Our Vision

A country free from prejudice where everyone experiences dignity, feels respect and included

Our Mission

Helping children and adults to unlearn prejudice, respect human rights and develop positive values
Message from PDT Founding Director Carol Smith

It is with enormous pride that I look back at the work of Persona Doll Training (PDT) in 2016-2017, which built on the solid foundations established over the past 13 years. While our founding values, vision and mission have not changed, our work has evolved and grown in response to the need for effective training, tools and support to promote diversity and transformation.

Since 2004, we have trained nearly 9,000 adults - early childhood development (ECD) practitioners, social workers, teachers, community health workers and members of partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) - to use the innovative Persona Doll approach to explore culture and identity, uncover and address negative bias, and promote positive values of respect and inclusion.

From an initial focus on providing direct training for adults working with children - largely in ECD and education - our focus as an organisation shifted to advocacy, training and mentoring to support the mainstreaming of our effective anti-bias and diversity approach within partner organisations in civil society and in government.

PDT is now firmly rooted within a wider network of civil society organisations working in ECD, education and broader civic education and mobilization, which has significantly increased our reach and impact. We have also broadened our scope - developing and running training courses, customized to address the specific challenges facing young people, young parents, caregivers and trainers.

This report provides an overview of our work over the past year, including key highlights: the launch of the Teen Persona Doll training, manual, story collection and Dolls; the development of a training workshop on diversity and respectful practice offered to NGOs, institutions and corporates; and participation in the second annual conference of the Anti-Racism Network South Africa (ARNSA) on the theme of ‘anti-racism in practice’, held in Johannesburg in October 2016.
While it is fitting to acknowledge what we have achieved, it’s clear that the ideal of a truly inclusive and fair society is still far from a reality. The persistent legacy of spatial apartheid, rising inequality and the perpetuation of privilege continue to pose visible - and invisible - obstacles that threaten the very fragile fabric of the ‘new’ South Africa. The past year has seen an alarming rise in racism and racist incidents, widespread and often violent protests, and a growing intolerance of political differences. This brings a renewed sense of urgency and activism to address the unhealed scars of the apartheid and colonial past and tackle new challenges if we are to move forward and achieve real transformation. This reinforces the importance of the work that we do.

The formation of ARNSA was facilitated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation with the aim of coordinating and strengthening efforts to combat racism across all sectors of society. In her address, Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Yasmin Sooka emphasized the importance of this initiative in the context of an alarming rise in racist incidents and attitudes. She reported that South Africa had appeared before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in August 2016, to report on progress in addressing racial discrimination and new manifestations of discrimination. CERD has recommended that government
step up its efforts to consult and support civil society organisations working in the area of human rights protection, in particular those working to combat racial discrimination. With our long pioneering history as an organisation dedicated to anti-bias and anti-racism work, we were delighted to be invited to present a workshop at the ARNSA annual conference. We are excited to be part of this wave of renewed activism to achieve real transformation and a just, equal society for all our people.

I believe that the future is bright - for PDT and for our young democracy - but there is much still to be done if we are to achieve our organizational vision of a society in which everyone experiences dignity and feels respect and included.

As the Founding Director of PDT, I would like to pay tribute to everyone who has helped us to flourish and grow. In particular, my heartfelt thanks to the small and dedicated PDT team, our funders, and our many partners, for their contributions.

While it has been a privilege to lead PDT in its journey, it is time for me to move on. I am delighted to announce that we have found the right person to take over the reins. Delores Athiemulam joins PDT as the new Director from her position as Centre Director of the Nokuphila Community Centre in Gauteng. She brings an inestimable wealth of experience, qualifications, skills and contacts in a career that has spanned from grassroots education to executive leadership of organisations. She served previously as Country Director for Operation HOPE SA and Managing Director for the Institute of Training and Education for Capacity-building (ITEC) in East London.

PDT will always have a huge part of my heart. I will continue to serve on the Management Committee, and help in any way that I am called upon to ensure a smooth succession, continuity and the preservation of institutional memory. I wish Delores and the extraordinarily dedicated PDT team all the best for the future.
Message from the new PDT Director, Delores Athiemulam

It is with great joy and privilege that I join the PDT team at this particular time! The need for our work in South Africa is even greater today than at any other time. Our communities are plagued by so many diverse social ills - poverty, violence, unemployment, sexual abuse, murder, and the list goes on.... Amidst all of these challenges, our children are the victims.

Being part of the PDT movement of change is indeed a privilege. As PDT, we must stay current and relevant in our response to the needs of the community and equipping our children with the skills to deal with the daily challenges. Ongoing programme development and curriculum review form part and parcel of our work to keep addressing the diverse needs of the communities that we serve. We need to listen and respond to the voices of our communities, and more especially our children, the future of our country.

The voices of our children are demanding of us to change their world. PDT is part of a movement for change and creating a better life for our children. Going forward, PDT will be looking to increase community participation by bringing more parents onboard in working with young children in their communities using the Persona Dolls. We will call for more corporate involvement and support in helping us to make a difference!

Let us remember the words spoken by the late President Nelson Mandela: “Children are the most important aspect in a country.” At PDT, they are the most important aspect of our organisation!
What we do

PDT is a non-profit organisation and accredited training provider in the ECD and education sectors, based in Cape Town and working across South Africa. We develop and offer anti-bias and diversity training, materials and mentoring on how to use the innovative and effective Persona Doll approach. Our ‘hands-on’ experiential training assists adults to deal with the challenges of poverty, violence, racism, and stigma in their own lives and in the lives of the children and young people they work with and care for.

In 2017, we trained 901 practitioners in 7 South African provinces and distributed 2 770 dolls in 7 countries

We offer a range of training options, tailored to address specific training needs and issues in various contexts, and provide follow-up support and mentoring to ensure the effective implementation and use of the Persona Doll approach by:

- ECD practitioners and trainers
- School teachers, principals and school governing bodies
- Youth groups and youth development organisations
- Adult education and parenting groups
- Social workers and community health workers.

We also offer leadership development training for NGOs, an e-learning programme, and a workshop on respectful practice and diversity appropriate for civil society organisations, academic and other institutions, and corporates.

PDT also supports a doll-making workshop, which produces and distributes Persona Dolls and Ubuntu Play Dolls locally and internationally. This income-generating project provides skills and opportunities to unemployed women in a rural community near Cape Town.
Who we work with

We see partnerships and collaboration as critical in expanding the reach and impact of our work, along with mainstreaming the Persona Doll anti-bias approach in the work of our partner organisations. It is extremely gratifying to see how our training, tools, materials and Persona Dolls are being used by many and diverse organisations, adapted for their specific needs and constituencies, to tackle prejudice and promote diversity, respect and inclusion.

During this reporting period, we trained 901 practitioners in 7 South African provinces working with our partners. We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone we worked with over the past year:

- Western Cape Education Department (WCED)
- Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA)
- Ikamva Labantu
- Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU)
- National Association of Childcare Workers (NACCW)
- The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI)
- Mitchell’s Plain ECD Forum
- 7 Passes Project
- Masikhule
- Sikhula Sonke
- St. James Primary School
- Beautiful Gate
- Westlake United Church
- Ikwezi Project, Schools Development Unit (SDU), University of Cape Town
- Masibumbane
- Sithuthukile
- Ntataise
- Tshepang
- Anti-Racism Network of South Africa & the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation
- Valcare Trust.
New PDT Materials

In the past year, we produced some exciting new materials, adding to our existing ‘library’.

Teen Persona Dolls

After the successful pilot of the Teen Persona Dolls with NACCW, we produced a training manual and a set of age-appropriate Teen Persona stories to support this new training offering. The training equips teachers and youth workers with practical tools to encourage adolescents and young people to express their feelings and discuss challenges they face openly, in the context of their rights and responsibilities. Key issues tackled include HIV, stigma and prejudice, given the high levels of HIV infection among young people in South Africa; sexuality and gender issues; crime, gender-based violence, and sexual abuse.

Early childhood development

We produced a story collection for use with young children in ECD settings, homes and communities. The stories aim to inspire and support adults working with young children in using the Persona Dolls effectively to raise and address specific issues and challenges affecting their young charges. Watch this space - we will be rolling out further editions in this series in the future!

Parent education manual

Through our work in the ECD sector and with our partners, we recognized the potential for our work to build bridges between homes, families, schools and communities by educating and supporting parents and other caregivers (as many children are not raised by their birth parents). We also recognise that, in a county with high levels of teenage pregnancy, young people desperately need to learn parenting skills, to understand their responsibilities, and to know their own and their children’s rights. We have developed a parent education manual, drawing on our experience with young children, to help prepare and equip parents to deal with some of the many challenges they and their children face. This will become an increasingly important focus of our work going forward.
PDT Doll-making project

Our Doll-making project provides work to local women in the Paarl Boland region. Many of these women were unemployed and through their involvement in the project, they now have an income and work experience that help them develop their confidence and new skills, and support their families.

Between March 2016 and February 2017, these women created and crafted thousands of dolls by hand. Our Dolls are seasoned travelers - they travel with trainers to training sessions in the Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, the Free State, Gauteng, and the North West Province - and then find their way ‘home’ with participants to new homes in all corners of the country, from remote rural areas to busy cities. This year, over 700 of our Dolls ‘emigrated’ to new homes - in the United Kingdom, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Estonia and Swaziland - spreading awareness across the globe about the unique Persona Doll approach. We also supplied play dolls to the SmartStart early learning franchise, helping children to play, learn, fly!
PDT Team

Director: Carol Smith
Administration: Mandy Hudson
Finance and Bookkeeping: Karien van Rooyen
Auditor: Duncan Albertyn, CA
Training Co-ordinator: Pat Birkett
Trainers: Phelisa Manyisane-Somciza, Kim Andreoli, Sue Rosie, Thikam Pillay, Pat Birkett
Material developers: Sue Connolly, Carohn Cornell
Media: Webfactory, Vaun Cornell, Umbono Art Media

PDT Management Committee

We are extremely grateful to our volunteer management committee for their unfailing commitment and generosity in sharing time, energy, knowledge and experience.

Chairperson: Rubert van Blerk
Members: Malibongwe Gwele, Cally Kuhne, Blossom Ngwevela, Carol Smith
Funding and Resource Partners

PDT is committed to implementing a long-term sustainability strategy that includes finding new markets for our training and materials, locally and globally, to provide a parallel income stream that will continue to fund our important work in impoverished communities. However, we could not do our work without the support and funding provided by our loyal and generous donors!

Our heartfelt thanks go to the following organisations for their support and contributions:

- DG Murray Trust
- Anglo American Chairman’s Fund
- National Lottery Distribution Fund
- Apex Hi Trust
- Department of Social Development, Western Cape
- Andrea Fine Trust
- Devon and Centocow-link
- Solon Foundation.
Finances

Total Income

Grants/Donations/Income

- Grants and donations: R1 721 727
- Self-generated income - Training fees and sale of dolls: R535 541
- Interest: R134 337

TOTAL: R2 391 605

Total Expenditure

Expenditure 2016–2017

- Training and salaries: R1 153 657
- Administration and support: R 467 078
- Materials development and production, Doll making: R 975 214

TOTAL: R2 595 949

PDT is a registered Non-Profit Organisation (042- 277- NPO) and Public Benefit Organisation (PBO No: 930022097)
ECD and Youth Practitioners trained by PDT in 2016-2017
BLESser STORY – ThandI, 15

PerSOna
Thandi is 15. She lives in a rural area of Babanango in Kwazulu-Natal. She was forced to drop out of Grade 9 last year to help nurse her sick mother. Sad to say, her mother passed away in November, leaving four orphan children. Thandi is the first born and she has two younger sisters, Gugu and Lihle, who are in primary school. Her little brother Vusi is only four years old. They live with their granny and her granny’s sister. The children all miss their mother, especially at bedtime, and Thandi sings to them to comfort them and to comfort herself. She really wishes her father was with them but he went away when Vusi was a baby. People said he went to Jo’burg and he will never come back but Thandi dreams that he will come back to look after his family. She dreams that he will be proud of his first born, he will dry her tears, he will love her and care for her. Day after day, Thandi keeps on singing and dreaming while she works.

Story
Hi, I am Thandi, 15, nearly 16, living near Babanango village in rural Kwazulu-Natal. I was in Grade 9 last year but I had to drop out to look after my mother. Sometimes I feel Thandi is the wrong name for me because nobody loves me. We don’t have parents to love us, we live with our gogo and her older sister and they are strict and always complaining so I don’t think they love me. Sure, my brother and my sisters love me but they are just little kids. Sometimes I feel like running away but I promised my mother I would look after them. I feel like everyone needs me, everyone depends on me. Sometimes it makes me really angry and I want to ask God: “Why did this happen to me?” You know what keeps me going? I SING to make myself brave and forget my troubles. I LOVE TO SING GOSPEL!

And maybe my singing will bring me good luck! Let me tell you what happened two weeks ago. Gogo sent me to the shop to buy tea and mielie meal and she kept Vusi at home with her. When I was walking home with the shopping on my head, singing of course, a man greeted me. I knew his face because he sometimes works in the shop, selling clothes. He was wearing black and white All Stars and an Uzzi beanie and he told me his name is Mandla. When I told him my name he said Thandi is the right name for me because I am someone to love. Wow! That made me happy. He said he loves my singing and he is also a fan of Rebecca [Malope]. He promised to give me one of Rebecca’s albums the next time I went to the shop. I was so excited, I sang her Gospel songs all the way home!

Believe it or not, Mandla kept his promise! Last week when I went to the shop again, I took Vusi with me because gogo was lying down. This time Mandla gave me one of Rebecca’s albums, Qaphelani, not her latest but still fantastic, and he bought Vusi a big lollipop so we could chat in peace. Mandla says he is 25 but he looks older and he said I look grown up, more like 18 than 15. He asked about my family and he even gave us bread and Russians to take home, enough for everyone. Ja, he is a kind man, nobody else gives me presents. I sang all the way home with Vusi and then we all listened to the album with gogo and her sister. It’s my first Rebecca album and it’s great!

Today when I went to the shop by myself, Mandla gave me a big smile. He invited me to his place after work so we can listen to Gospel and he says he wants to introduce me to his favourite R&B singer, Rehanna. He says we will be alone so we can get to know each other better. And he says he has something to show me – maybe it’s Rebecca’s latest album? I can see he loves me because he gives me presents so I don’t want to disappoint him – but I am a bit nervous because he talks as if he is my boyfriend. Please help me decide what to do. I want to have a boyfriend and the young guys I know drink too much, they get into fights, they don’t work. Mandla has a job so he can buy me nice things so maybe he will be a good boyfriend for me.

Maybe Mandla wants to be my blesser? At school the girls were always talking about blesasers – who was the fattest blesser with the biggest stomach, who was the richest blesser with the best car, who was good at sex. Some used to brag about the nice things they got from their blesasers.

Yes, I think Mandla wants to be my blesser. And he is not one of those fat old guys, he is quite good looking and I like the way he dresses. I think it will be ok to have sex with him. But I have heard lots of girls saying that blesasers don’t like to condomise, they ask: “Why eat a sweet in a wrapper? Why eat a banana with the skin on?”

What if Mandla wants to have sex without a condom? I don’t want to get pregnant but they say the first time you have sex you can’t get pregnant so that is ok. Then next week I can get the injection when the mobile clinic comes. I know lots of girls who got the injection from the clinic. They say the sister scolds you for having sex when you are young like me but she gives you the injection. My gogo is always scolding me about something so I don’t mind if the sister scolds me but I am scared of injections! I will have to be brave because I don’t want to get pregnant.

Thanks for listening to my story. There is nobody I can talk to at home - the kids are too small and the grannies are too old. But I think I will be able to talk to Mandla because he loves me. And if he gives me presents it will help us at home. Now I need to sing some Gospel to give me courage.
Get in touch!

If you want to share a story about your experience of Persona Dolls or PDT, learn more about what we can offer you and your organisation, or order Persona Dolls or our new Ubuntu Play Dolls, please get in touch. We’d love to hear from you!

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