



Inspirational Stories for San Youth

By role models
from San
communities



About the //Ana-Djeh San Trust

The //Ana-Djeh San Trust was established in 2015 to promote increased access to secondary and tertiary education for San students in Namibia. We conduct skills training and empowerment workshops with other stakeholders for and with San students based in tertiary institutions in Windhoek. We also conduct outreach to schools in San communities, to motivate and encourage the San learners to complete their education for a brighter future. Together with the Namibian San Council we challenge discrimination against San people in schools, workplaces, health centres and other public services, and promote San cultural heritage.

Contact information

//Ana-Djeh San Trust
Kileni Fernando
Cell: 081 368 8808
Email: fkileni@yahoo.com

Editing by Liz Frank

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We thank the San youth who have shared their inspirational stories for this booklet. We wish you success in your further studies and careers!

A special thanks to Candi Miller for the interview and photo of Sara Sungu

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Foreword

Advocate John Walters, Ombudsman

JOHN R WALTERS
OMBUDSMAN

The right to education for all children in Namibia is enshrined in our Constitution, which states that primary education shall be provided free of charge to all children, and that children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen years.

Yet we are aware that many children, and especially children from San communities, do not complete their primary education, let alone access secondary and tertiary education, due to the many social and economic challenges they face.

Namibia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges governments to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduce drop-out rates, as well as to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.

Yet we are aware that many San learners experience discrimination, bullying and violence at their schools, from other learners as well as from some of their teachers who disrespect the San children and disregard the specific challenges they face in their educational journey.

All schools must promote the development of respect for each and every child, for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values.

All schools have a duty to prepare the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

I commend the //Ana-Djeh San Trust for promoting access to all levels of education for San youth in Namibia, and for producing this booklet as a source of inspiration and motivation by San role models from diverse communities in Namibia and Botswana.



Kileni
Fernando

INTRODUCTION

The //Ana-Djeh San Trust is a San youth organisation based in Windhoek, Namibia. Our aim is to promote access to secondary and tertiary education among San youth, who up to now have been extremely marginalised and neglected by the education sector.

Most San children are not able to learn in their mother tongue at lower primary level. Most San learners have no San teachers or support teachers as mentors and role models. Our traditional knowledge and cultural practices are not included in school curricula and teaching materials.

Many San learners are also exposed to discrimination, bullying and violence at schools and hostels. Their human dignity is not respected and protected. All of these factors of exclusion and discrimination present immense challenges to San learners, as a result of which the vast majority drop out of school at a young age.

The //Ana-Djeh San Trust therefore aims to increase the numbers of San students enrolled in schools and tertiary institutions in Namibia, by motivating and supporting them to believe in themselves and complete their studies at all levels of education, despite all the challenges and hardships they face. It is only through education that they have a chance to find decent work and aim for a better future for themselves and their impoverished communities.

With this booklet we hope to motivate and inspire the next generation of San learners and students to follow in the footsteps of the role models from various San communities in Namibia and Botswana presented here, who have persevered in their personal journeys of academic achievement and community leadership.

Kileni Fernando, Founding Member of //Ana-Djeh San Trust
Windhoek, August 2017



**Sippora
Phillipus**

I KEPT GOING STRONG

I kept going strong because the challenges at school made me realise that there are still greater challenges ahead of me and I have to face them

I grew up in Ombili Foundation, a small farm 80 kilometres north of Tsumeb, where I completed my primary school. I went to Tsumeb for my secondary education. At first I was at Otjikoto Senior Secondary School but changed to Etosha Secondary School and completed my Grade 12 there in 2013.

Currently, I am working at the Ministry of Safety and Security as a Namibian Police Officer. I had always wanted to become a teacher to educate my San communities in Namibia, but I never had the opportunity to further my studies for a teaching career.

I believe that life was never meant to be easy. Through hard work and despite our

everyday challenges, we should take opportunities given to us and improve our future.

I was bullied and discriminated against and this affected my education, as it makes one lose hope and confidence in oneself. But I kept going strong, because the challenges at school made me realise that there are still greater challenges ahead of me and I have to face them.

Self-motivation is very important, it gives one the strength, values and the way to reach your goals.

San students: be persistent and strive for success. You can be successful just like any other person.

My name is Thomas Kariseb. I am a Naro. I was born in 1984 at the old state hospital at Gobabis. When I was four years old my mum passed away so I had to learn the hardship of growing up without my mother. My father was not always present and I had to stay with my granny and siblings.

I went to school from 1993 to 2004 for my primary and secondary education. During these years I faced many chal-

lenges, including bullying, discrimination, language barriers and financial problems. There were times when my dream of completing school was void.

However, pastors and other people who cared about me helped me to graduate from high school with flying colours. I was the top performer in my region – Omaheke! In 2005 I received my top performer award in Windhoek.

People who cared about me helped me to graduate from high school with flying colours

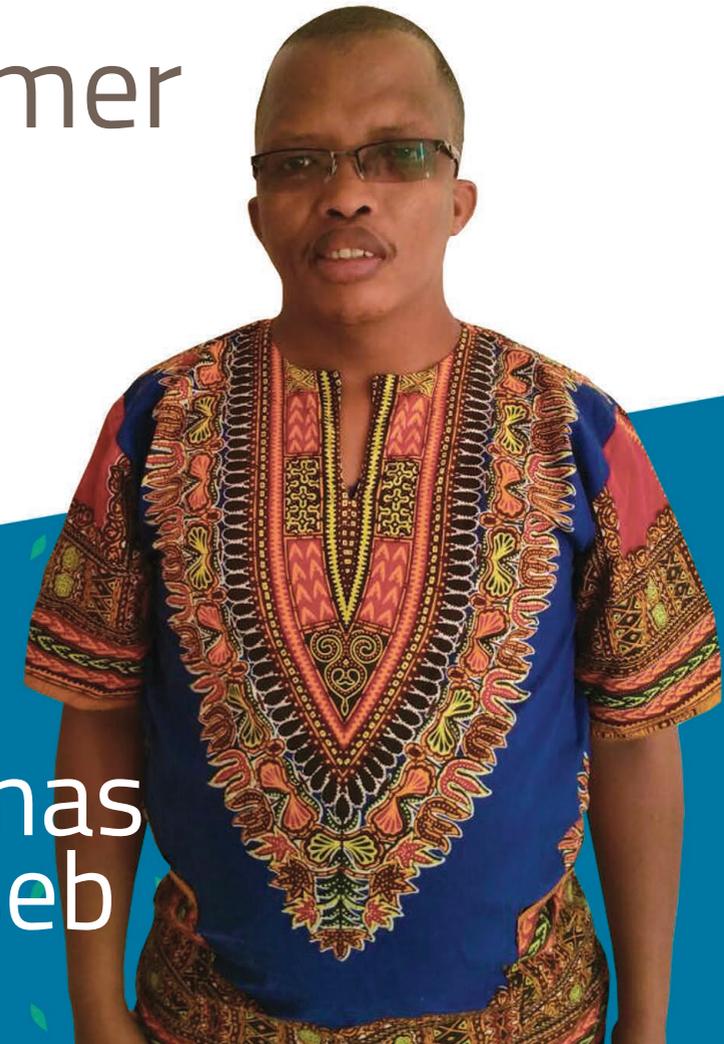
I was a **TOP** performer

I was accepted for a scholarship to study in Cuba in 2008. Again, I faced language barriers, having to learn Spanish before taking up my dentistry studies in 2009. I graduated in 2014, and now work as a dentist in Gobabis.

To my fellow San sisters and brothers who are still attending school, and to all the San youth of Southern Africa: don't let yourself be put down by what other people are saying about us. Don't lose hope!

Leave the material things - they were already there before you were born. Leave alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, they will only ruin your life.

You must know where you are from, and what you want to achieve in life. You should believe in yourself - you are capable of achieving great things.



Thomas Kariseb



Elsarien Katiti

My name is Elsarien Asante Katiti. I am a Namibian Hai//om San woman. I was born in the Outjo area and moved to Grootfontein where I grew up and eventually completed my secondary education.

I studied at the University of Namibia and hold a degree in Media Studies. I also studied Namibian Sign Language to

communicate with people with hearing disabilities, and I am currently completing a Diploma in Business Management.

University is a journey full of fun and equally so, many challenges. When I first came to Windhoek, I was sleeping on the kitchen floor of a student flat and walking long distances to attend my classes at university.

Not an easy Journey

In my final year I had mostly lost motivation to study. I sought psychosocial help, but I didn't find any. I eventually failed my final year. I lost my funding and took two more years to finish my studies. But eventually I completed my degree and graduated.

I faced more discrimination than bullying at university. People would ask: "If you are San, what are you doing in university?" "I thought you San people dance around naked in circles eating naros." "San people are extinct."

It has not been an easy journey, but I survived. My passion for education was groomed at a very young age, when my father would encourage me to read every piece of paper I could find. My mother inspired me as a community leader. I remember many cases of violence against San people in our community who had little education and did not know their rights. I realised that I also had to make a difference somehow - to become the change I am hoping for.

**Use the
opportunities
you get to
educate
yourself,
dream big and
never be afraid
to ask for help.**

OWN YOUR GOAL



**Find inspiration
and hang on to
your dreams
because it is
you who defines
your meaning
in your life**

**Job
Morris**

My name is Job Morris. I am a native speaker of Naro, and live in western Botswana in the little village called D'Kar.

Growing up in a village with little development poses an extreme challenge to one's personal growth and development, especially in the route of education. Like the majority of the San, I'm from a poor household where food three times a day was a luxury we couldn't afford.

I went through a childhood that was challenged because of my identity. Yet this fuelled my determination, focus, dedication and commitment towards my educational goals. There were many moments when I wanted to give up because of the bullying I experienced due to my 'San-ness'. I was ridiculed and demeaned through name-calling. No person should be subjected to such degrading treatment.

After my high school, with help from government rural development schemes, I undertook some certificate courses in local colleges in the capital city, Gaborone. After completion, I started working in D'Kar with the Kuru Family of Organisations, a group of non-governmental organisations supporting San communities in Botswana.

After five years I realised the need for further education. I applied for a scholarship and will complete my studies at the University of Botswana in 2017.

My message to all the San youth is to own your goal, find inspiration and hang onto your dreams, because it is you who defines your meaning in your life and your own path towards achievements.

EMPOWER YOURSELF

I am Tertu Fernandu. I was born into a !Kung family in M'Kata Village in Tsumkwe West, Namibia.

I moved to Ombili Foundation in Oshikoto Region with my mother. I went to school there from kindergarten to Grade 7. I had to go to Tsintsabis Junior Secondary School for my secondary education. I faced bullying from other children at the school, even from other San learners because of our different home languages. This affected me deeply and I could not make it through to Grade 11.

I had to move back to Tsumkwe West in 2009, and try to repeat Grade 10 or improve my points to continue my education. But funding was not available to do that and I could not get enough support for my studies since my father passed away in 2008.

The San Rise Foundation helped me to enrol at a Vocational Training Centre, where I studied basic computer

skills. In 2013 I enrolled at Monitronics Success College in Windhoek with assistance from the San Development Division in the Office of the Prime Minister. I am studying Human Resources Management.

I am a co-founder and the Chairperson of #Ana-Djeh San Trust, a San youth organisation that promotes access to education at all levels and encourages San youth to persevere with their studies and career choices despite all the difficulties we experience.

As San youth, we have to be committed and strive for success. We have been marginalised for too long! Any opportunity that you are given, please take advantage of it. Empower yourself and your people. If we San people are not going to help ourselves and each other, who will?



*Tertu
Fernandu*

**If we San people are
not going to help ourselves
and each other, who will?**

Dennis Munyingwa

“ I had to walk over twenty kilometres to and from school every day with an empty stomach... but that did not hinder my thirst for success.



I started school in the remote village of Masambo in Bwabwata National Park. We had to attend classes under the tree, because there were no permanent structures erected at that time. After four years I transferred to Ndoro Memorial Combined School, some twelve kilometres from my home.

There I completed Grades 5 to 7, and was recognised as the best learner of the year in 2008. The distance of the school was a challenge, because I had to walk over twenty kilometres to and from school every day - with an empty stomach on most days. But that did not hinder my thirst for success, and I managed the distance, often without shoes or warm clothing during the winter season.

My Academic Journey

I was subsequently enrolled as a Grade 8 learner at Caprivi Senior Secondary School in Katima Mulilo, where I completed my secondary education in 2013. I began to encounter some challenges at school during my junior and secondary phases, but ignored them because what I regarded significant was learning.

I also faced financial challenges but my parents provided what they could for me to buy school stationery and toiletries. Fortunately I was rarely was a victim of discrimination or bullying, because the school principal was very strict on such matters.

I am currently a final year student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources Management at Namibia University of Science and Technology.

I so far stand to be the only individual from Masambo Primary School who has made it to university, and am hence one of the youths perceived by my community as persistent and hardworking.

San women are strong

An interview with Sarah Sungu by Candi Miller

I catch up with Sarah Sungu at her office in Mangetti Pos. She is between business trips. Yesterday she attended a meeting of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia in Tsumkwe, tomorrow she leaves for an extended trip to Khorixas as vice-chairperson of the N#á Jaqna conservancy. She is also a senior councillor in the !Xun Traditional Authority and vice-chairperson of the San Council.

If this sounds like a hectic life, Sarah's unruffled manner belies it. She has a quiet majesty and clearly commands great respect and affection from the people who work with her.

Born in 1969, she married young and raised four children. While hers was a traditional !Xun upbringing, she has left it up to her children to decide if they wish to undergo the traditional ceremonies.

She approves of early mother-tongue education and longs for someone to write a !Xun dictionary for children, and to start a project in N#á Jaqna similar to Village Schools in the adjoining conservancy of Nyae Nyae. She fears the loss of her beloved !Xun mother-tongue. "My dream," Sarah says, "is that a girl from the !Xun group will go to university and learn to be a writer and record our traditions in three different languages."

San women are strong, she says. "Being strong means being outspoken when necessary, being confident because you speak the truth. Such a woman can find solutions for her community."

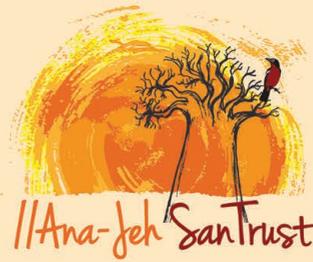
And such a woman Sarah obviously is, for when I ask her what she is most proud of she doesn't hesitate in saying she is proud of her service to the community, of working with people to improve their lives in anyway she can.

A portrait of Sarah Sungu, a woman with a black braided headwrap and a patterned jacket, smiling slightly. The background is a teal color with a white zigzag pattern.

Sarah
Sungu

**It is very important
for children to go to school.
For their future – then
they can be writers,
politicians, the president!**

//Ana-Djeh San Trust 2017



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