



24th November 2016

**MINISTER'S SPECIAL AWARD FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
CONTRIBUTION IN ARTS AND CULTURE**

REFERENCE: INDONI DANCE ARTS AND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Indoni development director Balu Nivison has asked me to write a recommendation in support of their submission for the **Western Cape Cultural Affairs Awards 2016/17**. I am delighted to do so.

I hereby whole-heartedly recommend Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy for the award. In 2016, Indoni was recognised as one of the top Western Cape Department of Social Development's Youth Ministerial Excellence awards of which the Impumelelo Social Innovation Centre was the project manager. We evaluated the academy on-site according to set criteria, which included innovation, impact on poverty, sustainability and replication. Indoni was recommended for an award for a number of reasons:

- For their focus on unemployed youth in Cape Town's townships;
- For their belief that arts-infused learning and the concomitant discipline entailed, encourages young people to grow and develop independently and diverts them from a life of crime and other psychosocial problems;
- For their vision to become a centre of excellence for dance and integrated arts;
- For their African-centred curriculum based on the Steve Biko philosophy as a guiding philosophy for their lives;
- And for their ingenious B-M-I funding model.

Started in 2014 and registered in March 2015, Indoni, operated primarily in Cape Town's townships and rehearsals were held in the Masikanye Community Centre in Guguletu, until better accommodation was found in the Eco Village in Pinelands in 2016. When we evaluated the project in Guguletu, we witnessed the students practicing in less than optimal circumstances fixing the floor boards that sunk in while they were dancing. They seemed quite adept at it as though it happened frequently. Their resilience shone through as they performed regardless of the broken floors and demonstrated that nothing would hinder their strive for excellence. As we entered the community centre we were immediately struck by the vivacious energy and beat of the Indoni rhythm, skillfully and strictly guided by the nationally acclaimed choreographer and artistic Director, Sbonakaliso Ndaba. She commands a level of diligence and precision to every move and does not miss a beat! As the dancers prepare for yet

another requested performance, the strong relationship between Sbonakaliso, Balu, Jenny and the students is evident, exuding the bonds of one big Indoni family. They support each other, guide each other, mentor, and laugh and I can imagine, even share a tear or two, if not just from wooden splinters in their feet. Their responses to what it means for them to come and rehearse and dance every day is further evidence of the impact this organisation has on the dancers:

"...Dance has given me a sense of belonging, my life is here..."

"...Dance has changed my behaviour, I realise it's not just about me but the way I deal with things..."

"...Dance teaches me discipline and helps me stay away from things like crime..."

"...Dancing gives me hope and a purpose in life..."

The youth also shared their concerns about the political issues in the country, the lack of opportunities for unemployed youth, crime and racism. However they were optimistic about their training and exposure to audiences, allowing them to celebrate differences and the love and humanity of South Africans. The students comfortably shares how Indoni has helped them to change the mindset of their immediate families who expect them to get 'real jobs' instead of dancing, until they see them perform. Family sessions facilitated by the academy to discuss the dance programme whilst also inviting family members to performances is rapidly challenging that mindset.

Indoni's vision is to become *the Academy* for dance, music, drama and visual arts. The aim is to target those who are naturally talented but due to socio-economic circumstances are unable to further nurture their talents or develop skills and an appreciation for the arts. Under the experienced eye and guidance of Artistic Director, affectionately known as Sbo, students are taught a range of skills and expertise drawn from a curriculum guided by a contemporary African-centred approaches of:

- practical dance
- improvisation and choreography
- dance theory
- drama, and visual art
- African music
- anatomy and health care
- moving art
- arts management and production
- computer literacy

To deliver a quality curriculum Ms Ndaba is assisted by two management team directors, Balu Nivison (Development Director) and Jennifer van Papendorp (Managing Director) who bring a wealth of experience from the field of dance and arts and who share a long history together of performing in the 1980's and 1990's. They are driven

by their passion for creating opportunities for talented youth to explore the arts as a vehicle for healing, personal, spiritual and professional growth.

This practically applied training programme is a 3-year programme with exit points at the end of each year. Beneficiaries are recruited from unemployed youth in Cape Town's townships who matriculated with dance studies as a subject. However through word of mouth other talented youth who are emerging young dancers or artists have also been attracted to the programme. Through strict auditions, intakes are selected and to date boasts 24 beneficiaries.

Indoni's unique funding model - the B-M-I (Benefactor, Mentor, Investor) model - consists of a student matched with a mentor who supports him/her financially with a monthly stipend of R1000 per month for 12 months. This stipend helps to cover the mentee's transport, airtime, food and board. In addition the mentor will commit to a monthly mentoring meeting, building a relationship with the mentee to motivate, instil hope and share advice. The B-M-I model assists mentors and mentees to gain insight into one another's lives and thereby dissolve barriers and false perceptions of one another. This funding model also directly teaches the beneficiaries how to budget and use their stipends responsibly. On the other hand, the mentor-mentee relationship provides corporates and the "privileged" to contribute to the skills development of SA's youth instead of pouring their money into a dark hole.

The Academy's operations are modest at a current annual budget of R361,633. They provide value for money on a very low budget. The strength of this organisation lies in the level of expertise and quality choreography received from their nationally acclaimed Director of Dance which has resulted in demand for their public performances, not least the Obs Festival, opening of national art exhibitions, gala performances, and most recently their highly acclaimed visit to Australia.

For example, all performance kits are designed and made by Development Director Balu Nivision, who also runs her own clothing business and subsidises the cost thereof herself.

The strength of this project is that it is aiming to revive and exist in a sector (performing arts) that is not only lacking in townships but can change the lives of disadvantaged youth. The impact the project has had, in its short existence, on the immediate families of the youth is a success within itself, changing the family mindset to see dance as a possible career but also as a means of expression and empowerment. The long list of requested performances and feedback from satisfied clients speaks to the quality and standard of dance that is delivered by Indoni.

I recommend Indoni for the highest award. It is more than a performing arts project, it is a holistic programme which includes:

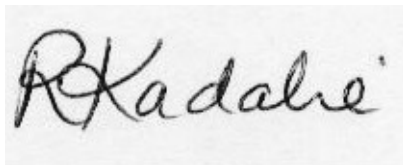
- tertiary education and training in the townships;

- a pathway for youth out of the drudgery of township life and its concomitant social problems;
- youth employment and a level of sustainability;
- youth leadership and empowerment;
- and above all strengthening families and relationships between people whose paths might otherwise never cross through the B-M-I funding approach.

Lastly, it is a programme that transforms young people into confident and productive adults who excel at using the performing arts as a career that not only catapults them onto the national and world stage, but that also transforms them into potential entrepreneurs who can start their own academies where they live.

I hope you will consider Indoni favourably as their recent trip to Australia has shown what township youth are capable of, as they join Pretty Yende, Kimi Skota, Given Nkosi and others on the world stage.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "Rhoda Kadalie" in a cursive, flowing script.

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