



Vuyelwa Mdlazi

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On a Good Note: Vuyelwa Mdlazi

Participant: Family Outreach Programme – Melrose Place

It is school holidays and children are playing soccer in the narrow, dusty streets of Melrose Place while others blow their vuvuzelas. On the corner of one of these streets is a bright yellow café – aptly titled Bafana Bafana Store. Opposite this colourful spaza is Vuyelwa Mdlazi's home.

Vuyelwa is walking down the street. She is returning home from the municipality where she receives her monthly grant for her foster child, Ntombizanele.

Vuyelwa lets us into her home and shows us to the lounge. From here we look through the doorway of an adjoining room. Vuyelwa's teenage son lies on a queen-size bed fixated on his cellphone's playlist which streams through his earphones.

A blast from a vuvuzela startles us. Vuyelwa's daughter, Babalwa, is blowing the bright red instrument in the room.

In 2009, Vuyelwa took part in CECD's Family Outreach Programme. The programme helped Vuyelwa to explore the educational activities she can engage in with Babalwa at home.

Babalwa swings her red vuvuzela around in the air and blows it again before running out the front door.

Her mother's eyes are on her all the time as she plays in the front yard. She's uneasy.

"The local government should build more parks for the children, because there are no parks here," says Vuyelwa.

"Last week a guy came into our yard. He was drunk and pulled her dress up. When the children are playing outside they are not safe," Vuyelwa says.

A solution to these challenges has been the knowledge gained from CECD's workshops, thus empowering Vuyelwa and the community to start making changes.

"I have learnt a lot. After school Babalwa and I play. I sit with her and we do shapes and colours. At least this way she's safe. I can keep her occupied inside the house," says Vuyelwa. Babalwa loves to play. Her favourite activity is drawing with crayons.

"This is very important because she is learning to write. She also enjoys playing with bottle tops or filling empty spice containers with water and sand.

She's learning while she's playing. Education is very important for Babalwa and I'm thankful to CECD for this," says Vuyelwa.

There is a cacophony of vuvuzelas blowing in the neighbourhood.

Babalwa trumpets her vuvuzela with the chorus and a note catches the wind – a messenger of hope.