



ICDF Networks

August 2020

Network for Cultural Dance



Photo: Dancers from the Khmer Inheritance Artists Association

The Network for Cultural Dance is interested in exploring:

- . the origins of our cultural dances*
- . meaning, development and change*
- . redeeming our culture*
- . integration and renewal*
- . ministry through cultural dance, sharing the gospel*
- . “breaking the rules”, innovation and creativity*
- . clothing/costume*

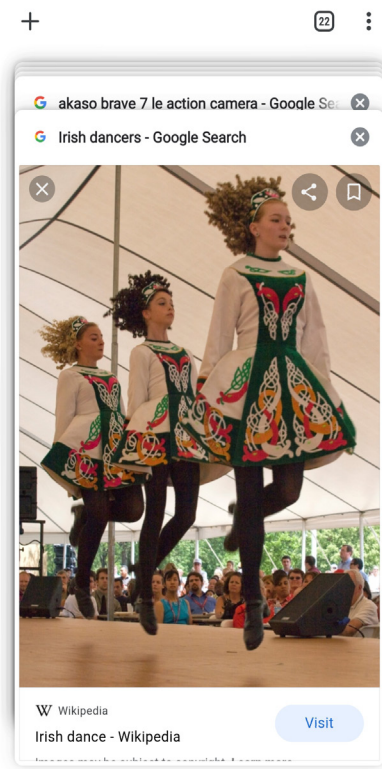
<https://icdf.com/en/cultural-dance-0>

Nations Are God's Idea

Living under the shadow of the pandemic that unites us globally for these past 6 months, our national identities and approaches have been highlighted. Initially it was repatriation with people hurrying to get “home” to their respective countries to ride out the lockdown and live in this new world. I was in Uganda in March and left to come home earlier than planned. Soon our national approaches became apparent as information about the pandemic was shared.

There was time to be still and take stock. Many noted a heightened awareness of the natural world as industries and locomotives were silent and families and friends became so much more important. God says, “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted above the nations”, Psalm 46. The prayers of our Christian communities are that the nations will take notice and our people will bow to the Almighty and acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Nations are God's idea. Wonderful words in Acts 17 speak of God the creator, the one who gives man breath and in verse 26 he says, “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”



What identifies us as nations? Language, culture, song and dance are strong markers. In Ireland, after 800 years of being colonised a great cultural revival took place in the 19th century. The Gaelic League was established in 1893 promoting the Irish language, literature, singing and dancing.

There are two distinctive forms of Irish dancing, solo or step dancing and figure or ceilidh dancing. The latter is the form I've grown up with and is a highly sociable kind of dancing. The word “ceilidh” originally meant, “the gathering of people in a house at night to talk and have an enjoyable time together” which in the last six months couldn't happen in house or in hall outside the family unit with social distancing constraints.

Solo step dancing did lend itself somewhat to these restrictions and it was lovely to see the inclusion of step dancers at the end of the “Irish Blessing” collaboration that was released on Pentecost Sunday. The Zephaniah Dancers that featured in the video are based in Portadown, Northern Ireland. They have brought the power and energy of Irish step dancing to audiences and congregations using traditional forms and dances to glorify God. <https://theirishblessing.com/>

Arm movement is discouraged in Irish dance and the dancer taught to demonstrate control and grace. There was a time in the 19th century when this was relaxed but the return to form, for whatever reason, came from the 1900s on to this day.

National dances are fast and energetic with strong leg and foot movement. Maybe our wild spirited character was in danger of being released! At a Christian conference over 20 years ago a prophecy was given that our people would be set free as they learned to dance with arms raised! This is a freedom we have yet to fully realise but at times we catch glimpses of it and, yes, “arms are raised”!

Alison Bourke

KIAA - Khmer Inheritance Artists Association

Keeping Khmer traditions of arts culture alive in the churches and nation of Cambodia.

When my wife, Long Reaksmey, and I started to choreograph “The Lord’s Prayer Dance,” the prayer of Jesus for his disciples, we prayed to see all Cambodians living in the blessings and grace of God the Father through His Son Jesus and for them to receive Jesus as Savior.

The daily lives of Cambodians show that they love dance, music and drama. By expertly using these traditional arts, we show the Cambodian people that, through all time, God has a great love for them and desires for them to worship Jesus, their Creator. As we do this, we are restoring these traditional arts back to them.

On Friday to Sunday, 6-8th December 2019, KIAA performed “The Lord’s Prayer Dance” in the Love Phnom Penh Festival arranged by Evangelist Franklin Graham. 24,000 people joined this event. 2400 received Jesus as their Savior. We rejoice that Khmer Inheritance Artists Association could partner with the Graham Association so that thousands of Cambodians were drawn to Jesus as Savior in the Love Phnom Penh Festival.

In ongoing engagement, KIAA partners with churches, organizations and schools, going from province to province to perform and to share the gospel of Jesus, to build up Khmer churches in worship and prayer, and to restore the traditional arts culture to the nation.

KIAA Vision:

As Director of Ministry and Training, I Sophun Ty would like to share with you more fully the vision of KIAA, the Khmer Inheritance Artists Association.



The Lord’s Prayer Dance (Matthew 6:9-13) danced by KIAA; Choreography: Ty Sophun and Long Reaksmey; Music and Lyrics: Mam Barnabas; Arrangement of Music and Singing: Bin David

Some people believe that Cambodians should reject all of their arts and culture when they become Christians. However, the Apostle Paul would not agree with that idea. In fact, he wrote to the Corinthian church: “I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some.” My purpose is to describe the vision of Khmer Inheritance

Artists Association (KIAA) for using Khmer traditional arts in our ministries of evangelism, Bible teaching, and worship.

The primary aspect of the KIAA vision is to bring arts that God has created so well to glorify the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, since He was the Creator of everything in the first place.

Human beings tend to love art because they are created in the image of God, who was the first Great Artist. However, people who have become disconnected from their Creator and entangled with the world tend to use arts to glorify themselves or to worship created things instead of the one true God. Particularly in Cambodia, where the love of art is so deeply ingrained in our Khmer culture, KIAA seeks to reunite Cambodian people with their Creator, without having to totally disconnect ourselves from our traditional arts and culture.

In support of this, an important aspect of the KIAA vision is to restore and preserve our Khmer traditional and national art forms that were almost destroyed by the Khmer Rouge Regime. This is a major way to attract the positive attention of Cambodian people, since they appreciate those who try to rescue their traditional arts for this generation and those to come.

Some of the story content of the traditional Khmer arts is antithetical to Christianity, however, there are still a lot of good moral elements there that coincide with Biblical teachings and are worthy of being preserved. Khmer Inheritance Arts Association (KIAA) focuses on creating presentations of the Christian story of Cambodians, now expressed through the familiar form of our traditional cultural arts. This draws Khmer to realize that He is and has always been a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

As a result, a third aspect of the KIAA vision is to give birth to new songs, dances, dramas, visual art, and literature based on the Bible, God's Word. These Christian works of art are expressed through the traditional cultural styles that Cambodians love. And because these new works of art are Bible-based and culturally appropriate, they are powerful tools to use in our ministries of evangelism, Bible teaching, and worship. For our ministry of evangelism, KIAA presents culturally appropriate evangelistic performances around Cambodia, featuring music, dance, drama, preaching and testimony. Periodically, my wife Reaksmeay and I have gone, and plan on going, on evangelistic tours outside Cambodia, for example to America and Europe, taking teams of dancers and musicians.

In our education program, which includes both arts and vocational training, we especially teach the Cambodian students how to use the arts as communication tools. We are particularly training both young and mature arts students in the Word of God in order that they will understand the importance of using creative methods to communicate the gospel message and discipleship in following Jesus, God's Son. We also focus the students to worship God through these arts and to look to Him as the Giver of all good things - we ask Him to work through our skills in the arts for His Glory.

As part of our ministry of Bible teaching together with the traditional arts, KIAA presents "Arts in Christian Ministry" workshops at churches and organizations to establish the biblical basis for Christian arts ministry and to encourage creativity.

At present, Central KIAA School trains children 7 days a week in our Phnom Penh ministry base. In the future, KIAA has a vision to establish a Christian arts school for every province in Cambodia. Since the students and staff of KIAA are mostly the poor in this country, providing more centers will provide more hope for disadvantaged Cambodians. In addition, the rapid multiplication of trained graduates who will become teachers and worship leaders for the Cambodian church will cause Christianity to spread more rapidly throughout Cambodia.

The Khmer Inheritance Artists Association vision for using Khmer traditional arts in evangelism, Bible teaching, and worship is also my personal vision - a vision that assures me that my life will have eternal meaning as I faithfully follow God's call to accomplish His creative work through Khmer Inheritance Arts Association.

Please pray for us.

- Please pray that Jesus bless KIAA mission and vision
- Monthly support for house rental and daily food to feed children and KIAA team
- A large truck with a stage to minister in remote areas of Cambodia
- A minibus to carry the whole performing team



<https://youtu.be/yr4Gk9K-CM4> : THE LORD'S PRAYER DANCE "AT LOVE PHNOM PENH FESTIVAL"

<https://youtu.be/IDUeMkm9bVM> : ENGLISH VIDEO MINISTRY

YouTube and Facebook: KHMER INHERITANCE ARTISTS ASSOCIATION

Website: <https://kiaa.site/about-us/> and if anyone wants to support KIAA: <https://kiaa.site/donation/>

Email: kcias.cambodia@gmail.com

May God bless you all
Sophun, Reaksmeay, KIAA team and children

Kinder Kalsi ... an interview

The first time we read about Kinder in the “Men in Dance Digest of Interviews” that was published in July, we were intrigued to find out more about his ministry. Here is a follow-up interview for us all to enjoy.

Please give us a short background of Bhangra

Bhangra history has come from the folk dancing of Sikhs in Punjab in north India and its roots are in farms and villages. Dancing and celebration would take place after the harvest season (known as Vaisakhi).

Today it is heavily present in the Sikh and Punjabi culture at weddings, parties, and all kinds of celebrations. It's also seen in Bollywood movies. Over the years the Bhangra style has been influenced by different regions in India. It remains today the dance of joy, the dance of happiness, the dance of good health, and the dance of productivity.

What is your connection with this specific dance form?

I grew up as a Radha Swami and followed the Sikh culture and faith, so Bhangra was part of family life and celebrations.

History

When I was 21, I met my now wife Gina at a store where we worked ... she is English. God, for me, was a natural part of my life and I was happy to talk about my faith so

naturally I ask Gina about her Christian faith. I found out that she was not a Christian but that she openly spoke about God. I asked her to look into her faith. Sikhism is not evangelistic. As we courted and finally decided to get married, my extended family struggled with my decision where Gina's did not. Gina wanted to get married in church and at the same time learnt about Jesus, became a follower of Jesus, and was baptised. God used me as an evangelist even as a Sikh. Move forward 7 years and Gina now goes to a church and, 2 children later, it was time to baptise our 2nd child. The new vicar said I could not say the words but everyone was open to come. This challenged me and I started looking into the Christian faith and who Jesus was. At the end of the discussions, the group I was part of were all getting baptised. When I asked what that was I was told, “It is a public display to say you want to know more about Jesus and follow His way.” I thought about it and said, “Yes please.”

My baptism in 1998 is where I realised that I was a child of God and God loves me unconditionally whether or not I do good or let the side down – WOW! blew my mind and I decided I wanted to share that with others. In 2003 we moved to Sheffield for me to train as an evangelist in the Church Army (www.churcharmy.org) and we are still here.

Why do you use this dance form to reach the community?

As an evangelist working in communities in Sheffield, one part of my role is to help fundraise for the posts. Hospitality is a key part of Sikhism and very much who I am so, as part of this, in 2006 my mum taught me to cook curry. The Bollywood movies have dancing that is very choreographed and uses a whole variety of styles - even in the same production. We've jumped into the enthusiasm for these films and this gave us an idea so started to collect Indian outfits from my family.

We started to develop our own sort of Bollywood fundraising events, these taking many forms. We charge for the tickets, provide a 3-course meal, they get to dress up and I teach them Bhangra dancing and tell them something of my story. It is a lot of work but we all have a good time as well as successfully raising money.

Other ways vary but I'm always teaching and demonstrating Bhangra dance! Often it's in schools. In a primary school we could have the whole school together with 200 kids up dancing or have classes of 20 or 30 at a time. We talk about culture and faith and answer questions as well as getting them dancing. If it's with a Women's Institute group they'll have the food, the dressing up and the dancing, and love it! I can be present at some



other event and when people turn to greet each other, if they see me and recognise me, they'll hold their hand in the air and twist it - like changing a light-bulb!

An addition in recent years is a Bollywood quiz or I teach a workshop - say if there's about 20 minutes left, I'll put them into groups of 6. I say, "You're to imagine that you're going to prepare a meal and cook it, then work out what the 6 moves would be you'd need to use to do that. It's not allowed to be pizza you're getting ready!" I put music on and leave them to work together, then each group 'cooks' together in turn, and we guess what they're cooking! It gets them synchronising their moves, has them moving to the music, and makes them confident. At the end of the night I may say, "What one move would you teach me?" - not a Bhangra move. It could be waltzing, or throwing a shape - or any everyday movement.

For me, what I love is watching people who say, "I can't dance... I don't want to... I'm not interested... I'd just be embarrassed". But they've come to an event anyway, the Bhangra music gets to them, and their shoulders start to move! I have a whole range of Bhangra music I use but I also incorporate Indian Christian music as background music at events.

Are these events to connect socially or is it also for outreach / evangelism?

I have done birthday parties, etc but the majority have been evangelistic. I share my story of why I am a minister in the Church of England teaching and doing Bollywood events. For me the important thing is that I help people who have always followed Jesus to understand in a fresh way why they follow Jesus and, for those who don't believe in Jesus, to have space to ask questions and decide if they want to follow Him or if they want to find out more.

I often share that I also go into schools to teach Bhangra, cook curry, and talk about culture and my conversion from Sikhism to Christianity. I would say to believers, "You have learnt a bit about who I am and what makes me tick so I ask you today, the ones that are saying I can't do anything in school, what can you do to help schools and to be the Christian witness in them? Can you juggle, cook, do gardening or balloon modelling, tell a story, play an instrument, sing, write poetry, or do you love maths? You may not be able to do Bhangra but I'm sure you can do something to help schools and to be a Christian witness in them. So why not today look at what you can do rather than what you can't. Then go into a school and offer your services. Get involved in the cooking club, music club, read stories ... do something."

We loved the description of how you teach Bhangra by telling a story. Please tell us again.

Teach everyone in the room these simple Bhangra moves and place in music.

- Rock shoulders to beat
- Push the trolley around the room
- fill the trolley with dog food on bottom shelf, chapatis from middle and light bulbs from top.
- Open car door and then drive home. To left, then to right.
- Open home door
- Pat the dog then look up
- screw the lightbulb and turn
- repeat....

If there is more time

- feed the chickens
- put the chickens into the pen
- wave good bye to neighbour
- repeat.

For me Bhangra is so uplifting when I am down it makes my soul sing and reminds me that I am beautifully and wonderfully made and loved.

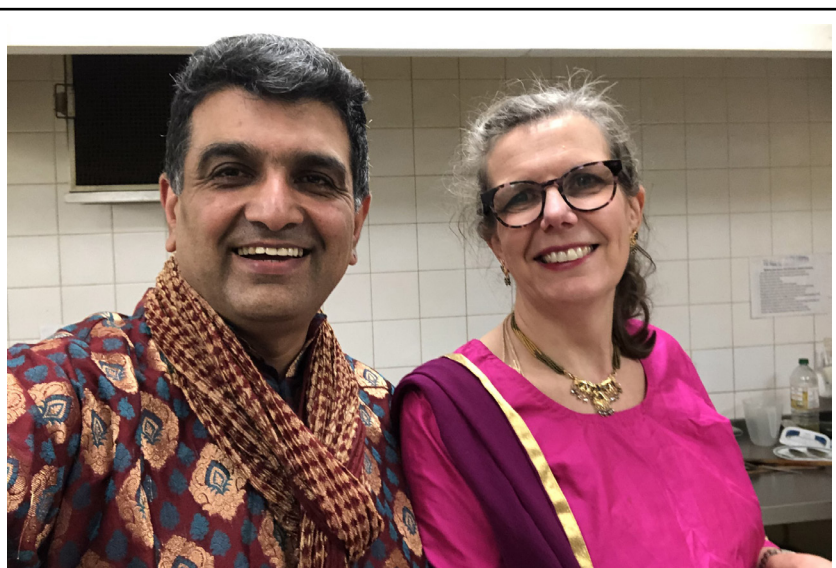


Photo: Kinder Kalsi and his wife Rev Gina Kalsi. Kinder is Lead Evangelist and Gina is Pioneer Priest for the Sheffield Centre of Mission.

“Here I am Lord”

In conversation with dancer/choreographer Jesica Sinniah (India), and dancer/multi-cultural artist Shrimathi Susanna (UK) about the creation of “Here I am Lord” - a fusion piece connecting the classical form of Bharatanatyam with a traditional Western Hymn.

How did this project come about?

Susanna: In March 2020, the UK government took the unprecedented decision to announce a national lockdown to help contain the deadly virus Covid-19.

All my classes stopped and I waited for direction from the government to restart these lessons. However, while waiting I was prompted by a text from a friend, Jesica Sinniah, a dancer and choreographer based in Bangalore, Southern India, who was also in lockdown. We discussed the possibility of her choreographing a new Christian item which could be taught on a virtual platform, while we were both free from our normal teaching commitments.

Jesica: I had many plans to conduct short dance courses and summer camps but the Covid-19 pandemic stopped everything and made me jobless. But I was consoling myself as I was comparing my life with the news around the world. At the same time my mind was asking questions: “Who will go for these people?”, “Who will come to me?”, “What can I do for them? and “How will God help me?”. My thoughts moved to the lyrics from the hymn “Here I am Lord” which are really apt for this time and could be visualised. As it is an English Hymn, Shrimathi Susanna a Bharatanatyam dancer from the UK came to my mind. Amazingly, at the same moment, there was a message from Susanna. Immediately I called her and shared my thoughts. I felt it was a call from God for a dancer to deliver His words through dance movements. I never thought that she would agree or I would do the choreography, but from then on the verses started taking shape in the form of hand gestures, facial expressions and body movements.

Your piece is based on the famous hymn “Here I am Lord”. How did you decide on this music and were the lyrics significant?



Shrimathi Susanna

Susanna: After initial discussions, Jesica mentioned that she had always wanted to choreograph to the hymn “Here I am Lord” also known as “I the Lord of sea and sky”, a song which was voted the UK’s 10th favourite hymn in 2019. After listening to the lyrics and sensing that this was the right time for me to learn a new dance, we started twice weekly classes.

The lyrics are inspired from the book of Isaiah chapter 6:8: “Then I heard the voice of The Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here I am, send me!””. It also builds on scripture from the book of 1 Samuel 3, where The Lord calls Samuel to

deliver His people. In the New Testament, we can recognise the same calling for Jesus who willingly accepted His Father’s mission to give himself and deliver us from our sins.

Jesica: Whenever I heard the hymn “Here I am Lord” in church I was always struck - choked throat and my eyes filled - as I uttered the words “Here I am Lord” in response to “Whom shall I send?”. In my mind I just offered and stretched out to tell The Lord I am ready, and I will go. Today my thoughts are expressed through the choreography I gave Shrimathi Susanna. During the process I reflected over the lyrics giving them very personal gestures using the vocabulary of Bharatanatyam.

How did your collaboration work with the restraints of learning on a virtual platform?

Susanna: The process of choreography had its challenges! Despite having the lyrics in English, I battled internally trying to remember the gestures after each session; the process was laborious! Additionally, I had very little spare time to practise since becoming a carer for my Dad during the height of the pandemic. We soon reduced the weekly lessons, allowing me more time to rehearse and Jessica adjusted her teaching to my right side to help me grasp the gestures. Jessica also filmed movements prior to each session so I could be more prepared. It took just over a month for my muscle memory to properly kick in and to complete the dance. I love the way that the choreography reflects the lyrics and how the viewer is invited to experience the role of both God and man, particularly man's challenge of being called to serve! So much detail needs to be mastered through gestures and a constant dialogue plays through my mind as I dance.

Jesica: I had very little knowledge of any virtual platforms, except for a few interviews. We have power cuts every day and the internet connectivity always goes down since most companies are now working from home. I had a few obstacles with my device and mobile phone. I had a very old laptop and the power cord broke during lockdown. I couldn't get a new one, so I had to borrow from one of my students. We also had problems learning how to video call since it was a new concept for us both and we struggled for a few days to get all the settings settled.

Despite all these setbacks we were able to create this new dance because of God's grace and to the honour of His Glory.

Do you have any thoughts you would like to share now you have finished learning this new dance?

Susanna: In this unprecedented time of a global pandemic, what is our response and position as Christians? We are all called to show the love of Jesus, often in very practical ways! Jessica had no income, so God in his grace bought us together allowing me to bless her financially and in doing so encouraging her giving me a new dance. It has been a pleasure and a challenge to learn this dance which was birthed during the pandemic. I pray it will stir the viewer and encourage them to "let their light shine" (Matthew 5:16). I love the way that God weaves together his plans, and I am so grateful for the choreographic skills he has given Dr Jesica Sinniah allowing us to see this popular hymn in a new and exciting medium.

Jesica: In my country, at this moment everyone is in fear and panic. People understand that they need to care and protect each other by staying away and following the precautions. I am reminded of the verses from the Book of Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven". In the name of Jesus we should be courageous and reach out to the poor and marginalised. In India, there are people who do not understand the need to protect themselves due to their lack of knowledge and education. If Jesus is in us, we need to follow His example and let our light shine during this continuing time of Covid-19 and reach out to the needy and give what we can. I would like to thank Shrimathi Susanna for giving me this beautiful opportunity to choreograph during this tough time which really encouraged and enhanced my faith.

See the dance at ... <https://youtu.be/dAP7dYzD8Jo>



Jesica Sinniah

Africa Collaboration - O' Naga

Lockdown is a word that is so restricting. It's a term used for prisoners, a term that keeps you down, a term that literally defined our state of existence for the past 5 months.

Dancing is the antithesis of lockdown. We need to move; we need to create and we need to be free. During lockdown, I started doing more dancing in my personal capacity. I created a space outside my home where I just worshipped. This got me thinking, should we really be in our homes, not moving, not dancing. Undoubtedly more of us spent more time online and keeping up to date with social media trends. I decided to work on a dance that I wanted people to learn and send their videos to create one dance in unity. I shared this idea with Liesl and Saartjie and they felt that Africa needed to do something together. Africa has its own unique rhythm and beats and we felt that we needed to capture this. I heard a song previously called O' Naga, some of the lyrics are as follows;

Things are breaking for my sake. Mountains are moving for my sake. Walls are falling for my sake. Everything is working for my sake

The words were so powerful and I believed that as we all danced together God would break the power of Covid-19 over us, that He would move mountains that were a hindrance to our worship, that our walls would be broken down and that everything will work together for those who love Him. The rhythm of the song resonated with the African style. I knew that ICDF had African countries and leaders. I got excited thinking about the different moves all around the African globe with its cultural history. I started having conversations with our African leaders and dancers with the help of Saartjie and Liesl. Needless to say, everybody bought into the vision of the event. After conversations with leaders, I had chosen the 5 choreographers to create the masterpiece. I approached Duncan from Clay Dance in Uganda. He was willing to participate and two of his dancers, Esther Namata and Josh Jasper Nasasira choreographed the first verse for us. What a fantastic piece it was! It got me jumping and feeling the force of gravity in every move. Then I approached a man that I met on the India cultural tour, Daniel Baraka, from Kenya. His energy and musicality are so good and contagious. He choreographed the chorus for us. Gio Fisher from South Africa taught at our India Cultural Tour and has presented many workshops for CDFS. Her presence on and off stage is infectious and she choreographed part of the verse. Jacqee from Uganda showed me a video of one of her dancers named Ayebare Otim - he definitely had the moves and the charisma to choreograph for us. A faithful dance minister from Nigeria, Abiodun Babalola set the end of the verse alight with his fast moves and energy. Jude Arnold Korankye from Ghana choreographed a vibrant piece for the verse as well. I choreographed part of the chorus. It came together beautifully and uniquely.



Photo: An African Woman Dancing (seekPNG.com)

The first thing I had to do was ascertain if they all wanted to be part of the project. Everybody joined immediately and immediately informed their dancers. After that I had to send the song to the leaders with their timing in the song for them to choreograph to. I then created a tutorial video and sent it out to our dancers. From there, we sent all the choreographed pieces to our Provincial leaders. People were given two weeks to learn the dance. The response was so overwhelming. I personally looked through every video and loved to see the diversity in the same choreography. People made it their own. I knew that God would see a united Africa and I was then assured of His blessing over us. We all agreed that it would be the first of many projects together.

This project has enabled us to engage more as leaders. It brought people from all walks of life together in one dance no matter their age, gender, genre or cultural background. Finally, the drum in Africa was used as a communication tool to gather tribes from far away. With this Africa collaboration, the drum was beating and the people from Africa gathered to praise God through our dance. We have collaborated and we have united. Praise God (Mdumise uthixo- Xhosa)

For the video watch <https://www.facebook.com/melanie.erasmus.18/videos/10158417922873828>

Melanie Erasmus