



#KeepIndoniDancing - Data is the new lifeline for dance trainees in township lockdown!

“Dancing is not a job, it is a calling. It heals!” So says Mthetheleli Dlakavu, a 27 year old founding member of the Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy.

Mthetheleli is staying with his mother, three sisters and a nephew in a small shack in Khayelitsha. He has no space at home. In order to remain in-training, he escapes to the fields of a church hall near his home. It is there he spends time creating, integrating dance, drama and the spoken word into his own technique. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FL07KF9ZIHg&t=22s>

Mthetheleli works on his dance assignments provided by Sbonakaliso Ndaba, the Artistic Director of Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy. He completes his Yoga, art and wellness assignments. The children from his Outreach class in Khayelitsha contact him daily. They are missing their weekly dance classes in the hall. He provides them with on line dance and leadership activities.

Mthetheleli was due to be in Edinburgh for three months from mid- April to mid-July. He had won a placement at an International Emerging Artists Residency, through Brouhaha International, to enhance his professional development, whilst enriching Scottish based artists. Lockdown has postponed this exciting opportunity, but planning is taking place continually, as the organisers prepare the artists for their activities and responsibilities.

Armed only with a smart phone and the What’s App platform, data has become Mthetheleli’s lifeline. He is one of 40 young performing artists in training with Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy. They are all locked down in the townships of Cape Town. Recording their sense of frustration and stress in solos danced to a cellphone is their new normal.

Live performances used to help pay for their monthly stipends. These will only be allowed at the last stage of unlocking. In the mean time they have to stay connected. Their assignments provide a structure to their days. Their ongoing training gives them a sense of belonging and the hope that they will find a place in the performing arts industry that they aspire to.

Indoni has supplied smartphones to those without, so they can all stay involved and committed.

The ongoing cost of data for the next few months has become the greatest expense for Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy. It is also the most vital.

#KeepIndoniDancing Back a Buddy campaign to help raise R50,000 for data will ensure that these youngsters from the under resourced townships of the Cape will continue to stay connected.

<https://www.backabuddy.co.za/keep-indoni-dancing>

Indoni Dance Arts and Leadership Academy: The Early Days

In February 2014, award-winning dancer and choreographer, Sbonakaliso Ndaba, took under her wing, five unemployed youth from the township of Khayelitsha. They were post-matriculants from the Chris Hani School, who had studied dance as their major subject. Sbo had worked with them in previous years when they were at school, but since then, they had neither further education, job opportunities, nor self-worth.

So I decided: I am going to open a school and take them and train them professionally. This is what I was doing since the beginning of February 2014, without funding, from my pocket, feeding and transporting them. (Sbonakaliso Ndaba).

Because of this one dedicated teacher, who had nothing but commitment, and a strand of hope to continue the training she had started almost a year before, a dance group grew to six dancers, with no name, no academy and no prospects. With the unwavering support of the founders of Indoni, this incredible Academy has flourished.

With a burgeoning youth population, unable to develop artistically through lack of access to higher education, and out of nothing but pure passion to make a difference, our young dance group has grown to 40 full time students all training at the Indoni Dance, Arts & Leadership Academy, now a registered Not-for-Profit (NPO) organisation.

Indoni Dance, Arts & Leadership Academy has performed widely to standing ovations, locally and internationally including representing South Africa in Australia and China. Over 11 million people have been touched by their performances in theatres, parks, conference centres, gardens, museums, festival platforms and through radio and TV. They have won 9 awards, including the Ministerial Award for Outstanding Contribution to Youth in Cultural Affairs in 2017, and were recently nominated for the Toyota Woodfees Festival Award for Best Performance in Dance.

The founding members of Indoni, **Sbonakaliso Ndaba**, Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer, **Balu Nivison**, Development Director and Lecturer in Life Skills, **Jennifer van Papendorp**, Managing Director, and **Helen Allen**, Marketing Director, collectively bring their particular expertise to directing and managing the academy. They are supported by a group of voluntary B.M. l's (Benefactor-Mentor-Investors) who provide stipends for the trainees, bridge the divide between socio-economic and cultural classes and contribute their skills and resources to the project.

In 2020 **Indoni Dance, Arts & Leadership Academy** has been supported by the National Lottery and AFET. Food parcels have been gratefully received from HCI, FoodForwardSA and Melton Foundation.

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