



**SHINE LITERACY'S KHANYISA PROJECT 2019:**  
*A brief overview and key findings*



## Background: Khanyisa Project 2019

Shine Literacy completed its third year of implementing the Khanyisa reading programme in collaboration with Action Volunteers Africa (AVA) in 2019. The programme seeks to provide every child with structured time to practice reading in class and to improve their reading skills. The pilot project started in 2017 with 24 participating schools. In 2018 and 2019 the programme was in 11 schools in the Greater Cape Town Metro districts.



For the first two years of the project, a Khanyisa Reading Partner (RP) was placed in each Grade 2 class. In 2019, due to budget considerations, 23 Reading Partners were assigned to thirty-nine Grade 3 classes in 11 schools. Nine schools had two RPs each, and two small schools with less than three Grade 3 classes, had one RP. The RPs in the small schools, divided their time between at least two classes daily, while in the three biggest schools with five Grade 3 classes, Reading Partners went to three classrooms daily. The RP's responsibilities in the classroom are to read a story to the whole class each day, and to spend some time reading one-on-one and doing paired reading with the children.



One thousand five hundred and eighty-four learners (787 girls and 797 boys) were reached through this programme in 2019. The Reading Partners (unemployed matriculants aged 19 to 25 years) received immersive training for one week in March 2019 before starting at schools in Term Two. Shine Literacy paid the RP's stipends for the duration of the programme i.e. six months.

As with the previous years, each class was provided with a fully resourced class library box of graded paired and shared readers (taking into consideration the Language of Learning and Teaching [LoLT] in each school).

## Project outputs

- **Initial consultation Cluster Teacher meetings**

The School Management Team (SMT) knew what the programme entailed and agreed to continue. This was the first year that Grade 3 teachers were part of the programme and Shine Literacy underestimated the significance of having a new set of teachers involved in the process. Teachers were divided in their response to the programme – some supported it while others showed a reluctance to accept its principles. There was a view from a minority that the RPs were ‘spies’ watching out for non-observance of Shine Literacy’s zero tolerance of Corporal Punishment.

- **Training of Reading Partners (RPs)**

Twenty-five unemployed matriculants were recruited by AVA and attended the initial training at the end of March in Wynberg. Of the twenty-five, twenty-three reading partners were placed in schools in Term 2. New recruits to the programme were trained by the AVA facilitator on a needs basis and received additional support during the top-up training in June. Of the twenty-five trained at the start of the programme in March, eleven RPs from that cohort completed the programme after six months. Altogether, seventeen young people dropped out of the 2019 programme between April and September, with AVA adding new recruits when needed.

- **Reading in Grade 3 classes**

In most of the schools, one RP had to read with two classes per week. In a school with one Grade 3 class, there was a single RP, and in three large schools with five Grade 3 classes, the RPs had to read with 2.5 classes per week. In Term 3, the five classes per grade received an additional RP to alleviate this pressure.

Based on the journal evidence from the RPs, there were a number of teachers who were reluctant to let the RPs do paired reading during the course of the day, and only allowed them to read during the literacy lesson once a child had finished the pre-scribed class work. This means that there were some classes and schools which read below the expected average.



## ● Daily data record

During the week-long training session in March, it became apparent that of the twenty-five RPs, only 3 were able to use Excel suite and Google Docs. This setback required a change in data capturing methods, and as a result, RPs were given training on how to maintain a handwritten daily reading log. This reading log was then captured electronically at the end of each term by a data capturer at the Shine Literacy office.

Even though RPs had received a morning of training on how to capture the details of each child, a number of follow up sessions were still required, culminating in a second half day session over the June holidays. From this point forward there was a noticeable improvement in the data logged.

From collated data of the 11 schools on the programme, three schools showed a paired reading average rate of 80% – 100%; children at three schools had a paired reading average rate of 50%; four schools were rated at levels between 50% – 75%. One school presented very low reading rates below 50% in Term 2, but this increased significantly to above 80% in Term 3.

Collected data showed a great loss of time over the assessment period i.e. in June and September. Historically, children do not attend school during and after assessments, meaning valuable reading time is lost, where the RPs recorded being 'bored' in their journals. Reading Partners noted that they were tired of working between two classes, which could possibly contribute to the high attrition rate in 2019. Teacher absenteeism was noted as a factor that prevented children reading, as the class would then be split between other classes. Supply teachers did not let RPs continue with their programme.

## ● Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) 2019 — Data analysis

Of the eleven schools on the Khanyisa programme, ten submitted their 2019 EGRA assessment results for analysis to Shine Literacy. One school provided data for all three assessments, with no errors. A second school provided data for all three assessments, however the data was not divided to show the language split to reflect attainment based on the two languages the children were assessed in. Eight schools submitted data for either one term only, with many basic calculation errors, data not split between the two languages of learning and teaching, or, the data was not legible or useful enough for one to extrapolate information. The lack of reliable data is of critical concern as this is the data that is sent through to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to grade schools and their performance. Shine Literacy decided to use EGRA data provided by the school rather than to reassess the children. This means that we have to work with what the schools present to us, which is indicative of what the department receives as well.

From the little data received, the two areas that showed the learners' greatest challenges are passage reading and comprehension. This is in alignment with the current narrative and data which states that children are unable to read for meaning when they leave the Foundation Phase. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency by all parties involved with teaching children to read.

### ● **Cluster site visits**

Each cluster leader visited their schools twice during the six-month programme – in May and July. An important component of the programme is that the cluster visits ensure the implementation and integrity of the programme. RPs were always happy to see the cluster leader and to get support from her; and often teachers were equally happy and cooperative. During these sessions, teachers asked clarifying administrative and programmatic questions, while the RPs were observed while reading with a child and given feedback by the cluster leader. There were instances when visits were scheduled during teaching time when teachers were unable to converse with the cluster leader, or the cluster leader was not able to observe any paired reading taking place.

While every effort was made to ensure that visits take place during break times, this was not always possible, or at times, other programmes, as determined by the school, took precedence.

### ● **Reflection sessions at AVA**

The Programme manager attended reflection sessions on a Friday at AVA, where the aim was to check in on the RPs and offer ‘troubleshooting’ training, or support, as and when needed. Some sessions were interactive with lots of questions coming from the RPs, but at other times there was little response from them. The Programme Manager’s attendance at these sessions averaged once every three weeks. Corporal punishment was raised as a key concern in the first month by the RPs, but due to fear of victimization, this stopped and no report was given thereafter.

### ● **Teacher Community of Practice (CoP)**

Teachers were invited for an afternoon CoP where they could share their collective experiences, both good or challenging. Of the 39 Grade 3 teachers in the 11 schools invited, 18 attended the session from 5 schools. While this turnout is disappointing, it is important to note and consider that teachers have a lot that is required of their time. This often means that they are unable to meet and honour certain requests from other parties as their primary obligation is with their employer viz. WCED. This means that as an NGO when requesting meetings or data, that is an over and above what they need to do and this can cause some tension between the two parties because the teacher feels that the NGO is asking too much of them, notwithstanding the positive impact of the programme/s.

The time factor is an important challenge when holding a CoP or any meeting with teachers from across the metro. Transport problems often result in a delayed start to the day’s schedule. Even with special request from WCED for the teachers to be released early to attend the meeting, very few arrive on time, and unfortunately, close out time has to be strictly adhered to.

Teachers often gave positive feedback after the CoP, saying that they enjoyed having a safe space to air their views and to be heard, and to share with each other as professionals. This shows that these meetings are important even though they might not be as well attended as one would have wanted them to be.



- **Teacher training: Positive Discipline and Creating a Culture of Reading: Book Buddies modules**

One school was given an opportunity to attend these two modules. The Book Buddies module was in February, while the Positive Discipline module was held in May. On both days, over 75% staff attended including the school principal. Feedback from all teachers was very positive and they were all receptive to the suggested strategies. The key consideration however was finding time to implement the Book Buddies programme, though the new school librarian was present in the workshop. Unfortunately, the school did not implement Book Buddies in 2019 and neither did the Khanyisa Reading Partners at the school.

## What worked well in 2019?

- ✓ The children were keen and eager to read. This 2019 cohort of children had been part of the Khanyisa programme in 2018, with each class having one RP. The children knew how the programme worked and understood the system. This made for an easier transition into Grade 3.
- ✓ Encouraging initiatives were demonstrated by some Reading Partners who started in break and after school reading time to compensate for time lost in the classroom.
- ✓ Three Reading Partners implemented the Book Buddies programme voluntarily in their schools after school.
- ✓ There is a noticeable improvement reflected in the RP journals. In the beginning there were comments such as, “These children can’t read at all”. Towards the end, the RPs were reporting that “These children love reading, they can read fluently.”
- ✓ Reading Partners even under challenging circumstances found motivation to be present and to be positive throughout the programme. Of the twenty-five initially trained in March, eight RPs received 100% attendance for the duration of the programme.
- ✓ In their exit interviews, four RPs showed an interest in pursuing a teaching degree, or wanted to obtain an Early Childhood Development (ECD) qualification, and had applied to do so. This means that through being part of the programme, RPs are inspired to join the profession.

## Challenges and response strategies for 2019

- One Reading Partner between two classes or more was too much of a burden for the RPs. The programme is most effective when the RPs are based in one class with one teacher and one group of children to work with. This allows for all parties to have a rhythm, a working routine and to understand each other and know how to support the class and teacher as a whole. The 2019 model meant that some children only read once a week with an RP which is not enough to be impactful.
- People management and engagement is critical. This was a new cohort of teachers, new to the programme, and as such, required more time to engage with them, giving them the space to be reluctant, to question and hopefully to see the value of the programme as time went by. It is not an easy or simple process to do.
- The role of the Cluster coordinator from Shine Literacy and Facilitator from AVA cannot be underestimated. A huge part of the programme implementation and delivery relies on strong, solid and trustworthy relationships being formed with the relevant stakeholders inclusive of the RPs.

## Conclusion

Khanyisa is a multidimensional programme and needs to be looked at holistically. The initial core beneficiaries are the Foundation Phase children who are given a unique opportunity to read with a trained reading partner daily which helps to increase their confidence, potential and reading abilities. The youth Reading Partners are becoming another core beneficiary to the programme through their facilitation of the process. Some of them are parents, and through this programme have seen the value of being an active reader and the importance of supporting their children in their school life. Most of the RPs were unsure of what they wanted to do in the future, or had lost hope, but through being part of Khanyisa, they have a renewed vision of what they want to achieve. Some RPs have made their experience with Khanyisa even more worthwhile by enrolling to become school teachers, and by doing so, laying the pipeline for the next generation of educators.

Even though 2019 did not produce the desired outcomes in terms of reading rate, the experience was still able to spark hope, and inspire the RPs who participated in the programme. The emotional reward to the young foundation phase learners at the schools cannot be underestimated; having an opportunity to have a private moment with an adult in a busy day for two years — priceless!

