



Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

Sihlalo Outreach Newsletter 1 *Oct* 2019

BELIEVE, CHALLENGE, POSSIBLE

My very dear uncle Alan triggered this venture, when he patiently listened to me debrief after one of my trips to South Africa where I had once again been confronted by inequity by birth and circumstance, and the subsequent poverty trap. He said 'When do you have enough?' That started me thinking.....money, time, love, energy, skills, vision, patience? What can you do that will make things better for people who don't have enough? What can you do without, that will mean so much to someone else?.....and so the adventure started! If I had known what I was getting into, would I have started it? Probably yes, because not to do it would have been to deny a chance to learn, grow and pay forward.

Sihlalo Outreach has gone from 'maybe a good idea' in November 2018 to a reality in October 2019. The company (Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd) and its not-for-profit offspring Sihlalo Promise, was set up in January 2019 with the help of marvelous South African accountant and lawyer brothers who threw their wisdom into this potentially madcap venture. We also have an Australian and two South African directors, and an Australian partner. We found the perfect premises in Salt River, Cape Town in January 2019. Whilst some members of our team could see the potential from day 1, it took others a little longer to see how a dingy workshop could become a toy and furniture factory, as well as a coffee shop, a piano studio and a performance space! Sihlalo Outreach lives in the middle warehouse of a group of three, in the heart of Salt River, a fringe suburb to Cape Town city. Parking is plentiful out the front (a rare commodity in Cape Town) and it is in an area about to become gentrified.

The Sihlalo Outreach mission is to create advantage out of disadvantage for young people who previously would have little hope of getting out of the poverty trap. We could write a whole treatise on the poverty trap!!

Sihlalo is a Xhosa word meaning 'To fold'.....whilst it initially was meant to describe the fine wooden chair that we eventually want to make, it has taken on a far bigger meaning for the company directors of 'folding into my heart' which describes the commitment of the many people who have bought into this venture!



Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

Salt River is an old suburb walking distance to Cape Town city, with narrow streets, colourful northern-style African houses and a vibrant street art scene. Most houses are right on the street, with gothic columns and fancy ironwork. In the early 1990s, Salt River was a booming industrial suburb, housing textile and garment manufacturing. It borders the infamous District Six area, and is just down the road from University of Cape Town, and Groote Schuur Hospital where the first heart transplant took place. This is the old building on the corner of Foundry Road, and our premises are about 100 metres down the street on the left of the picture. To the right is Albert Road, a place where you could wander and wander and never see the same thing twice. The building in this picture sits right on the terrifying Salt River Circle, an official two lane (unofficial 6 or more lanes) and five offshoot road roundabout. This picture must have been taken very early on a Sunday morning because this area is usually clogged with people, taxi buses, bigger buses, cars, as well as the odd horse and cart, all shouting, pushing in, taking chances, in general confusion.



Check out the Sihlalo location on <https://www.google.com/maps/@-33.9278916,18.4542901,14z> and on our new website www.sihlalo.org.za.

There are tiny shops on corner blocks, children playing on the streets, people leaning over fences (and over streets) to talk to their neighbours, and eclectic shops jostling with tiny restaurants and supermarkets. There are pop-up street markets where you can buy unmentionable cuts of meats, and vegetables spread out on the pavement. At the end of Foundry Rd is the Salt River Train Station, so there is a constant stream of people going past Sihlalo. The ladies are often balancing goods on their heads, and babies on their backs and the men are pulling handcarts with anything you might want to buy (or sell) on them. There is singing, dancing, courting, business and bargaining, arguing, soliciting, life goes by in its complexity.



Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

The Salt River Town Hall is almost opposite our workshop on the other side of the terrifying Salt River Circle. The area around it is about to be turned into medium density housing.



Just up the road.....



Work in progress signwriting our woodwork shop



Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

We stocked the woodworking shop and the coffee shop with equipment in February, and took on a manager and three trainees.....Justin, Michael and Charles.....

Over the next few months, the manager whom we thought was in Sihlalo for the right reasons, turned out to not have such good reasons or morals. This caused more than a bit of a hiatus! But it was a good thing in the end, because we learnt about South African labour laws, we learnt more about how a team of young people from different backgrounds works, and it served to alert us to the underbelly of local society that we have sadly seen more of over time! When you don't have a lot, it can be pretty easy to make decisions that favour short term gain (and put you over your fellow man), rather than focus on long term growth. I am not sure that that is only an African thing, it is perhaps just more obvious when no-one has much? It has also highlighted the complexities and hierarchies of race, colour and language in this amazing country.

It also introduced us to some wonderful philanthropic Cape Town-ians who also want to make a difference to those less fortunate, and who have volunteered time, energy and expertise to Sihlalo. The trainees Justin, Michael and Charles are still with us and are growing more every day in confidence, skills and ownership. Their stories are enthralling, and their take on life humbling.





Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

Keith, with support from MGS in Adelaide, loaded and dispatched a container of donated goods in May. We are so grateful for the many South Australians who donated to Sihlalo (clothes, pianos, music, furniture, kitchenalia, books etc).

That shipment started the next part of the Sihlalo saga, when the container sat on the wharf in Cape Town until September, held up by so much red tape that you could hold a ticker tape parade.

That day that the container arrived at Sihlalo, we had so many removalists standing by, that it took less than 30 minutes to unload and dispatch it! Mind you, whilst we waited for the container, they drank us out of coffee! We are indebted to Darren from Halifax Shipping in Adelaide, and Gavin from Meihuizen Shipping in Cape Town, for steering this shipment to its rightful endpoint.



So now we are into the next phase. Justin, Michael and Charles are learning to work as a team. They have a regular wage and are eating breakfast and lunch (which is a new experience). Surviving on half a loaf of white bread for the day is common. Andre, a wonderful retired woodwork teacher is helping us, and the team is already producing a great range of wooden toys. Under Andre's guidance, and Keith's WhatsApp instructions, the team is learning about



Sihlalo Outreach Pty Ltd (VAT
No. 4140284318)
54 Foundry Rd, Salt River, Cape
Town 7925
www.sihlalo.org.za
+27 790930873
Karen@sihlalo.org.za

[Contact Us | Sihlalo](#)

production runs, organisation and quality control. The chair production is now a reality starting in January.

The renovations to the piano studios and performance space are finished and I am learning to run a woodwork shop and a coffee shop, as well as doing a crash course in marketing. I now have 6 pianos to play on however, so life has looked up. I do miss my comfortable home life in Adelaide, but I rejoice every time I maneuver around the Salt River Circle safely and get into Sihlalo for another day of personal growth and learning, a lot of hilarity, some tears, much time spent in discussion, and the sobering recognition that life isn't always fair. My little Chevvie Spark has been christened Myffy the Wonder Van because of the many and varied loads she carries. No one else drives, so my bravery quota is exponentially higher than in Australia.



Please come to visit, teach something that you are good at, or write with good ideas! The Salt River community is rich in culture but poor in opportunity. There is so much to be done, and a lot of fun to be had.

Check out our website, and our facebook page (The Little Brown Dog Café). We can offer accommodation, great food, wonderful scenery, the opportunity to be part of the growth of some great young people, and to contribute to people less fortunate, and the lifechanging outcome of getting around the Salt River circle safely. It is a work in progress.