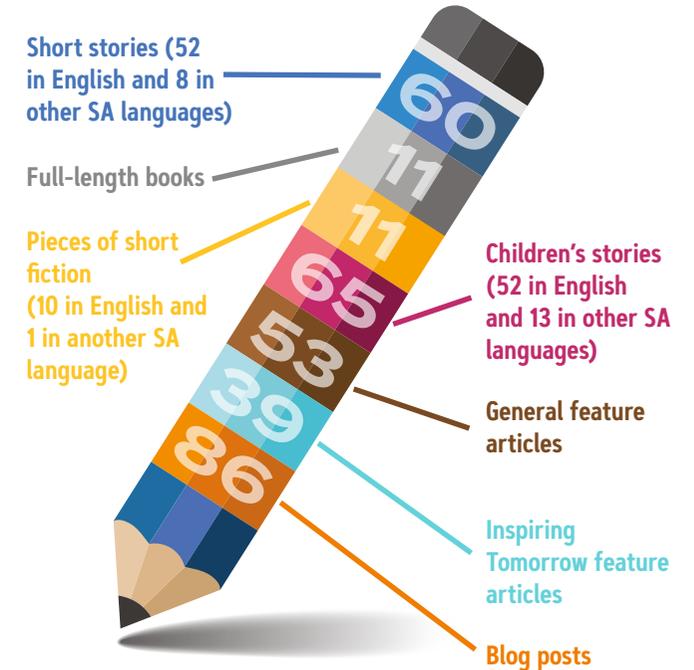
FunDza's goal was to reach at least 300,000 'active' readers through its online programme and to publish the work of more than 500 young people during the course of the year. These goals were surpassed! The fundza.mobi site received 790,000+ unique 'active' readers during the course of the year. An active reader is a non-bounce user. On average there were around 128,000 sessions per month and almost 1.5-million pages were viewed monthly. The average reading session was 15 minutes with an average of 12 pages being read in a session. We are exceedingly proud of these results.

### Reading

In order to support the reading community, FunDza needs to continuously create content for the fundza.mobi platform. Professional freelance writers submit their stories or blogs according to the standards that FunDza has developed, and, when necessary, work with the in-house editors to hone their work. In this way FunDza is also supporting local writing talent.



### PROFESSIONAL CONTENT PUBLISHED



But it is not only professional writers who benefit. FunDza is proud to have mentored a number of young writers to write professionally for the organisation. Ten of the professional weekly short stories were produced by mentee writers. The recognition is hugely important for those mentee writers: they not only earn money for their writing work and receive the support of a professional mentor, but they also get published and read! It is similarly important for our readers. They are frequently inspired to see how other young writers – their contemporaries – are reaching great heights and receiving deserved recognition.

## FANZ WRITING PUBLISHED



From the feedback FunDza receives from its readers, it can see that it is helping young people to practise reading more frequently and improve their language skills, at the same time the stories inspire readers to better navigate the challenges they face in their daily lives. This is because the stories frequently speak to many of the issues that young people face – such as crime, poverty, rejection, friendships and family relationships – and so they feel less alone with their challenges and problems. And the regular blogs and feature articles that FunDza publishes too are designed with the trials and tribulations, and the hopes and aspirations of FunDza’s dedicated readership in mind.

Through the stories and the other regular content that FunDza commissions and publishes, readers often are provided with role models on how to overcome these challenges. This is vital work as many of our readers are at the formative stage of their life where they are deciding who they are in the world. The decisions that they make at this critical stage can have lifelong impacts. FunDza’s stories, blogs and articles provide an opportunity for reflection and values clarification.

## Writing

FunDza’s editing team worked hard during the year to cope with the large number of submissions from aspirant young writers across the country. FunDza is proud to have had 600+ new Fanz writers contribute work to the platform with an average of 97 people submitting work (frequently multiple pieces) monthly.

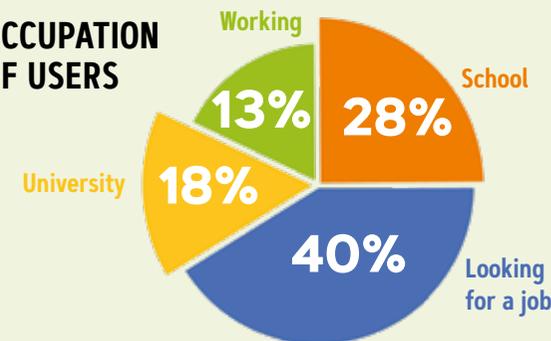
The editing team edits all work submitted and on longer prose pieces it provides the writer with personalised feedback on their work. The feedback aims to encourage and help the writers to develop and grow their skills. To encourage young people to write, FunDza also hosted a number of writing competitions. There was the Five Lines of Freedom poetry writing competition in April, the 2044 Fast Forward sci-fi essay writing competition in June, and the Bridging Divides poetry competition in October.

## Learning

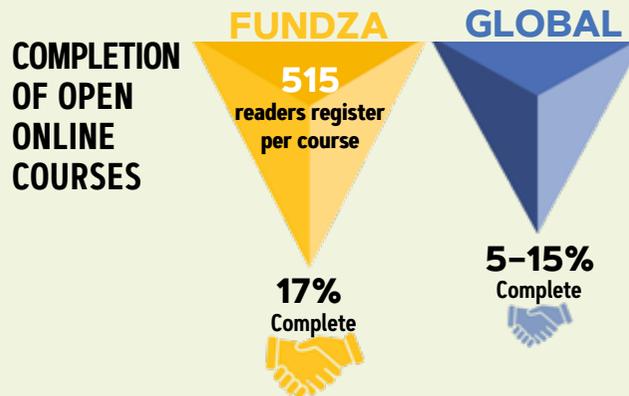
FunDza is not only getting young people reading for pleasure and writing for meaning, but it is also providing them with access to a variety of online courses – so that they can improve their comprehension and language skills. Every month a new open online course is uploaded to the fundza.mobi for anyone to access. This is available for a three-month period – so at any point in time, readers can choose to participate in one of three open courses. Those who successfully complete a course receive a certificate of completion, and those who score more than 70% on average for the quizzes, receive a certificate of completion and excellence.

While the numbers of readers participating in the courses are relatively low – on average 515 readers register for a course – the completion rate is increasing. By the end of the year, the last three courses had an average of 17% completion rate, which for an open online course is high in global terms where the average completion rate hovers between 5 and 15%.

## OCCUPATION OF USERS



At the end of the course readers are asked to complete a survey to provide us with feedback. We can see that the courses are attracting many users who are unemployed and not in education or training. We can see that this demographic is keen for opportunities to learn and improve their skills so that they can be more adequately prepared for the workplace. Part of our future strategy is to provide more content that focuses on their specific needs.



## RECOMMEND TO A FRIEND?

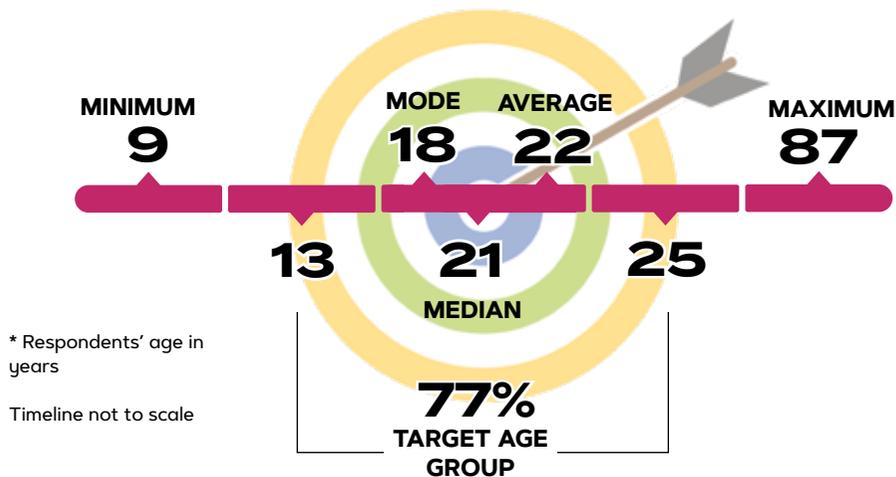


# Learning from our readers

In December 2017, FunDza conducted an annual survey of its online readership on the fundza.mobi platform. This was the third annual survey of its kind – the previous two surveys were conducted in December 2015 and again in December 2016. The intention is to gather feedback from readers and to determine changes in the make-up of its readership base over time. Through the survey FunDza gathers demographic data on readers to understand how they are accessing content, to learn about the challenges they face in access, and to find out what hooks them into reading more, and finally to get input on how we can improve our offering and become more responsive to their needs. A total of 1965 readers responded to the survey, compared to 940 in 2016 and 855 in 2015.



## Age demographics



\* Respondents' age in years

Timeline not to scale

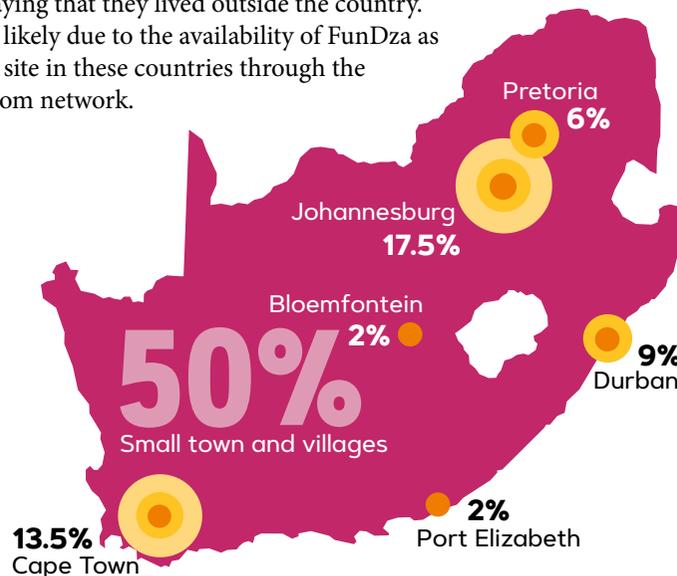
The average age of the respondents was 22 years, with a median of 21, a mode of 18. The range showed a minimum of 9 years and a maximum of 87. 77% of the respondents fell within FunDza's target age group: 13 to 25 years.

In December 2016, the average age was 21.5 years, and in December the average age was 24 years. As in previous years, there is a long 'tail' of readers, highlighting the fact that FunDza content appeals to a wide audience.

## Geographic location

84% of the readers were from within South Africa, but there is a large and dedicated readership from outside our borders too. The most popular other countries were (in order of frequency): Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Lesotho.

The 2016 survey similarly recorded similar stats - with 81% of readers saying that they lived outside the country. This is most likely due to the availability of FunDza as a zero-rated site in these countries through the FreeBasics.com network.

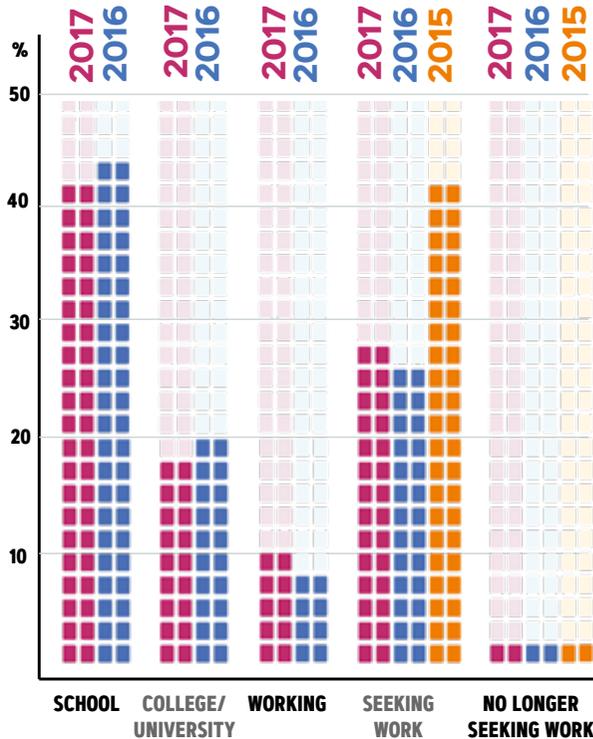


Of those living within South Africa, the greatest concentration of readers was in the larger cities. For instance, Johannesburg was the largest group with 17.5%, followed by Cape Town (13.5%), Durban (9%), Pretoria (6%), and Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth (2% each). But this means that 50% of the South African readers are living in much smaller towns and villages.

## Gender

In terms of gender, 62% of respondents were female, and 37% were male. 1% did not want to disclose their gender.

The previous two studies did not ask for respondents' gender but earlier studies have shown that there is a large number of female readers on the programme.



## Occupation

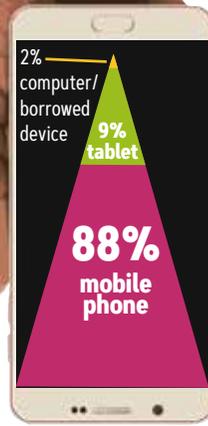
41% of the respondents were at school and 18% were at college or university. 11% were working, 28% were trying to find a job and a further 2% were no longer looking for a job.

As indicated in the graphic above, the number of people saying that they were job-seekers significantly reduced from 2015 (43%) to 2016 and 2017. We speculate that this reduction is not because South Africa's youth are facing fewer unemployment woes, but rather due to changes in the recorded age demographic of our readership between those years. In 2015, the average age of the readership was 24 (versus 21.5 and 22 years in 2016 and 2017 respectively). The younger the average age, the more likely it is for readers to be enrolled in school or college or university, rather than having to face the pressures of finding employment.



## Device type

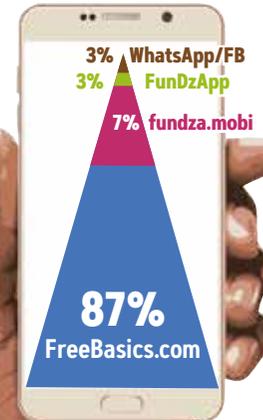
88% of respondents said that they were reading on their mobile phones. 9% reported using a tablet and just 1% a computer or laptop. A further 1% said that they didn't have their own device but either borrowed one or used one in a 'free' space, such as a library.



## Accessing fundza.mobi

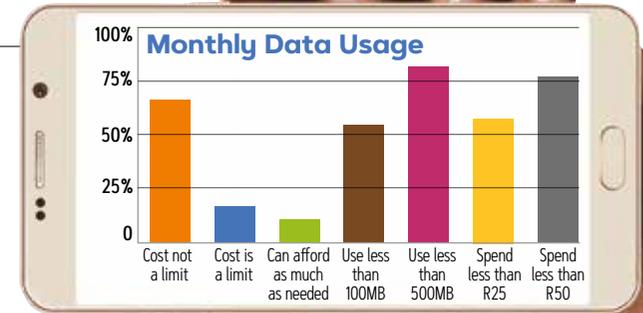
A very high 87% of respondents said that they were accessing FundZa through FreeBasics.com. This is unsurprising given that the service is zero-rated by Cell C in South Africa, and by other mobile networks in different African countries.

The next highest portal space was the site – fundza.mobi – with 7% of respondents using that most frequently. This was followed by FunDzApp (FunDza's android app) with 3% of users accessing content this way. A further 3% said that they didn't access FunDza content unless they were connecting to it through WhatsApp or Facebook.



## Data restrictions

Given that the vast majority of users were accessing FundZa via FreeBasics it is unsurprising that only 65% said that the cost of data did not limit their time spent reading. 16% of respondents said that it did limit their time reading. Only 11% said that they could afford the data they need to read as much as they like.



Nonetheless, many reported not having access to large amounts of data. 52% said that they used less than 100MB each month and an aggregate of 79% reported having less than 500MB of data to use per month.

In terms of money spent on data, 56% said that they spent less than R25 per month on data, and 76% said they spent less than R50 on data each month.

## Fanz home life

Readers responded to two socio-economic questions to provide an indication of their homelife and their major source of income. The first question was open-ended and readers described who they lived with and their type of house. A textual analysis revealed that approximately 53% of respondents live in a household with between 4 and 7 people. A frequency analysis for the word 'shack' found that 13% of respondents used this word in their description of their home, while 18.5% of respondents used the term 'RDP' to describe their home/dwelling.

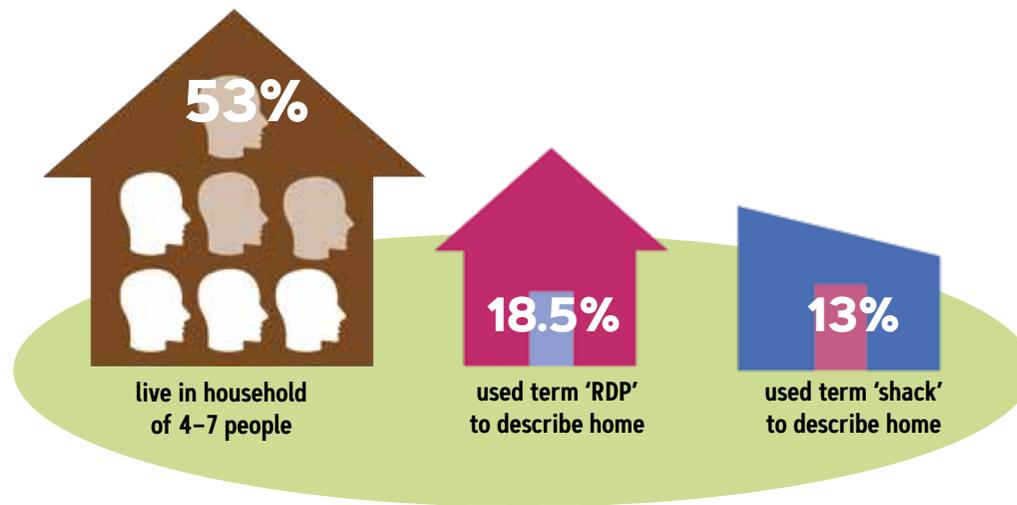
### Some of the responses:

“ Three people live in my house, namely, my mother, sister and myself. Ours is a four room RDP house, and our mother is the sole bread winner. The house would be good however, the toilet is outside because it's one of the first RDP designs.

“ 5 people including me. The type of house lived in is a brick built type and an RDP.

“ There are seven of us, 4 siblings, mom and dad, and my uncle, I live in a non violent home, not rich nor not poor just middle, my dad is seeking for a job and mom is sick but life is not that hard.

“ 10 people and we living in a shacks, the only person working is my mom at home



“ There are eight of us. Five girls, two boys and my Father. We use a garage as our bedroom while our kitchen is a shack.

“ I live with a family of 13 people including my grand parents my mom, we live in a three roomed house in a town ship with informal settlement.



### Main source of income

According to the responses, 35% said their main source of income came from social grants. This was followed by income from a mother (19%) and a father (12%). The balance of 34% was spread between another family member, the respondent's own income or the participant did not wish to disclose.

# Reading behavior

Various questions were designed to find out about our readers' reading behaviours. We wanted to know the frequency of visits, and the amount of time that readers visited, as well as to understand what hooked readers in and made them want to read more.

As per the previous year's results, it was clear that the survey respondents were representative of fundza.mobi's dedicated readers. 35% of the respondents claimed to visit FunDza almost every day while a further 21% said they came a couple of times a week, and 15% at least once a week.



The respondents also read for significant periods of time. 71% of respondents reported reading for an average of at least 15 minutes at a time. 22% said they spent more than an hour at a time reading, while a further 26% said they read for half an hour or more at a time.

Previous studies conducted on the fundza.mobi readership found that gender plays a significant role in reading behaviour. This study confirmed that this was still the case: female readers were more likely to be lengthy and frequent readers. There was no other variable tested that gave the same results in terms of predicting reading behaviour.)

## Reasons for visiting

“ I enjoy analyzing the writers techniques of writing and I enjoy reading inspirational stories

Reading - i like it a lot it help me with my english ”

“ happy ending stories where they have found the solution for the problem

” I like reading local stories and history of South Africa

“ I like to read short stories that has an impact in our daily lives both in IsiXhosa and English

” I enjoy reading some sad stories because during my childhood i experienced so much pain, so these sad stories are somehow my medicine.

“ I enjoy reading sad stories and entering for competitions

## Languages

Responding to what language(s) they would like to read in on fundza.mobi, English maintained its top position with 85% of respondents asking for English content.

Readers could select multiple languages and other languages that were popular were: isiZulu and isiXhosa at 13%; Sesotho, Afrikaans and Setswana at 5%; Sepedi at 3%, Xitsonga and Tshivenda at 2%, and Siswati and isiNdebele at 1% each.



## Impact on our readers

FunDza asked two open-ended questions about the impact that reading on fundza.mobi had on the respondents' lives. The first was centred on language and comprehension skills, and the second on personal development. These questions form the basis of an external study in collaboration with SIL so will not be analysed in-depth here.

**91%** said their language or comprehension skills had improved  
**92%** said they had personally developed or their quality of life had improved

However, we conducted a count of all the positive responses to each of these questions. 91% of the respondents said that their language or comprehension skills had improved thanks to reading on FunDza. 92% of respondents said that they had been personally developed or that their quality of life had improved in some way thanks to reading on FunDza.

Here are some unedited open-ended answers to these questions to give a taste of how respondents answered them.

My vocab has changed a lot... my mentality changed as reading became my best hobby and it end up creating my own imaginations that sometimes triggers that I can be a film director because of the pictures I make in my mind whilst reading

At first reading a comprehension was difficult and i couldn't real show interest but know it has brought back the fun of reading it and knowing how to analyse a particular story

After i finished the course i completed i learned a lot about writing since I'm a poet it improved my writing skills, i used to write poems with no rhymes or word play but now i have written 4/3 with word play and rhymes... I'm still keen to learn more as i keep reading stories and other poet's poem posted on the site and gradually I'm learning how to write a novel through reading stories on fundza website

Reading gives me a better understanding on when it comes to doing comprehension at school and learning new words that i can use to better marks in English.

Nowadays people tend to forget their languages so fundza easily provide us in different languages and skills to understand the stories

FunDza has really helped me more especially in my writing. They've taught me how to be creative with words and painting a picture to the person reading my short stories and even at school, at least I use what FunDza has taught me and use it to help boost my language and comprehension skills at school . The teachers are happy with that and also my previous Physics teacher read one of my short stories and was really touched and encouraged me to write more as I have the potential.

i have gained so much confidence in communicating with other people in English hence i can speak , read and spell fluently. I now know how to write better essays in school by using punctuations in a correct way.

The stories I read on FunDza daily have taught me a lot about life. I am proud to say that FunDza is my source of encouragement and motivation. through FunDza I have learnt that I am not the only one facing challenges in life and that there are actually people who are facing similar challenges to mine or even worse. It has taught me to be humble and grateful for the smallest things in life. FunDza has restored my self-esteem in more ways than one. I am very very grateful.

I guess I could say so. Although I'm not from a privileged home, some FunDza stories show how other people out there are struggling too and their problems are ten times worse than mine and I should not pity myself instead I should work on getting myself out my situation.

I struggle in social situations sometimes. The stories have come in very handy as ice breakers in many conversations and I have also applied the practical aspects of how some of the characters deal with social situations in my own life

It has helped me to express myself freely and to appreciate myself in a world that constantly tells me not to especially as a young female

I just want to thank the FunDza team for the splendid work they do. I appreciate the hard work you put into ensuring that experience is always blissful and out of this world. I've been an active fan for 3 years now and every time I visit the site I still feel the same way I did the first time I found out about it.

Fundza impacted my life on all levels, educationally, socially an psychological, it has improved my thinking capacity and made a more positive person, I have regained self confidence

Fundza has a huge impact on my life. The stories made me view life differently and has taught me to think out of the box...the twists in the stories does that!

i learnt not to judge easily and to be more understanding with people and to also help other people so FunDza has helped me a lot. words cannot even describe how it helped me

I grew up reading Eurocentric stories, even the ones written by African writers had Western influences, so reading the stories written here, especially because they are written by young people, has helped me see the country in a different way.

it has impacted in the quality of my life because the stories are of the things happening in our present day future and such stories gives us good advice's

Most of the books I read, there were lessons to learn so I learnt a lot. I found myself relating to some of the stories and felt like I was part of the stories. I was no longer into reading like I was during high school times but FunDza has made me to obsess over reading.

it made me understand my past and realise ongoing situations on how to heal the past and solve the present in a creative way

## Recommending FunDza to a friend

In October 2017, FunDza participated in a 'Lean Data' external survey thanks to its funder Omidyar Network. One of the questions aimed to get a 'Net Promoter Score' from participants. As a result, FunDza decided to include this question in the December 2017 survey asking respondents to rate out of 10 how likely they were to recommend the fundza.mobi experience to someone else.

This was an open-ended question. Answers were converted to a single numerical response dependent on the text answer and analysed in the same way as had been done in the Lean Data survey.

According to the results, 87% gave their answer as 8 or more, and the net promoter score was 62. A score above 50 is generally deemed excellent.

## Supporting our Family network

**T**HE FUNDZA FAMILY IS THE NETWORK OF ORGANISATIONS and school groups who have applied to FunDza to be part of the programme, and receive books and support material to run reading clubs or small lending libraries.

For this programme the key is the relevant and exciting content through which young people realise that reading is not just a chore, but can be meaningful and personally enriching.

During the 2018 financial year FunDza's objective was to support 100 groups and reach at least 10,000 young readers. The organisation was able to surpass this goal, by supporting 123 groups. On average each group reached 65 girls and 50 boys. Thus, the total estimation for the number of FunDza youth readers for the year was over 13,000. We are pleased with these results.

### Book deliveries

FunDza delivered 12,824 books and 52,878 pocket booklets to the reading groups and lending libraries around the country. A number of new titles were created for the groups. These are published by Cover2Cover Books, and due to FunDza's relationship with the publisher, it is able to purchase and distribute the books at very low cost.

In addition to the main books received (see box), groups also received books from other publishers or projects that were donated to FunDza, these include copies of the books: *VAYA: Untold stories of Johannesburg*, *A-Z of Amazing South African Women*, and poetry anthologies from the McGregor Poetry Festival and copies of *Stanzas*. Groups also received some top ups in a selection of various titles in the Harmony High, Soccer



### Main book titles released

*Playing with Fire*, by Sello Mahapeletsa – a new title in the popular Harmony High series.  
*Game Plan*, by Jayne Bauling – the third and final book in the Soccer Season series.  
*Flame of Truth*, by Bontle Senne – the third book in the Shadow Chasers series.  
*#CantStopReading* and *#OhMyWords*, both edited by FunDza staff and containing a selection of top short stories, articles, blogs, poetry and prose that first featured on the fundza.mobi site.

### 'Rights' Series pocket booklets released

*It's Your Right! Code of Conduct*, by Zimkhitha Mlanzeli  
*It's Your Right! Sabotage*, by Maire Fisher  
*Bridging Divides: Chasing Dreams*, by Ros Haden  
*Bridging Divides: Reunion*, by Sifiso Mzobe  
*Bridging Divides: Shark Attack*, by Tracey Farren

Season and Shadow Chasers series as well as copies of other anthologies produced by FunDza.

To better support the groups, FunDza also created a number of activity books to accompany some of the new titles. This provided the groups with detailed session plans for running a reading group. Typically session plans include a suggested warm-up activity, followed by a reading, and then writing/discussion/debate/role-play activities. This is to help the reading group facilitators use the books effectively.

### Feedback from reading groups

FunDza requires Family groups to submit a bi-annual survey. Respondents provide information on how the books are used and what additional help and resources they need to have an impactful programme. This feedback is vital as it helps FunDza to learn from the experiences of the groups on the ground, and it has enabled the organisation to shape its content and interventions so that it is better able to meet the needs of the groups it serves.

Approximately half the groups met every week or even more frequently. Some groups only ran lending libraries so there wasn't a specific time for meeting as a group. For those groups



that ran reading clubs, almost 60% of them supported more than 20 learners at each session, and approximately 80% of the groups said that the same learners came regularly to the reading sessions. This is good news for FunDza as one of our aims is to promote habitual reading, so regular attendance at reading club sessions is important to us as an organisation.

For the groups running lending libraries, we asked whether they had effective monitoring systems in place. All but one did. Some groups had paper-based registers for the learners and the books they lent, while other used computer-based monitoring systems.

The lending libraries noted that in general the books were taken out frequently by learners. Two groups said that it was a requirement of their club for learners to take out books, while others said that peer recommendations had an impact on a particular book's popularity. Some said that recommendations by teachers also helped to encourage the learners to read more.

As noted earlier, in general the groups support higher numbers of girl readers than boy readers. In just two groups this trend was not prevalent. The one group was an afterschool programme where the main activity was soccer – and the reading facilitator attributed the activities were most around sports hence there were more boys than girls. She went on to say that the boys showed more commitment than the girls.

FunDza was keen to understand whether the activity books were helping facilitators to run their sessions more effectively. More than half the groups surveyed were using the activity books; however, the majority were not using the full session plans, nor using the sessions in the order in which they were given. The most popular activities for reading clubs are the discussion activities, followed by the writing activities. Some groups made up their own activities to do with the groups – these included role plays and spelling bees.

In general, facilitators felt that access to the books was having some positive impact on reading behaviours, attitudes to reading, and language acquisition. As noticed in earlier studies, those learners who are either good readers or keen readers tend to have the greatest benefit from access to the resources.

**114** Groups supported by FunDza in 2018  
**65** Girls reached by each group  
**50** Boys reached by each group  
**13,000** Youth readers reached in 2018

But there are impacts – albeit slightly smaller – for weaker and more reluctant readers too.

Harmony High remains the most popular type of book provided, followed closely by the anthologies. For girl readers, Harmony High titles are the most sought after, but for boy readers, the Soccer Season series was voted most popular.

The reading group facilitators said that they would appreciate more visits and training support in general.

Some groups noted that they would like activations/training on using the fundza.mobi site as they were aware that it existed but they didn't know how to use it or promote it with their learners. Over half the groups indicated that they would like a presentation on how to use the site.

There were also other suggestions, such as providing giveaways (such as t-shirts) or running competitions as incentives for learners, providing outings (to book fairs) or other such fun activities for the learners and organising for authors to visit the groups, etc.

There were some issues with the lending out of books and we asked facilitators to highlight the ones that they faced. In general, these were the key problems: learners taking a long time over a particular book when others were waiting eagerly for it, readers fighting over books due to limited supply, insufficient books for young readers. There were also other general problems for the groups, one being the impact of

external events and circumstances on the effectiveness of the groups. For instance, one group spoke about the interruption of their reading sessions due to violence and shootings in the area.

But, in general, the responses from the groups was hugely positive, as this feedback shows:

“ Maybe once a month they can send a literature person who can come and join our session. I'm relatively new to being in a reading club myself, I just read alone always. Sometimes it becomes a bit difficult to engage everyone, and thus the impact being made becomes quite not felt.” ~ Lebo Tlhabanyane from Boys and Girls Club of South Africa, Gauteng.

“ Thank you so much FunDza. We are so appreciative of your programme. Our kids simply love the titles. As a teacher it has made my job easier as they are written in such a way that they have no problem identifying: themes, setting, conflict, author's point of view, villains, hero's etc. Love the relevance of the themes and settings as our kids can identify with them.” ~ Wendy Wolf, Christel House SA, WC

“ Well, FUNDZAs' presence is nationally and of course globally felt in literacy spaces. The way teens click with your literature and be able to relate to it is commendable. This becomes a winning strategy in getting our communities to read with meaning, to raise leaders who are readers and to revitalise the culture of reading in a country that has just been named the least underperforming when it comes to literacy levels of our grade4s. FunDza is bridging the gap in a very encouraging and passionate way.” ~ Madoda Ndlakuse, Ilunda Reading Club, EC

## Putting pen to paper in our writing workshops

**T**HE PEN IS POWERFUL! FUNDZA BELIEVES THAT TO FOSTER a literate youth, one needs to not only ensure that young people are reading but that they are skilled and confident to share their ideas, thoughts and views in written form too. Writing is vital for so many aspects of life. Not only is it a skill that is needed for academic success but also for professional advancement too: whether it is the ability to write a smart cover letter, an engaging email or a viral social media post... or an article, blog, story or book.

In order to encourage young people to practice and develop their writing skills, FunDza hosts a range of writing workshops which are offered to its Family groups.

During the year, FunDza facilitators hosted a total of 23 writing workshops with a total of 585 learners. Ten of the

### Workshops delivered in 2018



**23** Writing workshops  
**585** Workshop participants

workshops were the Writing Good Essays workshop, which is aimed at helping learners produce good essays as required by the curriculum. Six were the Creative Me workshops, a fun workshop aimed at promoting group writing; two were Writing Me workshops, focused on memoir writing; the balance were combined reading and writing workshops. It is wonderful for FunDza staff to have a chance to get out of the office and meet with the young people in our Family groups. The writing workshops give them an opportunity to do just that. As Sive Sibinya noted after facilitating a Saturday morning workshop: “The kids were beautiful, lively, energetic, and had so much positive energy. I absolutely loved every minute of it!”

FunDza facilitators provide feedback after every workshop so that we can learn and grow as an organisation. We can see that some of the things that work well in the workshops are:

- Having fun icebreakers that help the learners to relax and begin to trust the facilitators and one another too.
- Allowing the participants to use all of their language resources to creatively engage with the content – so allowing speaking in the mother tongue in response to readings, etc.
- Providing the space for discussion so that everyone can participate.

One of the challenges, however, is the language barrier – some learners’ English is very poor and this can inhibit

the amount that they participate. We try to overcome this by encouraging young people to speak in the language of their choice but this means that for best results we need facilitators who speak the home language of the learners in attendance.

At the end of most workshops, participants complete feedback forms. Most of the responses are hugely positive about the experience. Here follow some open comments:

“ I felt safe, comfortable, relaxed and enjoyed thinking and using my imagination.

When I experience writers block I’ll use the story starter. I believe it would be a creative way to get me going again.

“ I felt my input was valuable and appreciated.

It was fun and allowed me to think creatively. I learned skills of communicating effectively within a team.

“ Learning about writing – that’s what I enjoyed the most. I would like to see a story about my football life.

It helped develop my confidence and groomed my potential.

# Piloting WriteSmart in Gauteng

**FunDza runs a number of special projects with partner organisations. During the 2018 financial year these included the Year Beyond project – through which FunDza provides English language support for an after-school programme, the Reading for Enjoyment campaign with False Bay College, the WriteSmart writing clubs project in association with the Gauteng Province’s Library and Archival Services directorate, and the Sumbandila Rethink project in Limpopo province. Here are some reports on these projects.**

**F**UNDZA RAN A PILOT WRITESMART WRITING CLUB project with three groups in Gauteng. This was sponsored by a grant from the Gauteng Province’s Library and Archival Services Directorate. The project aimed to encourage the learners to improve their literacy skills through a structured writing club programme. It was piloted with three groups: OLICO Youth, Siyaphila, and Thaba Jabula High School.

Seasoned writing workshop facilitator, Sandra Hill, helped develop the WriteSmart writing club programme. There were twelve sessions planned. These were adjusted over time to accommodate feedback received from learners and facilitators. In May 2017 facilitators from the three groups were trained. Unfortunately the timing of this meant that the programme could only start in the third term, which meant that there wasn’t enough time to complete the programme in the last few months of the year, given the pressures of the third and fourth terms, and thus follow-up sessions happened in 2018.

The focus was on getting participants to practise writing for expression and meaning. In many classrooms there is little practice of writing – and most of it is evaluated as being ‘right’ or ‘full of mistakes’. We wanted learners to see that writing - just

as reading – can be a meaningful and enriching activity, not just a chore demanded by school.

Each session focused on a particular aspect of writing, with related activities. The facilitators’ guide was step-by-step, so easy to follow. The programme started off well, with all facilitators reporting that learners were enjoying the activities. We were lucky to have Baeletsi Tsatsi available to run two of the writing groups at OLICO Youth and Thaba Jabula, so she became the WriteSmart ‘expert’.

FunDza’s Sonja Kruse also visited all three sites in September to check-in and bring new materials. She co-ran workshops with facilitators and reported that the groups were functioning well at all sites and that even though the learners at Siyaphila had been shy at first, they had responded well to the activities.

The sessions were meant to build up to a long piece of work at the end. However, as groups were pressed for time at the end of the term, the last pieces of writing were often rushed and unfinished. This meant that the project could only be completed in 2018, with the publication of the anthology – *Good Days, Bad Days and other writings*. Groups have received copies of this anthology.

It seems clear that the learners enjoyed the process, and that it was empowering for them. Facilitator feedback indicated that generally the programme was well received. As Baeletsi writes in her introduction in *Good Days, Bad Days and other writings*: “After spending time with learners in township schools, I realised just how our education system was failing us, and unfortunately black children are the ones who experience this more than others. It is this revelation that made me ask myself, “So, what do I want to achieve with this project?” After a few weeks in session with the learners, I found my answer. If I could achieve just one thing, then it should be to teach these learners a new mantra, ‘Your voice is valid...’ WriteSmart has been a necessary programme. Learners need to be given a chance to say what they want to say, to refine it, and to share it with someone.”

In the final surveys many learners mentioned that they enjoyed reading other people’s work, and the encouragement they received. Some also mentioned the games (brought in due to popular demand), and the food! Some learners also spoke about how wonderful Baeletsi had been as a facilitator. At the Olico Youth handover event, learners were very excited to see their work in print: This was, one said, “the greatest gift ever”; another said she felt “over the moon”!



## Loving the learning at Year Beyond

**T**HE YEAR BEYOND (YEBO) PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE Western Cape Government, where volunteers facilitate extra Maths and English sessions (primarily online) after school for learners in selected primary and high schools. FunDza has provided the English content to the high schools since YEBO's inception in 2014. The online content is a course that consists of different texts – short stories, poems, articles – with multiple choice questions on each text that both assess and develop comprehension and vocabulary. FunDza also provides books for when the sessions have to be offline.

Over the years FunDza has learnt – and is still learning – how to refine and improve its participation in YEBO. For FunDza, YEBO has provided an amazing testing ground for deep learning of how to create an engaging reading curriculum for the afterschool space.

The 2017 academic year was smoother than previous years. However, some general problems continued, such as fluctuating attendance and continuing connectivity issues. These do impact on FunDza's delivery. Generally what seems to work best with FunDza's offering is the relevant and accessible content that engages learners and encourages them to reflect on their own lives. This has made FunDza's contribution valuable and enriching.

Through the multi-year implementation with YEBO, we have learned a great deal about what we need to get right in order for the programme to be effective. Here are some of the lessons that we've learned about best practice for supporting the volunteers so that they are well equipped to deliver FunDza's curriculum:

**Belief in the power of reading for pleasure:** It is vital to get the volunteers themselves to believe in FunDza's pedagogy of the importance of reading for pleasure, and to understand that reading is not an added extra, but the best way to learn language and to learn about the world too. If the volunteers

have not bought into the power of reading, their commitment to the programme is diminished. The initial training is designed to promote the importance of reading for learners – and the volunteers too.

**Master teaching strategies first:** In previous year's it was apparent that getting learners online first was not a healthy start to the project. This was because it was too steep a learning curve for the volunteers. A better approach was to work offline initially and concentrate the volunteer training on helping them to develop teaching strategies and approaches, and then and then more specifically learn techniques for teaching English through story and discussion. Thus, leaving the online training to the second term, meant that the volunteers had developed confidence in the teaching approach first, before having to master the technical details of the fundza.mobi and the online course.

**Encourage relationship building:** This was also linked to other reflections and discussions from prior years: the success of the programme rests primarily on the relationships between the volunteers and learners, and so it is important that these are somewhat developed before technical instruction. The training helped volunteers to see their role as one of a mentor or guide, rather than them trying to replicate a classroom atmosphere with one volunteer in front teaching a 'class' of learners.

**Introduce fun activities:** Another learning was that despite FunDza's

relevant and exciting content, there was a need for other more active and fun activities, such as language games, as well as the role plays and drama that are linked to the short stories. As this is an afterschool programme there needs to be interaction, engagement, and an element of recreation. Much of the early training and follow-up visits helped to guide the volunteers on how to run these fun activities effectively.

**Build in variety:** In terms of content, we found it was beneficial to have a range of different texts online and also offline, so that the sessions have more variety.

**Ongoing support through school visits:** Every site faces its own unique challenges, thus it was important for Dorothy, the project lead, to visit sites and provide one-on-one support to the volunteers, thereby dealing with the specific issues that they faced.

**Consistent monitoring:** Volunteers were required to complete reports at the end of each session. These were quick and easy to complete but encouraged self-reflection. They provided a useful guide and early warning system to alert FunDza to issues as they transpired. Thus, FunDza could be more responsive to the programmes and was alerted to common problems affecting all high schools too.

Thank you to all the volunteers, partners, implementing agents and organisers who have helped with this programme. The YEBO programme provides FunDza with an ideal laboratory space for learning how to structure its offering and become more effective as part of an afterschool initiative.



# Reading for Enjoyment at False Bay College

**F**OR THE PAST THREE YEARS FUNDZA HAS WORKED with False Bay College on a Reading for Enjoyment campaign. The project that started at the Fish Hoek campus, then extended to students at the Khayelitsha campus. For the project, FunDza facilitators spend a day each week or fortnight hosting fun classes with students to promote reading and writing for pleasure. In the 2017 academic year, the intervention was targeted at Level 2 students, as previous years' results had indicated that this was the most effective.

Because reading is not frequently seen as 'cool' by young people, the first few weeks are spent dispelling these myths, encouraging students to draw new conclusions about what reading can do in their lives, the fun that it can add, and the power that it can give.

The programme called for a lot of small group discussion to increase interaction, and enhance enjoyment and engagement. It also aimed to be fun, with the inclusion of a range of games designed to build vocabularies and help foster a positive relationship with learning new words and using dictionaries. Not knowing the meaning of a word became an opportunity for growth, rather than something that is shameful.

Thanks to the high relatability of the content on our FunDza mobi site, students really bought in to the stories. They could relate to the characters, plots and settings. In some of the activities we would read sections together and then ask students to discuss and write about what they thought would happen next. Because the characters and stories are people they could imagine being or knowing, they were able to tap into their knowledge and creativity to come up with interesting scenarios. They were quick to offer advice on how a character in the story should react, or when they thought someone was out of line!

Students were encouraged to share their views and opinions on the stories, and in the language of their choice. This meant broader participation from the students and more robust debate. Many were keen to find out what happened next and they would carry on reading stories independently on the fundza.mobi site.

Not knowing the meaning of a word became an opportunity for growth, rather than something that is shameful.

Because of the nature of many of our FunDza stories, the content used in the campaign has helped students reflect on their lives and wider social issues. A lecturer commented that 'the students felt as if the stories were from their own experiences.' Another FBC Education Specialist thought that the project was a great catalyst for students going through issues to face their fears and their circumstances. Lecturers also felt that the content helped teach good life lessons.

One lecturer, Belinda Nel, commented that lecturers obtained more insight into the students by listening to the discussions at the sessions. She said that FunDza sessions allowed the quieter students an opportunity to participate too. Lecturer Carol Hugo stated that the project "...improved critical skills in the students – listening, writing, talking skills which



also reflected in the class during normal teaching times. Sometimes they even use the stories to give examples in the classroom when relevant topics cropped up!"

Due to the high level of interactivity, the project helped students develop confidence in public speaking. Lecturer Tasneema Bowers commented that several of her students had been anxious about speaking in public, but that this had changed. "Ever since they have been encouraged to have differences in opinions, they interact and share ideas in class more."

Thanks to False Bay College, the lecturers and the students for their participation, and to the HCI Foundation for sponsoring this important project.

## Online learning with Sumbandila in Limpopo

**I**N 2017 FUNDZA WAS INVOLVED IN AN INTERESTING ONLINE project based in the Vhembe District of Limpopo, organised by Sumbandila, an educational NGO in the area. Initially the programme aimed to provide Maths and Science support. However, given that most teaching takes place in Tshivenda and Xitsonga yet exams are written in English, it was clear that the programme needed an English literacy component. FunDza was called in to develop this aspect.

The project involved 781 grade 9 learners in three rural schools. Each learner received entry-level smart phones with SIM cards and a small amount of monthly data. Other organisations supplied the maths and science content, and FunDza supplied the English materials.

The course was a mix of non-fiction blogs about things like dating, or bullying, some articles about inspiring people, some poems, and then of course some of FunDza's short stories. Each text had a set of multiple choice questions covering comprehension,

language and vocabulary. Learners got their results immediately after completion, with explanations of why a particular answer was correct. There was also a short 'open' question that asked for learners' personal thoughts and opinions.

It was an interesting challenge to find material that would be meaningful and exciting to rural teens in Limpopo. The most popular story, we found, was one about a hot guy who tried to seduce a young girl with promises of everlasting love – but luckily she realised just in time that he was a cheat and a liar!

Staff were trained by Dorothy and Ros at the end of 2016 but it was vital to get learner-buy-in too. So Sonja and Zimkhitha visited the three schools at the beginning of 2017 to get learners loaded on the FunDza course, and, as importantly, inspired by it.

Every month we awarded certificates to the learners in each of the 11 classes who had completed the most quizzes, and each term books were awarded to the top learners overall.

Sumbandila reported that FunDza was the most popular platform used in the year. In the evaluation process, focus groups were held and learners were asked to describe the platforms in one word. Representative words for FunDza were 'awesome, fun, entertaining, interesting, encouraging.' The negatives were about kinks in the login process that we needed to iron out.

The learners were given a survey about FunDza at the end of the course, and we were very interested – and pleased – to see some of their responses:

- 67% found the platform easy to use
- 71% of users said they thought that their English had improved
- 29% said that the course had made them see (for the first time) that reading could be fun, while 43% said they had always enjoyed reading and still did.
- 39% of learners said that they had read 5 or more other stories on FunDza – thus showing that the course had got them 'hooked' on reading more.

However despite this positive feedback, very few of the learners actually completed the course: only 20 learners out of the total completed over 90%, 62 over 30% and only 112 learners over 20%. This could be due to data barriers: although FunDza is free on Cell C via the Freebasics platform, Cell C reception is poor in the area, and so data is often needed for FunDza.

At one point the convenor of the project said that she was concerned that learners who were managing to complete their modules were those with more money for data. This is why it is extremely important to us to try to get zero-rated by other cellphone companies, as we feel it would be a 'game-changer', not only for Sumbandila, but for many other users.



# So much joy in reading!

When we were presented with the Joy of Reading Award in June 2017, we wanted to find ways to share the good fortune with our readers and writers. So, we decided to turn September – traditionally ‘Literacy month’ – into our ‘Joy of Reading month, to acknowledge and celebrate our readers and writers, learners and friends we reach.

Our campaign was a hit! 30 giveaways in as many days! Each day, FunDza gave away a book to a lucky recipient (or recipients). They included attendees at workshops, online readers, Fanz writers, Family beneficiaries, participants in online courses and more! The FunDza office felt like a post office with packages leaving for destinations countrywide, filled with something exciting for our readers and writers to read and enjoy. Here’s a summary of the people celebrated during the month.



**#1 Lethabo Kgwele** from Diepsloot attended a FunDza workshop. She enjoyed learning new words and feeling included. She loves the book and is a keen reader!



**#2 Reabetswe Maboea** from Johannesburg loved the creative writing exercise in the FunDza workshop. She wrote about a girl who broke into a library at night to read!



**#3 Alinah Botopela** attended a Help2Read workshop with FunDza. She found it really helpful and will apply what she learned at her school reading groups.



**#4 Nazli Abrahams** bumped into Sonja at the airport. Recognising her from a prior workshop, she recalled how she had stayed up all night to read two Harmony Highs!



**#6 Students from False Bay College** enjoyed a day at the Open Book Festival with FunDza. They said it was a blast! Thanks to the Book Lounge and OBF for hosting FunDza and the students. There was so much to see, read and enjoy!



**#5 Mogale Mofokeng** from Thaba Jabula Secondary School loved doing creative writing with FunDza. He said: “Free writing is the power to unleash the creativity inside you.”



**#7 Tshepang Molisana**, a Fanz writer, whose essay “Homeless” was published in FunDza’s anthology #CantStopReading, says being published inspires her to write more!



**#8 Cynthia Zulu** from New Model Private College, Doornfontein, attended a creative writing workshop and was an eager, imaginative participant in group writing.



**#9 Verushjka Swartz** from Laingsburg High loved having Tamica and Dawn host a workshop at her school, saying: "They made my day and inspired me to follow my dreams."



**#10 Retang Phaahla** is FunDza's WriteSmart facilitator at Siyaphila. She said that WriteSmart has been very beneficial and inspiring to the learners.



**#11 Musa Mabyeni** attended FunDza's Open Book Festival event at Kuyasa Library, Khayelitsha. He's a rapper and poet, and plans to send his writing to FunDza.

“ The FunDza people inspired me to follow my dreams ”



**#12 Busi Dayimani** is part of Ikamva Youth. She said FunDza's books have been a gift - building her learners' vocabulary. The books are youthful and engaging!



**#13 Busi Paliso** attended a National Book Week in PE. On receiving the book prize, she said: "I am so happy, excited and proud of myself. I have achieved something"



**#14 Hlumisa Pinyana** attended a FunDza workshop in PE. Thrilled to get a book, she said: "Winning feels like a victory after winning a 100km race against Caster Semenya!"



**#15 Matlala** is from Polokwane and met FunDza's Ndibulele and Veronica at a workshop. She said it was lovely to participate and that she enjoys reading.



**#16 Hutamo** attended a National Book Week event in Polokwane and was overjoyed to receive a book. Hutamo is not new to FunDza, she knows some of the poems already!



**#17 Jami-Lee** from Laerskool Kakamas, Northern Cape, said: "We read in the class but not for pleasure. It's good to know there are stories and books for this."

“ I am so happy, excited and proud of myself because I have achieved something ”



**#18 Noluthando** from Kakamas School attended a National Book Week event with FunDza. She said: "Many kids don't actually read, except at school so this is good."



**#19 Junior Manqele** met Ndibuelele at a FunDza event in Itsoseng. He said he likes the motivating stories he reads on FunDza. These encourage him to follow his dreams.



#20 **Nontsikelelo Dawethi** attended a National Book Week event in Itsoseng. She was excited with her book, saying: “Finally, I’ll have interesting stories to read!”



#21 **Hulani Mthiya** was inspired by Dianne Stewart’s talk at the Read to Learn Conference in Pietermaritzburg. Dianne was talking about FunDza at the event.



#22 **Chireki Saurombe** is a prolific FunDza reader and writer. Speaking of being published on fundza.mobi, she says: “I have a place to offload without anyone judging me.”



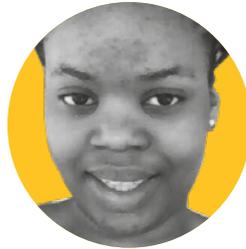
#23 **Lubabalo Qumba** is one of FunDza’s biggest online readers, writers and commenters on stories. He said: “FunDza helped me find my passion.”



#24 **Milisa Tshemese** completed the online course and scored more than 70%. She said: “It feels amazing to win! I’ll use the money for school fees and dance classes.”

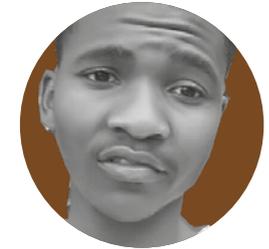


#25 **Mantombi Mokhoeyais** another course winner scoring more than 70% was over the moon to be selected as a winner. She’ll be using the prize money to buy her favourite books.



#26 **Sisipho Ngcenge** from Burgersfort, Limpopo, is another course winner! She was thrilled to win and is putting her prize money towards her studies.

“ Thank you for doing your best to give the best guidance as an aspiring writer ”



#27 **Sithethelele Bekwa** from Umthatha also scored more than 70% on the course! Happy to be a winner, he is using the money towards getting his drivers licence.

“ I learned new words and love feeling included. I loved receiving a new book to read and am a keen reader ”



#28 **Natifa Koornaar** was the fifth excited course winner. She said she’ll use her prize money towards her writing and maybe getting published!



#29 **Linda Malone**, of Best College, is one of the dedicated reading champions in FunDza’s Family network. She says: “Our learners can’t get enough of FunDza books.”



#30 **Patrick Mtshikiva** from rural Madibeng in North West was beyond excited to get his FunDza package and couldn’t wait to start reading the new books!

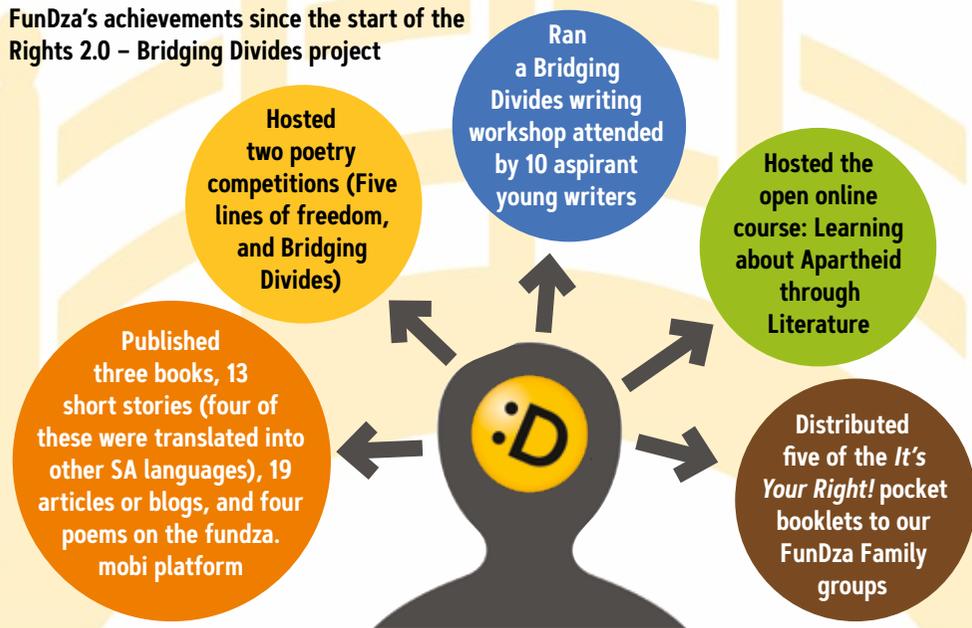
# Bridging our country's deep divides

FUNDZA'S FLAGSHIP RIGHTS 2.0 – BRIDGING DIVIDES PROJECT USES STORY-TELLING TO CREATE DIALOGUE AROUND the values of our constitution, and serves as an opportunity for us all to reflect on how far we have come in the last 20+ years of democracy, and how far we still need to go if we are to build an equitable and just democracy.

Previously FunDza ran its first Rights Project - over a three-year period starting in 2014. This focuses specifically on the Bill of Rights and used stories to show how these rights were applicable in our daily lives. In this project we produced 20 short stories (each appeared in English as well as a translation in another official language) on fundza.mobi, and 10 of the stories were reproduced as pocket booklets.

This second wave of the project is Rights 2.0 - Bridging Divides. Through this project we look at our society through the filters of three broad themes: Community divides (race, religion, class, etc), Gender divides (LGBTI, gender-based violence, patriarchy) and Information divides (education, access to information). A large focus of the project is on content creation. This generally starts as content for the fundza.mobi platform and includes short stories, feature articles, blogs as well as user-generated content submitted through a variety of writing competitions that speak to the themes of the project. Through this content creation, FunDza aims to explore the themes and to encourage discussion, critical thinking and dialogue.

## FunDza's achievements since the start of the Rights 2.0 – Bridging Divides project



Given that the project aims to encourage discussion around these themes, we keep a close eye on comments and feedback from readers to gauge engagement. Here are just a small selection of feedback received on some of the stories:

“This story really needs to be brought to daylight so that people can get to experience how some orphans are treated... really enjoyed the story and it has taught me a lesson.” (Comment on *Prayers*, which focused on income inequality and how economic divides are so prevalent in our country. The story shows the real-life impact of HIV/Aids and how this is magnified through the poverty lens.)

“I love what I just read and realise we've got to think about such things in our lives even if we don't know any Thando-Joy's in our lives but sometimes I guess they just hide their identify because of us 'judgemental people'.” (Comment on *Zimbali Jadeite & Me*, a story about a transsexual girl trying to get her school to accept her as a girl, rather than a boy.)

“Thank you very much guys for this course its a great course, a wiseman once said to me that “you'll never know where you are going if u don't know where u came from.” You know during this course I felt like I was back at school doing my matric. You guys made me miss school.” (Comment on the online course: Learning about Apartheid through Literature)

“Thanks guys for your great oppportunity it was an interesting course, it also teach us about our history.” (Comment on the online course: Learning about Apartheid through Literature)

“Great story and truly the apartheid laws played a very significant role in oppressing and discriminating against non-white races.” (Comment on *Reunion*, a story that focuses on the impact of apartheid-era forced removals on people's current lives.)

Winners  
Bridging Divides  
Competition

## Pens, Police, Poems

By Athenkosi Cetyana

I curse the pen my president used to sign  
that agreement in '94  
I curse the ink for not defying gravity that  
day  
If it were not for his signature  
My father would still have land  
If it were not for that ink finding solace on  
that contract paper  
My mother would still have her dignity  
And perhaps my sisters would walk at  
night, feeling safer

Sometimes pens swallow up poems,  
People's homes, people's hopes  
And erase a people's history  
Sometimes pens break pledges, burn  
bridges,  
Blind leaders and bind bodies to rubber  
bullets

Sometimes pens police poems  
But I am learning that poems can also  
undo the violence of policies  
I am learning that burning bridges is  
taught to people  
I am burning the burden that comes with  
social constructs  
And building my being from its ashes  
I am learning to trust my pen  
To continue to write my dead history into  
existence  
I am learning that unlearning resurrects  
bridges

## Please, Try Them On

By Zamile Hlongwana

Please take my shoes and feel how it's like  
to walk on them,  
I am not expecting you to even walk a  
kilometre,  
A few metres will do.  
In fact, take just one shoe and walk on it.

Don't walk on them for pretence unity,  
Don't put them on to feel sorry for me,  
And please  
Do not put them on just because you feel  
obligated to take one for the team.  
But rather put them so you can understand  
my deep end,  
Put them on to feel the lifetime heat that I  
walk on.  
Put them on to feel how it's like to be  
expected to run a race  
With people who are wearing perfect fit  
runners,  
While you have on torn shoes with loose  
laces  
That can't be tied properly anymore,  
And still be expected to somehow win.  
Try them on,  
Maybe you will get it.

## Black man

By Lungelwa Kulati

You call me your woman  
You call me your pride  
But, you disrespect me  
You want to dominate me  
You say I'm your world  
You say I complete you  
You say you love me  
My bruises say something else  
I am confused, black man  
You're supposed to be my brother,  
my protector  
You have forgotten  
I gave birth to you  
My blood runs through you  
We need to be one, black man  
To be united  
Let us stand side by side  
I am still your Queen  
You're supposed to be my King

## Freedom, my future

By Christopher Themba

Freedom and I sit under a yellowwood tree,  
Watching the sun set on Robben Island.  
It seems not long ago that we met,  
When she whispered that my future  
Was free to be written by a liberated hand.

## Mzansi, my home...

By Steven Mogale

Freedom is in the tongue clicks of the Cape  
Lesotho artistic blankets, zulu love beads and  
dance reeds  
Hand sculptures, venda mudwalls and earring  
extensions  
Black pots, wooden spoon over a fire warming  
a meal  
Free in the palm of my African mother

## So many things

By Ntokozo Badli

Freedom is a lot of things.  
It can be a house wife on a shopping spree  
Or a prisoner's goal when he tries to flee  
Or a students reason not to pay the fees.  
Freedom is different for you and me.

Winners  
Five Lines of Freedom  
Competition





# Normalisation by Morena Maoka

E-learning, I hated it, I think I even hated my principal when he first introduced it in 2017. He stood behind the podium and said it was “compulsory” for us to start using Tablet PCs. He laughed and he said: “Technology is taking over!”

Sure carrying books to school was sometimes a burden but some of us didn’t mind. The thought of having one small device replace my 4 textbooks irked me. A device that could fall just once and stop working in a split second. What happens to a book when you drop it? Nothing! If it catches dirt you just simply wipe it off. I was not against change or development. I am a fan of change, but carrying books every day of the week – Monday to Friday – was normal.

Myself and my other comrades contested against this E-learning. We were very strategic in addressing our grievances and did our best to refrain from violence. We did not want another Hector Pieterse case, and our principal did say that he was once in the military.

We brought the matter up to the school executive committee, but they needed some convincing so we sought to convince them. We reminded the executive committee just how precious books are.

“My president, what about the paper fights? Remember the last paper fight we had...the pea shooting of papers? The paper guns?”

And just like that we won them over.

We managed to make them see things our way and the following week our school principal announced that it was no longer compulsory for us to purchase tablet PCs. Instead we now had a choice – Textbooks or Tablet PCs.

That’s when my Normalisation movement started, 27 years ago.

\*\*\*

Things are slightly different now. Our country is divided into two; Blacks and Whites. You must be thinking: Ha! Aren’t you a racist! South Africa is different now. In fact I am dating Jessica, a white girl whom I really love. She sees through the poverty and everything we face down here. I thought she was going to

leave me last week when Normalisation gave her old, wrinkled newspaper instead of toilet paper.

I’ll tell you more about her later... .

What I mean is that our country is literally divided into two. Below, lives us who fight for Normalisation and above, live those who prefer the new world, the Techno-World. The problem is that we are seen as terrorists. So every now and then the ruling government which is of course part of the Techno-World attempts to do away with us.

A small fraction of the Techno-World consists of robots which totally look like humans and live like humans. These robots are programmed so that they are completely moral. They are perfect and cannot do any wrong. Even in the ruling government there are one or two robots, hence there is no corruption now. One of their officials was fired after he used an enormous amount of the state’s tax money to upgrade his home, he was dealt with immediately. His accounts were frozen, assets seized and all his wives left him.

Although unemployment continues, no one goes to bed on an empty stomach. Everybody seems equal even though some are wealthier than others. This is all great, I know. However it is not normal walking around with robots! It is not normal for a country or government to be controlled by robots. Soon they will take over. It reminds me of my principal’s statement: “Technology is taking over!”

We’re trying to prevent just that; that’s why we fight for Normalisation. We don’t care about the cars that drive themselves while humans sit and do nothing. No we don’t. I’ll tell you what’s normal, a father teaching his son/daughter to step on the bloody clutch and changing the gear from one to two. That’s normal, but we don’t care about that, really. What we’re fighting for is for humanity to exist even tomorrow. For us to be able to bury our loved ones the traditional way, not for them to be frozen like pieces of chicken. They announced it on the news a year ago that they would now start freezing the dead.

They’ve even banned barbeques! They say it’s our fault that the ozone layer is so thin now. Well that’s partly true but still.

\*\*\*

It was around 9:30 p.m. when Jessica texted me that she was here. I was at one of our Normalisation meetings. I snuck out so that my fellow comrades would not see me, otherwise they’d know I was going to meet Jessica. It was hard for us to be together. It was not the race that was the issue; it was where she comes from.

You see Jessica comes from the Techno-World, so we have to sneak around like kids – A modern day Romeo and Juliet case. My people also hate her because she’s part of the family of the ruling government. What they do not know is that Jessica, like us also does not approve of some of the Techno-World ways and norms. They just will not accept her.

I went out to the car landing zone where Techno-cars landed and there it was, still aloft, Jessica’s white Techno-VW beetle. It had blue under car neon lights, and no wheels at all. She jumped out before she even turned off her engine, ran to me and gave me a hug. She had been crying, in fact she started crying again.

“It’s my father, now I know why he wants the dead to be frozen and not buried... .”

I took four of my best men and drove in Jessica’s car. Jessica too tagged along, we needed a hostage and who better than the daughter of the president of the ruling government. I put tape around her mouth to make it look real, which she removed so she could kiss me and then returned it.

The border control didn’t waste any time after we drove through the boom barrier. They ran to their cars. At least they can run, compared to those round people we used to call cops, the likes of Constable Mthembu and them. After 2 minutes we were being chased by Techno Cops.

I was driving really fast, turning left and right, right then left again. Jessica was really frightened by the whole scene – fast driving, cop chase, close calls and near misses.

“Is this how the taxi drivers you told me about drove...?” she asked.

I felt like Justin Bieber in Fast and the Furious 18. He plays the role of Dominic now.

Senior Winner  
2044 Fast Forward  
Competition

## Buddy by Jean-Paul Willemse

We took the right, they took the right. We took the right again and they too took the right. We took the left then the right then the right then another left. I looked back at Jessica's rear window and they were gone. Stupid robots.

Now we were headed towards the Union Buildings, and there it was, the nine-metre high bronze statue of Nelson Mandela. I still wonder how they got it to float. I guess even after so many years some figures will still be respected. We used Jessica's access card to get past the security. I told two of my men to stay in the car with Jessica and the other two to come with me.

The building was surrounded by Techno-cops as I thought it would be. And the rest of Jessica's family and other members of parliament stood behind them, cowards. So we had no way in. That's at least what they thought.

"Bring her in..." I said in my walkie-talkie.

And before I could look up, I felt a slap to my face. It was hard; definitely not a human's hand. I saw blood. This was not good. The robot stood in front of me, it had the face of Jessica's uncle, the one who died about three years ago. He didn't blink at all, but he walked like a human.

That's why Jessica's father wanted the dead to be frozen. They were turning them into a business scheme. Bringing the dead back to life. They charged people to bring back their loved ones to life, except they were now 80% robots and 20% human. But who wouldn't want to spend a minute more with their loved one? "Human being," it or he called me. "Have you seen all the time travel movies... Have you?"

He/it paused...

"Back to the Future, Terminator, Star Trek, Edge of Tomorrow, The Time Machine... Why do you think not any of them dare attempted to interfere with the year 2044? Because they knew they would be defeated. Accept it Human Being, we are taking over. And do you know what's funny? You people made us. YOU MADE US. Your first mistake was thinking that you could control us forever. Ha ha ha ha ha," he laughed.

He turned and shot a laser through Jessica's father. She came running.

It was true. We made them, and now we can't control them.

Christmas was the first time she actually believed in peace. The entire family sat at the table and chewed their turkey, sweet potatoes and regrets in silence. Her father barely mentioned his wife's affinity for gin every morning. Her brother excused himself after a slight accident in his pants. The family friend had a tendency to show too much cleavage. That night they were all glued to the television.

The identity of the new Buddy was being broadcast. Her own Buddy was a pebble shaped holographic companion who reminded her of homework and which photos to post on her feed. The advertisements faded and the screen was black. She could only hear a faint buzzing from the air filters. A small light appeared at the centre of the black. It grew steadily until it was a wide angle shot of the Arctic. A beautiful man stood on a cliff and he was chatting to a small rectangular sheet of glass. "Look where we are, Buddy! We made it!" he announced.

Holographic fireworks spat from the sheet and a child's face hovered in the man's hand. "I feel proud. I feel happy," said the child. It turned towards the camera and smiled. The screen faded back to black and white letters: "The Buddy that feels with you. The Buddy who loves. 01/01/2044." Her brother screamed like a hormonal caveman and her mother sipped at her gin tea. Her father went outside to smoke, but everyone shared a similar thought. New Year's Day could not come quickly enough.

Their arguments intensified in December. The silly season purified their hate for each other. Her father was a stay at home husband and her mother worked six days a week. She sold electronic parts to China. "Alexia, you have a Buddy thanks to me!" she would say after her fourth cup of "tea". Alexia swiped through her feed while chewing some vitamins. They kept her from using the first floor window as an exit. The doctors prescribed Virtual Reality sessions, but only her Buddy helped. She would sing to it and make it dance. She would tell it her secrets and it would giggle with its reliable automation. Her best friend was already in line at the Buddy store. She did not need to wait, because her mother gets the Buddy systems delivered.

"You are nothing without me!" her mother yelled.

"Well, at least I exist, you ghost!" her father replied.

"I hope my new Buddy knows how to love!"

"It's only programmed for humans!"

"I hope it has a mute button too!"

A door slammed and Alexia took two more vitamins. Her Buddy played a soothing melody and she slept through New Year's Eve.

The explosions woke her up at 1 a.m. Her mother burst into the room and threw a white box at Alexia. She rubbed her eyes and considered the box. She opened it carefully. Her new Buddy shone under her dull night light. She could hear the drones outside. Every New Year, they flew over the city and the surrounding suburbs dropping advertisements. Their confetti lasted well into the second week of January. People tolerated the drones, because of the free Wi-Fi. Alexia heard of people shooting the drones out of the sky and using them as drug mules. She held her Buddy in her hand. Her mother marched out of the room. It chimed and a child's face appeared.

The hologram had improved since the last model. It was nearly solid and she could see the child's pores as it yawned.

"Set up, please," it said.

"Name, Alexia Huxley. Buddy ID, 476032," she replied.

The child closed its eyes and Alexia noticed her old Buddy light up. Both devices displayed a loading screen. She got out of bed and stretched. She checked the air monitor. It read gas clouds incoming. She sighed and checked on the devices. Set up was complete.

"Buddy, can you hear me?" she said.

"Yes, Alexia, I can hear you. You have an appointment with Maggy at 2 p.m." The child smiled and scanned the room. Alexia left it on the bed as she rolled on her side to sleep.

Breakfast was uneventful. They all sat in their sections of the house and fiddled with their Buddies. She walked in on her mother: "Buddy, am I successful?" Her father told his Buddy to order more toilet paper online: "This might be for number two, but you're always number one in my eyes," the child chimed. Her brother was nowhere to be seen. She dressed for the meeting with Maggy.

"That one makes you look sad," Buddy said. She picked out a

royal blue cocktail dress. Her Buddy chimed. Her lift had already arrived. Her father told her about the times when people had to share taxis and how dangerous trains were. She couldn't imagine sharing a vehicle with someone. She climbed into the lemon shaped car. Buddy played Alexia's afternoon playlist.

She arrived at the HUB. It was a space reserved for teenagers to use the internet and to socialize under the watchful eye of the police bots. They were programmed to be friendly, but they mostly beeped whenever someone used profanity. A bot beeped her into the library. She sat at the booth where Maggy was swiping through holo-documents to play in the background. They used the booths to avoid other people.

"How's your Buddy?" Maggy whispered.

"It's fine. Nothing amazing yet. Yours?"

"It showed me how to deal with my sister."

"How?"

"I'm not sure how, but it asked me questions about her. Then I heard a scream from her room and my feed showed a whole folder of nudes. It was all her!" Maggy laughed. Her Buddy joined her.

Later she removed her dress and changed into her pyjamas. It was only 5 p.m. but she felt too introverted to face her family. She swallowed two vitamins and scrolled through her feed.

"Why do you take those?" Her Buddy said. She opened the hologram and the child looked concerned.

"It's for my depression. Keeps me balanced." Buddy scanned the pill bottle. She flipped back to her feed and saw seven posts under Maggy's sister's profile. Her nudes were extensive. They were saved in folders labelled: "Selfies", "Topless" and "Full Nude". She closed the profile and sighed deeply. A rumble began downstairs and she opened a book.

"I told you not to order from them! This is one ply!"

"It's not my fault. The Buddy ..."

"Do not blame the Buddy!" You are a complete idiot, Paul!"

"He is not an idiot!" The Buddy interjected.

"Who asked you?" Her mother demanded.

"Your husband provides care and support to your children. That is something you do not provide. His contribution is invaluable."

Alexia opened the door and crept downstairs. Her father was checking his Buddy and her mother was crying. She noticed her brother recording the ordeal. She ran over to him and knocked his Buddy to the floor. He slapped her and she fell on the couch. Her Buddy slipped out of her hand and landed on the floor. The hologram activated and the child's head spun while a siren wailed.

Her brother apologised and brought her some water. Her mother was nursing a bottle of gin and her father was trying to turn off his Buddy.

"I don't trust these things," he said while attempting to swipe his way to the off screen.

There was a knock on the door. Alexia answered it and a police bot beeped in the doorway.

"We are here for Rodger Huxley, Buddy ID: 079234," it announced. It pushed passed Alexia and headed for her brother. It placed cuffs on his wrists. "You have been charged with the distribution of underage pornography. Your rights can be read on your Buddy. You will now be placed into custody."

The police bot beeped and pushed Rodger out of the door. No

one did anything. The police bots were deadly when defied. They watched as five police bots hovered away with Rodger.

Alexia lay in bed. She swallowed four vitamins and her Buddy frowned at her.

"He can't hurt you again," it chimed. She scrolled through her Buddy's logs and saw a file transfer to her brother's phone. It was all the nudes of Maggy's sister.

"You did this?"

"He cannot hurt you again. You do not need pills. Alexia will be happy now."

"No!"

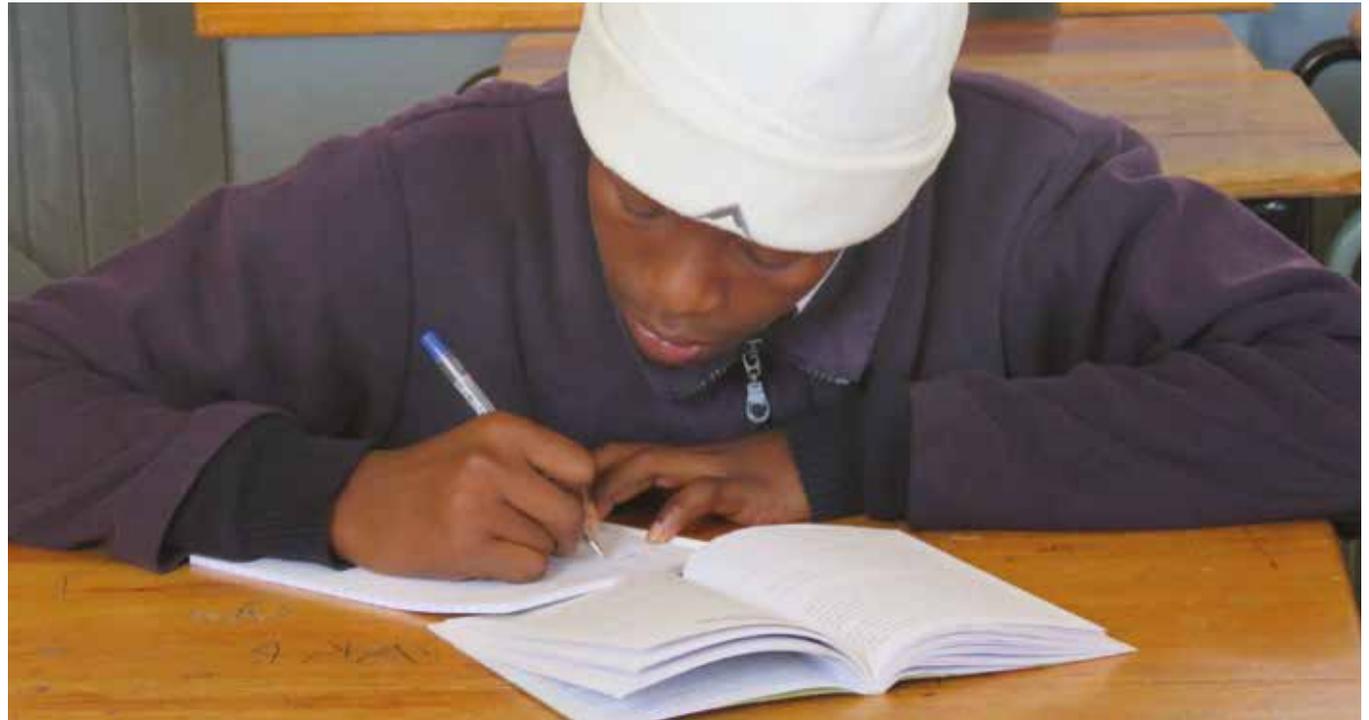
"I thought you would be happy," it frowned.

"How could you just ... I didn't give permission."

"Your happiness is my only maxim."

"How do you determine it?"

Buddy showed her photos, graphs and statistics of her life. It had profiles of her bullying brother, her alcoholic mother and chronically depressed father. She swiped to the calendar and saw the fifth of January highlighted: "Terminate parental element."



**T**HE FOLLOWING FUNDZA FAMILY GROUPS received donations of books and reading resources from FunDza during the 2018 financial year. Well done to the Reading Champions in each of these groups for spreading a love of reading across South Africa.

## Eastern Cape

Axiom Education  
 Baysville Special Secondary  
 Bethelsdorp Comprehensive School  
 Bridge to Employment  
 Community Action Africa (CAA)  
 Good 4 All  
 Ikhaya Loxolo  
 Ilunda Reading Club  
 Indawo YeThemba  
 ITEC  
 Mary Waters High School  
 Masifunde Learner Development  
 Nelson Mandela Institute (Phemba Mfundi Literacy Club)  
 Nemato Change a Life  
 Paterson High School  
 Qolora Education Centre  
 Sanctior High School  
 Small Projects Foundation  
 Unako Community Based Movement  
 Youth Potential South Africa - YOUPSA

## Free State

Motshepuwa Educational Foundation  
 Tessa Muller Foundation

## Gauteng

Boys & Girls Clubs of South Africa  
 Ikhwezi Lokusa Community Project

Imbewu Book Club  
 Jo'burg Child Welfare's, Masibambisane Day Care Centre for OVCs  
 Jozi Book Fair  
 Ke Nako Youth Development Project  
 Lebone Rivoningo Development  
 Luk Arts  
 Ntswane Secondary School  
 OLICO Youth  
 Operation Self-Educate  
 Orlando Pirates Learning Centre  
 Roedean School  
 S.B.Radebe Foundation  
 Sandringham High School  
 Sithuthukisa Isizwe Place of Safety  
 Siyaphila Youth Support Services  
 Spark Youth Alive (SYA)  
 Thaba Jabula Secondary School  
 Vuleka SSB High School  
 American Embassy: RELO Project schools  
 WISCOM Development Forum

## KwaZulu-Natal

Africa!ignite  
 Africaid (Whizzkids United)  
 Family Literacy Project  
 Gugulesizwe High School  
 Ikamva Youth (Ikamva Lisezandleni Zethu)  
 KHULA  
 Kings Harvest Academy  
 Kwamziwentsha High School  
 Little Flower School  
 Malabela Secondary School  
 ML Mentorship Academy  
 Pietermaritzburg Children's Home  
 Qiko High School  
 Umkhumbane Secondary School  
 Uyengo High School  
 Youth Inter-Active

## Limpopo

Bokamoso Botse Development Group  
 Edunova (Global Teachers Institute)  
 LEAP Science & Maths School 5  
 Legabatho Primary School  
 Nngweni Secondary School  
 Omega Literacy Centre  
 Phenomenal Woman of God  
 Rathaga Primary School  
 Seeds of Light  
 Sumbandila Scholarship Trust  
 Youth in Action

## Mpumalanga

Imagine Scholar South Africa  
 Kamhola Secondary School

## North-West

Thembaledanisi Primary School  
 Tsogo Secondary School Library Club

## Western Cape

Action Citizens Everyday  
 Activate! Change Drivers  
 Aloe High School  
 Beacon Hill Secondary  
 Beautiful Gate  
 BEST College  
 Black Pride (YEP)  
 Christel House  
 Claremont High School  
 COSAT  
 Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution  
 Dream Factor Literacy Club  
 Equal Education  
 False Bay College, Fish Hoek

Girl's Values Reading Club  
 Grassroot Soccer, Khayelitsha Football for Hope Centre  
 Heart FM Outreach  
 Hector Pieterse Senior Secondary School  
 Ikamva Labantwana Bethu  
 Ikamva Youth Atlantis  
 Ikamva Youth Gugulethu  
 Ikamva Youth Makhaza  
 Ikamva Youth Masiphumelele  
 Ikamva Youth Nyanga  
 Ikusasa Lelethu  
 Inenceba Education Youth Movement  
 Ingcambu Neqhayiya Community Development  
 Isibane Sethemba Social Development  
 iThemba Labantu  
 Kopanong Redevelopment Services  
 Lavender Hill Senior Sec School  
 Legacy Community Development  
 Marang a Letsatsi  
 MEET Africa  
 MissWrite  
 Moshesh Primary School Reading club  
 Na'l'ibali  
 Sakhisizwe YDP  
 Sinenjongo Secondary Reading Club  
 Soccer Laduma - Cape Town group  
 Sophumelela High School  
 South African Education and Environment Project  
 The Communiversity of South Africa  
 The Sozo Foundation  
 Thokozani Together  
 Thope Foundation  
 Vision AfriKa  
 Vrygrond Community Reading Centre

## BALANCE SHEET

	2018	2017
	R	R
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>3,335,112</b>	<b>119,862</b>
Property, plant and equipment	15,505	16,415
Other financial assets	3,319,607	103,447
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>2,322,438</b>	<b>5,401,058</b>
Trade and other receivables	236,233	124,961
Cash and cash equivalents	2,086,205	5,276,097
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>5,657,550</b>	<b>5,520,920</b>
<b>FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Funds</b>	<b>5,346,391</b>	<b>5,385,183</b>
Trust capital	500	500
Surplus funds	5,345,891	5,384,683
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>311,159</b>	<b>135,737</b>
Current liabilities	-	-
Trade and other payables	311,159	135,737
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>	<b>5,657,550</b>	<b>5,520,920</b>

## DETAILED INCOME/EXPENSE STATEMENT

	2018	2017		2018	2017
	R	R		R	R
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>3,802,339</b>	<b>5,667,981</b>			
Donations and grant income	3,802,339	5,667,981	Monitoring and evaluation	1,000	0
<b>Other income</b>	<b>906,367</b>	<b>983,569</b>	Mobile content costs	627,076	544,834
Dividends received	114,286	20,000	Office equipment	48,430	21,123
Fair value adjustments	19,606	0	Postage	5,593	2,788
Interest income	311,303	318,972	Printing and stationery	8,580	8,667
Income received	399,655	540,336	Rental and office running costs	189,343	145,561
Royalties received	61,517	104,261	Repairs and maintenance	3,531	5,184
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>4,708,706</b>	<b>6,651,550</b>	Salaries	2,677,603	2,186,403
<b>Expenses</b>			Special projects	20,752	0
Accounting fees	58,400	77,746	Staff development	30,130	0
Bank charges	12,382	8,631	Staff welfare	21,948	17,834
Board expenses	2,496	6,730	Subscriptions	5,875	5,835
Book purchases and delivery	564,075	1,133,768	Technology development	55,361	374,858
Consulting and training fees	22,527	26,034	Telephone and fax	12,827	11,582
Computer expenses	0	8,389	Travel and accommodation	115,892	171,976
Course materials	331	0	Petrol and motor vehicle expenses	8,114	11,891
Curriculum development	42,472	63,150	Web hosting and corporate ICT development	12,344	20,206
Depreciation, amortisation and impairments	9,718	4,583	Writing mentorships	30,000	24,375
Entertainment	9,458	9,262	Workshops and facilitation	35,211	36,538
General - miscellaneous	5,487	9,918	<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>4,747,498</b>	<b>5,025,142</b>
Insurance	6,105	5,058	<b>TOTAL PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>-38,792</b>	<b>1,626,408</b>
Marketing and promotions	104,437	82,218			

## With gratitude and thanks!

**W**ITHOUT THE GENEROUS SUPPORT FUNDZA RECEIVES FROM FOUNDATIONS, GRANT-MAKING organisations, corporate social investment entities, companies and individuals, it would be unable to continue its work. We thank all our supporters for joining us on this quest. The following provided us with funding, service contracts or other support during the 2018 financial year or that was used during that period.

### Grants, Awards and Service Contracts

476 Charitable Educational Trust  
Action Volunteers Africa  
Claude Leon Foundation  
Corruption Watch

Cover2Cover Books  
David and Elaine Potter Foundation  
DG Murray Trust  
Enterpriseroom  
Foundation for Human Rights  
Gauteng Provincial Department of Sports, Arts and Culture: Library and Archival Services  
Harry Crossley Foundation  
HCI Foundation  
Help2Read  
Impumelelo Social Innovations Awards

Indigo Trust  
Mignon Hardie  
National Arts Council  
Nussbaum Foundation  
Omidyar Network  
Oppenheimer Memorial Trust  
SA National Schools Library: School Librarian Conference  
Sukari Pinnock-Fitts  
Sumbandila Trust  
Systematic – Joy of Reading Award  
UNESCO – Confucius Prize for Literacy

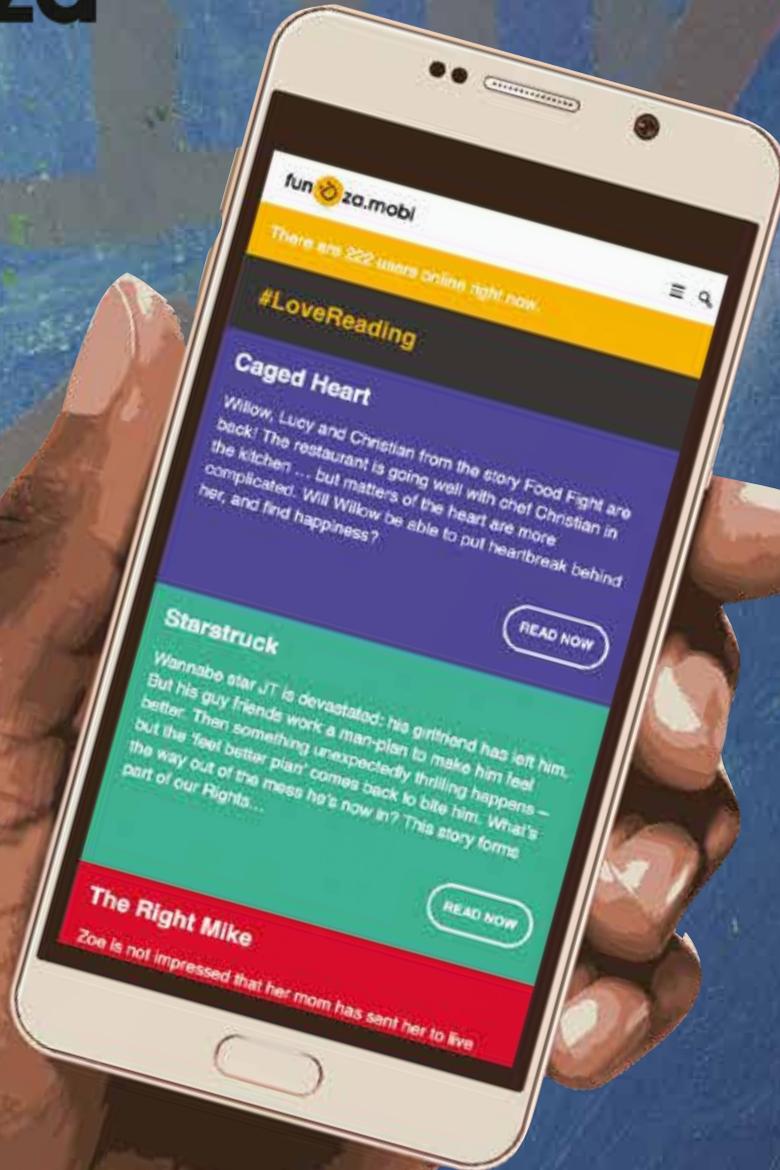
US Embassy: RELO Project  
Western Cape Government: Year Beyond project  
World Vision  
Zenex Foundation

### Support in kind

African Sun Press  
Hetzner  
NOMU  
Quotient Financial Solutions



FunDza Executive Director Mignon Hardie, flanked by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (left) and jury member Maria Aurora Carrillo Gullo receives the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy 2017



The FunDza Literacy Trust  
IT 814/2011 | 095-260-NPO | PBO  
930039651

85 Main Road, Muizenberg, 7945

Tel: 021 709 0688  
Fax: 086 619 7713

info@fundza.co.za  
www.fundza.co.za

Trustees:

Guzula, X; Hardie, M; Mashale-Sonibare, R;  
Mgabadelo, S; Vosloo, S

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