

# INNOVATION FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

SOCIAL PROJECTS BRING QUALITY EDUCATION TO AT-RISK CHILDREN

SDGs covered by this initiative

1 NO POVERTY



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



**NAMIBIA IS THE SECOND LEAST POPULATED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD (TOTAL POPULATION AROUND 2.3 MILLION), WITH AN AVERAGE OF THREE PEOPLE PER SQUARE KILOMETRE. THIS POSES UNIQUE CHALLENGES TO A COUNTRY COMMITTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS TINY POPULATION.**

The remote villages of Namibia are unable to attract and retain skilled teachers as they are required to live in areas with harsh environmental conditions, poor infrastructure and virtually no facilities.

As there are no schools in many of these remote areas, children end up leaving their families at the age of five or six to attend inadequate boarding facilities far from their family villages. They are immersed into a new and challenging existence where many cannot cope and drop out of school with no future prospects.

It is against this background that B2Gold supports two critical interventions under the education pillar of its CSR programming. Both of these projects target marginalized San (or Bushman) communities.

### **EDUVISION PROGRAM**

The Edugate Academy in Otjiwarongo, 70km south of the Otjikoto Mine, recognized that the benefits of their private education system – with highly qualified teachers and small classes – could be shared with marginalized communities in remote areas. They developed the EduVision program: an e-learning system comprising smartboards (large interactive displays) and dedicated satellite connections between the Academy and schools in remote villages. This enables a teacher at the Academy to not only teach his or her small class of 10 to 15 pupils, but also pupils attending the class in a remote village – all interacting as if together in one class.

B2Gold realized the potential of the initiative and became a major sponsor in 2018, providing funding for several smartboards and the monthly cost of a high-speed satellite link. The EduVision program achieved exceptional results at Tsumkwe High School, its first proof-of-concept school, approximately 500 km from Otjiwarongo.

**EDUVISION HAS BEEN A KEY INFLUENCE IN THE DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL'S GRADES AND PASS RATES. IN THE NATIONAL RATINGS BASED ON EXAMINATION RESULTS, THE SCHOOL ROSE FROM 178<sup>TH</sup> POSITION IN 2018 TO 83<sup>RD</sup> IN 2019.**

Teachers of both schools are in continual contact, especially regarding the subjects with which the Tsumkwe High School requires additional support (i.e. accounting, mathematics, physical science, biology and English). A total of 645 lessons were recorded during 2019, which can be regularly accessed by pupils that require extra assistance, as lessons can be accessed online afterwards. Additionally, this remote school now has access to the internet. EduVision has been a key influence in the dramatic improvement in the school's grades and pass rates. In the national ratings based on examination results, the school rose from 178<sup>th</sup> position in 2018 to 83<sup>rd</sup> in 2019.

Due to this success, and in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, it was decided to bring the Cornelius Goraseb High School in the remote Kunene Region onboard as the second beneficiary of the EduVision program in 2019.

EduVision aims to continue to grow the number of schools that benefit from their virtual classroom solution. Their objective is to increase the pass rate of 1,000 Grade 12 learners over the next three years by at least 25% in all participating schools. A second objective is to increase the number of pupils taking higher level subjects by 5% over the next three years. In order for the initiative to be sustainable, more private and government schools will be encouraged to partner with EduVision.

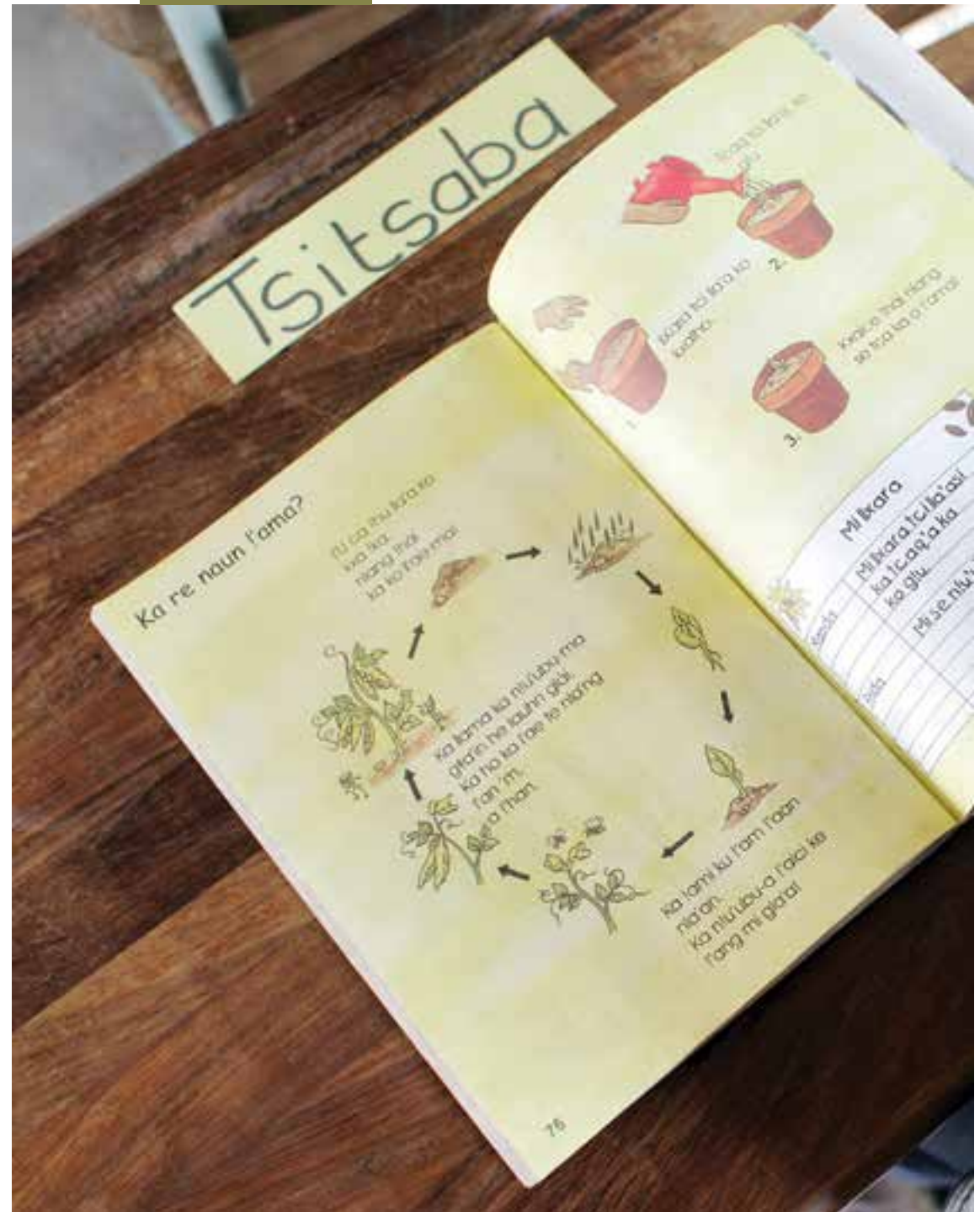
## SAVE THE SAN PROJECT

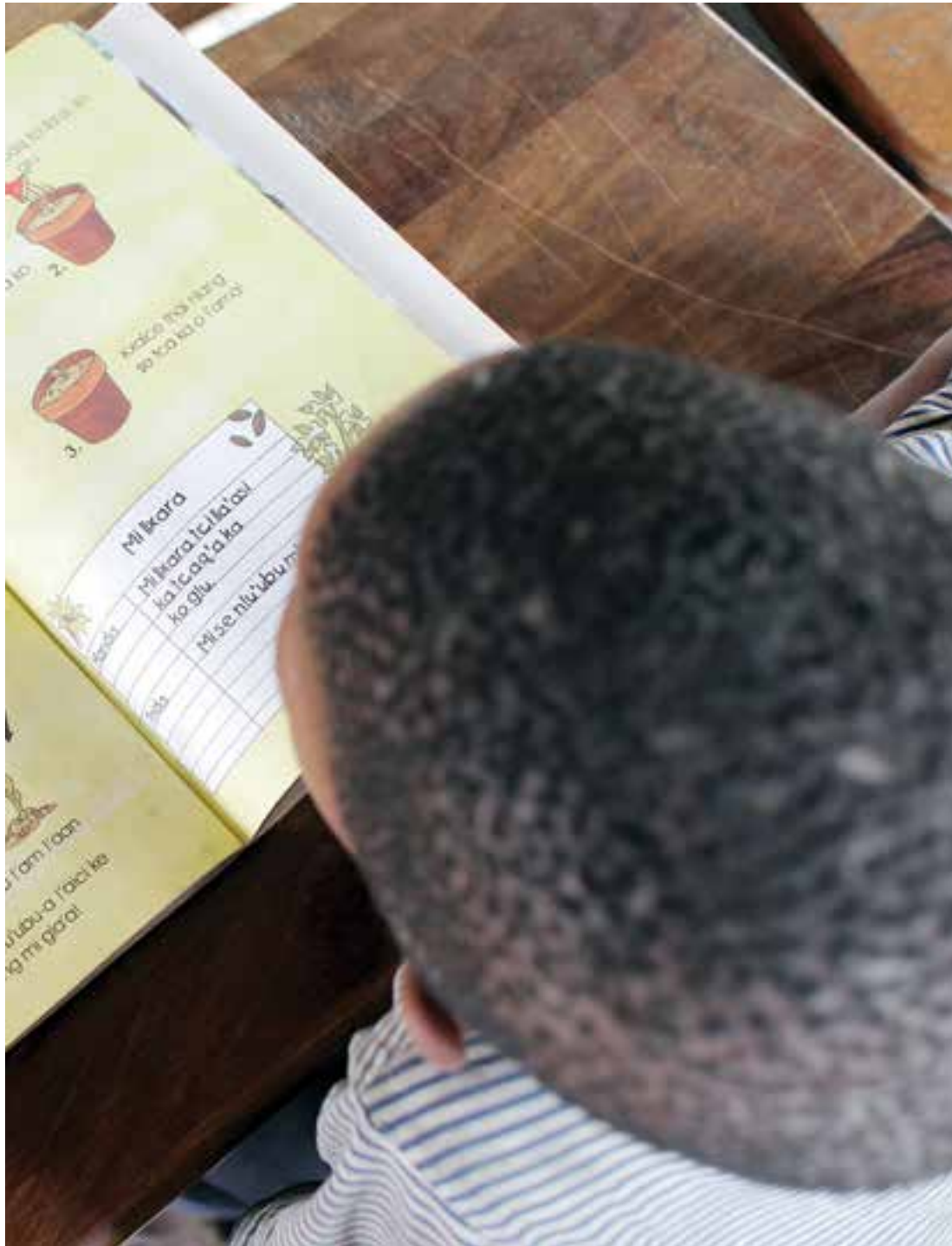
The San of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy of northeastern Namibia, called the Ju/'hoansi (or "real people"), are the last integrated community of the first nations of southern Africa. They have survived on lands which they have had an uninterrupted association with for over thirty thousand years, and on which they still retain the right to hunt and gather by traditional means.

The San have virtually disappeared as a result of encroachment of their land by other settler and tribal cultures. The Ju/'hoansi are the only community that has a protected and dedicated tract of land in the Tsumkwe area, allocated to them through the foresight of the Namibian government. They are also the only group of Bushmen whose language has been transcribed, and for which there are mother-tongue learning materials for children.

**THE JU/'HOANSI ARE THE ONLY COMMUNITY THAT HAS A PROTECTED AND DEDICATED TRACT OF LAND IN THE TSUMKWE AREA, ALLOCATED TO THEM THROUGH THE FORESIGHT OF THE NAMIBIAN GOVERNMENT. THEY ARE ALSO THE ONLY GROUP OF BUSHMEN WHOSE LANGUAGE HAS BEEN TRANSCRIBED, AND FOR WHICH THERE ARE MOTHER-TONGUE LEARNING MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN.**

The school results of the Ju/'hoan community have been consistently poor and Tsumkwe High School had one of the lowest pass rates in the country. This is owing to the fact that, as mentioned above, children are sent away to school at a very young age, with very little support, and are instructed in languages they do not understand. In addition, teaching resources are limited. These factors lead to psychological and social challenges – leaving them even more marginalized. Almost no Ju/'hoan children make it to high school and none successfully complete high school.





To address this situation, the Ju/'hoansi Development Fund was set up to raise funds to build five remote village schools over the next four years, at sites selected by the Ju/'hoan Traditional Authority and the Nyae Nyae Conservancy. These sites are in the bush, close to villages.

The schools are designed with careful consideration of cultural and environmental factors. They will have classrooms, hostels, accommodation for teachers, ablutions, solar panels, and kitchens. Vegetable gardens will be established, ensuring that the children benefit from a balanced diet.

Construction of the first school will begin in 2020<sup>33</sup>. B2Gold will support various aspects of the project, such as salaries, a project vehicle, transport for children, and the supply of other crucial equipment.

The Save the San Village Schools project has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Namibian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, who will take over the management of the schools once they are established. To date, eight Ju/'hoan teachers have been trained in their mother-tongue at the University of Namibia, thus providing a group of native-speaking teachers who will provide instruction at the schools – making education more accessible and effective for San children.

When children from these village schools complete their primary schooling, they will be able to benefit from quality education at the Tsumkwe High School (with EduVision). These two projects are expected to make a significant contribution towards quality education in what is perhaps the most marginalized area of Namibia.

<sup>33</sup> Date based on current assumptions, subject to variation due to impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.