



2021
Three2Six
Poetry
Collection

Dear friends and supporters,

We are very proud to share with you the poems that our children have written around the theme “being a refugee”.

They are powerful testimonies of the struggles faced by refugees in their host countries, as well as of their strengths and desire to just live a normal life in South Africa, and to be part of the society. The children from the Three2Six project come from very disadvantaged backgrounds and from families for whom living in South Africa is about survival. They are unable to access formal employment, have unstable sources of income, have temporary immigration documents, and face huge difficulties accessing their basic rights (e.g. to education, to work, to social protection).



We hope these poems somehow resonate with you and help you understand what their lives are like. Please note that we haven't edited these poems to keep them as real as possible.

The Three2Six project dedicates this booklet to its former teacher Gisele Ngoy Ngele who passed away earlier this year. She had joined the project in 2017 as a parent supporting learners and families in difficulty. Gisele was later on appointed as a teacher to help the children in need of remedial support, before teaching our grades 1, 3 and 4. She cared for, supported and loved every single child. May her soul Rest in Peace.

Charlotte Margerit: Advocacy, communications and stakeholder engagement officer



African child

I am an African, born with my brown skin
My shield protects me from the seen and the unseen
No matter where I go I dance to the beat of my
African drum
My heart beats faster each time I breath in the
African air.
I come alive when I see the smiles of my African people
To be African means to be strong, selfless, loving and caring.
I might be half Tanzanian and half Burundian, born in
South Africa but Africa is my home.
My parents fled because of the hardships of the war and
Economic status.
Even though I am prosecuted because of the blood that runs
Through my veins, my culture, my heritage and my pride I
Remain African
Africa is in me and I am in Africa

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Artwork: Bernice



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Look at my thick curly hair, my dark chocolate skin and the
Shape of my nose

I have to change them just to feel normal or fit in

And to be called beautiful

I am an African, I believe black is beauty and beauty is

Within

I am scared to walk on these streets wearing my cultural
Clothes because I am afraid that I will be attacked or called
Names like “foreigner”.

I am a young African girl, born and bred in the African soil

And so I refuse to be called a “foreigner” in African land.

“Mimi ni mwafrika na wewe pia” which means “I am an African and so are you”

Elizabeth, 12, Congo Brazzaville



Untitled

The few that can afford three meals a day, they are labelled the rich,
And the rest of us that have breakfast for supper, we are labelled the very poor.
It is for peace that we have been forced to leave our motherlands,
It is for freedom and harmony that we have been forced to leave our
Mother tongues
At the borders of
A stranger's land

Ivan, 22, Rwanda



I am a refugee

From a very far country,
It's not easy to be a refugee,
Without a family or parents,
In a foreign country!

I ran away from my country,
There was no more place for me,
Only a great war, and my parents no more,
My only hope was to leave!

I believed all human have rights,
But, why not refugees?

I am a refugee,
Do not take my rights away,
Do not take my home away!

Amida, 15, Angola

I am a refugee

I am a warrior, a survivor, I see no fear.
You try to erase me but I survive,
You take me away from the things I love,
You still fight me, but I won't fall,
Angels hold me!
You bring me down, but time holds you!
Together we ride,
I am with you forever.

Gloria, 14, Congo Brazzaville



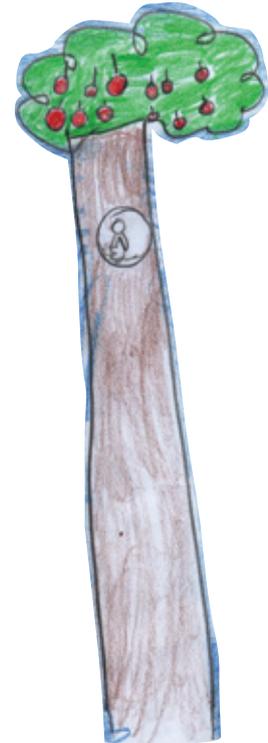
Artwork: Danton



A fight in vain

He was a great leader, father of our
Nation, liberator and patriot
Who fought for everyone to be free
But he overstayed his welcome.
He became a dictator, ruthless
And greedy leader
There was hunger and poverty
Because of him.
Those who demonstrated and
Viewed their opinion were silenced.
I couldn't stand it anymore
I took what I thought would help
Me on the way to freedom
I crossed the border for greener
Pastures and peace.
I slept in the bridges, no food,
No shelter.
The streets of South Africa became
My home.
I had no one and nowhere to go
I survived from handouts and food from dustbins
There's no place like home
I long to be in my beloved country.
Zimbabwe.

9, Zimbabwe



Untitled

I'm 9 years old but I can tell you how it feels to be a refugees. I was born in South Africa but I dont have any documents to show for it becuase my mum refugee paper was expired when she gave birth to me. There are times my mum wants me to go to the hospital but she says no I wish we could go to the hospital withot being afraid of being looked down on or being taken by the police. I dont think it's a nice feeling to be looked down on. I have decided not to feel down or to let anyone make me feell bad so I play with my toys and I make friends at school.

Siyanda, 9, Zimbabwe



Artwork: Jeremy

Artwork: Cadet, 12



I am a refugee

I am a refugee,
Struggling about everything.
Not only me,
Million of us,
In the whole world.
It's not easy,
Leaving your country,
It's not easy,
To be a refugee.

Alice, 12, Zimbabwe

Untitled

My family were labelled refugees, no one want to play with us schools refuse to admitte us because of lack of recognition of these asylum seekers permit.

My parents were unable to find employment due to non-recognition of their documents.

Thanks to 326 for giving us the oppourtunity to education and empowering our parents through different workshops.

Tamia, 9, Zimbabwe

The unknown name

A strange place called home
Can home be violent
Cause I live with those names
Which haunt me every time I close my eyes



That first word come “Foreigner”
The feeling of fear and hatred
Overcame me
The wonder of ... if I will
ever love this land
Birthed by our foremothers

This land made me hate where I
come from
For this one person who called me
Can't explain the pain inside me
Making of a promising future just faded.

I would love to be seen human
among others
I didn't choose war it came
and took everything I desired

Cecilia, 15, Democratic Republic of Congo

I am a refugee in South Africa

I enjoy my dogs, play and go to school,
I meet good and happy people,
I am a good refugee.

I don't like to be a refugee,
I want to go back home,
I will never get a job in South Africa,
We are all refugees in South Africa!

Rodin, 14, Uganda

Untitled

Barely a year ago lif looked positively rosy
My mother got a piece job and my father
A job on a construcion site a rented room
In Joburg Hillbrow and enough money
To enjoy three sqware meals a day
It all disappeared during a wave
Of xenophobia in May 2019

Mayionbgwe, 10, South Africa



My life, my struggle

I am a Congolese by descendant
Born from a warrior
Who developed cold feet in the war
Quit the army not because of being
A coward, but because of the
Fear of the unknown
Wondering around the borders
Of countries I had never known or
Heard about
Trying to find disclosure of who
I belong and where to go.
Landed in Mzansi where I
Was not welcomed
Being beaten up by a mob
And chased away like a
Stray dog
Cry my beloved country cry
The country that had turned
Into a warzone.
My heart longs for my mother
Land D.R.C

10, Democratic Republic of Congo



Artwork: Elcana, 7



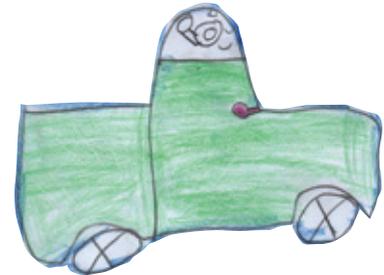
I am a refugee

I am a refugee, looking for help.
I want a relationship with citizens,
I want to live a good life.

I am a refugee, looking for life.
Like an ant looking for food,
I am hunting for a living.

Let me plant the right seed,
Let me give a taste to the food I eat,
I need to live!

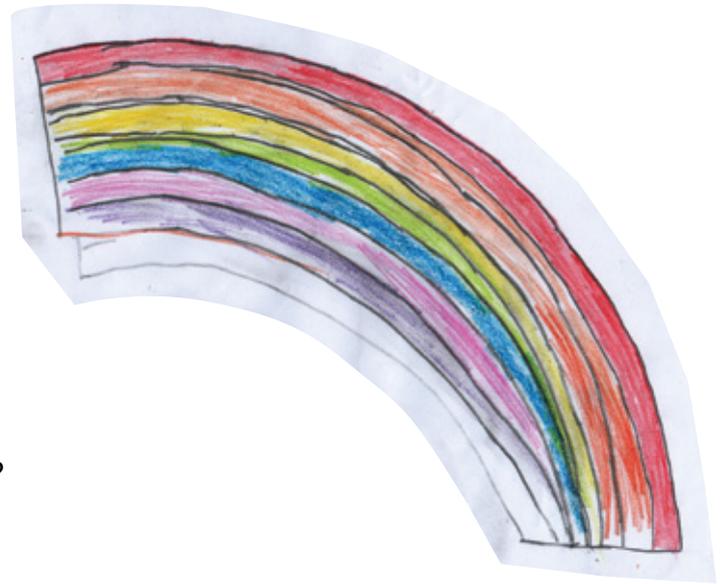
Emery, 14, Democratic Republic of Congo



Keeping my hope

Sanibonani, I, a foreign child
Suffer in a violent crowd
Parents struggle to make ends meet
Starving at the back of a car seat
Different looks for looking different
Surrounded with a lot of irrelevant
But moved to be told a lie
Xenophobia is the unreasoned fear
And would it make a better atmosphere?
Brothers and sisters of Africa
Build up one another
Africa has hope

Lily, 13, Zimbabwe





Untitled

I was born here in South Africa
My mum told me that she didnt get
a real birth certificate at the hospital
when she had me at first. I felt very
sad, and sometimes, teachers care a lot
about me and my friends. I sometimes
get confused. I ask my self, paper
that Am I really from Burundi? I have
never been to Burundi and I don't even
have any paper that shows that I'm
from there. But I don't know God has
been helping my mum and so, I'm sure
he'll continue to get food but I'm still
grateful. Thanks to Three2Six I hope
that one day my mum and I will be able
to get the real birth certificate and then
I can join the other children to attend big
schools in South Africa.

Bester, 9, Zimbabwe

Artwork: Kimona, 9

Mother's Story

We left something we never had
Darkness became our world
Walking in a tunnel towards there
Still can't get home

We strangers knowingly
From different families closely
One with all desired yet alone
And the other fights with no satisfaction
Had a brother who cared not
A sister who left a mark, unapologetic
A mother with hopes and dreams
Scares in her heart
A father not felt a stranger he had become

Drops of liquid from our eyes formed rivers
Longing to be dried by sweet warm hands
A voice from afar deep down below the
Sea shouting yet not heard left to suffer
To unleashed warriors of the night

We had eyes yet blind
Ears yet deaf
Smelt revenge at the toe of the south
And felt cold deep in side

Oh mother land
Her tears never told what she felt
Her voice never heard
Her eyes showed her sorrow
Her hair was her beauty
Her feet took her slowly keeping her alive
Nightmares never at end
Love murdered and joy taken

Eccentric memories of this ancient grudge from
Our past, cold warm blood in our veins and
Sweet seasons of death that rains our names

Beauty of acception abused by addiction of
Affection craving attention not wanting
Detention mother's old story

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The music of fame to ear, how lame of
These African drums of shame, troubled by
Frames of bubbles so humble don't blame
Shh... silence, can you hear that? Nothing
With a light that still remains freedom

Bleeding to get power, can't handle these
Falling walls losing temper extreme anger
Laughter of trouble popping these bubbles of
Nightmares for the stranger.

Flavie, 17, Democratic Republic of Congo

I am a refugee

I was forced to leave
I am a refugee
Do it today do not wait for tomorrow
I came from Zimbabwe

Buhle, 10, Zimbabwe

I am a refugee

I am a refugee, I come from far away,
They told me to be aware,
They told me I have no way but to pray.

I am a refugee, I was a prey,
All I had was taken away,
I ran to the Big City,
Johannesburg is my new home,
Please help me, I am still nowhere,

I am a refugee, I am no harm,
I am a human,
And I have come to stay.

Mercy, 10, Democratic Republic of Congo



Artwork: Jason



Untitled

I am a Zimbabwean refugee, my parents are asylum seekers and live in an abandoned warehouse, getting water from a nearby broken pipe for washing and cooking.

When we left our country for South Africa we expected protection and the opportunity to better our lives, but maybe we were better off in Zimbabwe.

Left Zimbabwe for South Africa

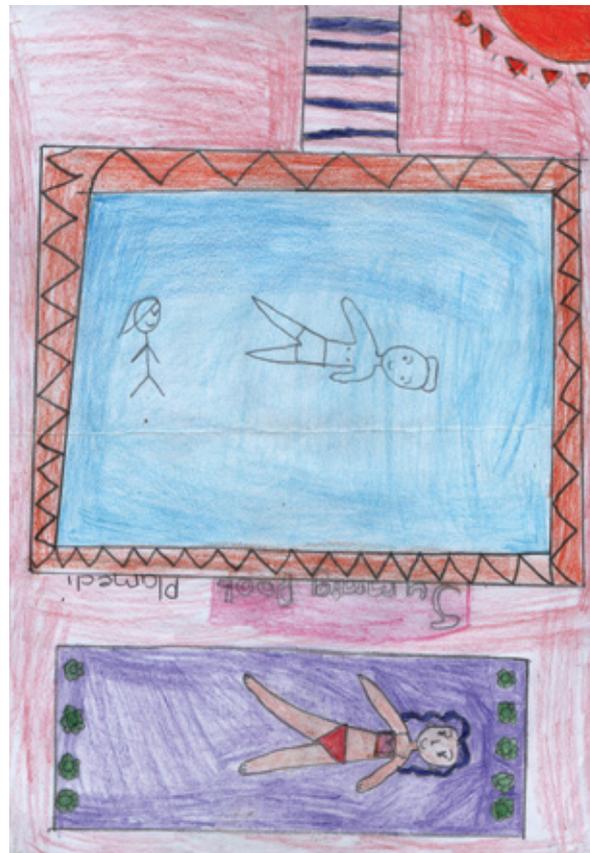
We regret our selves.

Bongani, 10, Zimbabwe

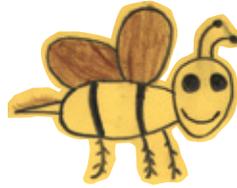
Untitled

My parents will have to force themselves to get up and search for work. I and my sibling goes to the street to beg for food. Mostly we pick from the dustbin dump before getting to know the project. Thanks to Three2Six for giving us sound education and providing for our needs.

Andisa, 8, Zimbabwe



Artwork: Plamedi, 10



I am a refugee

So many refugees around the world,
Like fish without water,
So lost and scared,
No right to do what people do,
We look for ember to kinder our life.

It's too difficult, not easy,
We are trying so hard,
To live a normal life.

Chrisnovic, 14, Democratic Republic of Congo

I am a refugee

I am a refugee, I have come in peace,
To be part of your community.
You do everything to erase me, to bring me down,
But, like resistant roots, I sprout out again.
You scare me as lions,
But I fast pass by as a cheetah.
You try to push me away, I resist as a strong rock,
I keep shining like a sun!
I am a refugee, I have come to share,
Please let me fit in.

Tshiamu, 14, Democratic Republic of Congo



Artwork: Nestor, 9

I am a refugee

I am a refugee, I am troubled.
I ran away, far away,
From the country I used to love.

I came this far, to seek refuge,
I have no peace in my mind,
When will this end?
I long to see my relatives again.

It's not easy to run away,
Far away for hunger, politics and violence!
People killed and Schools burnt to ashes!

Leonah, 15, Zimbabwe

The life of strive, the life of struggle

The struggle was real
From war to the fear of the unknown
The fear of not knowing if you coming out of there alive.
Now was the exact time to strive.

Travelling into different countries you don't even know
How would one survive

And finally I've reached a country called South Africa
The great country in Africa...

And the rest is history.

Kelsia, 13, Congo Brazzaville





Untitled

I am a refugee and I was born with a refugee father
So I am a refugee born in a refugee country
And I run away from poverty
I am a refugee girl

Chinonyerem, 9, Nigeria

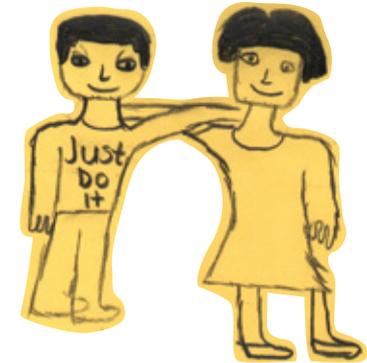
Untitled

My father struggled to get a security job and to set up a small business for my mother. It got worse when the South African started with their xenophobia crises. They destroyed my mother's goods and stopped many employees including my father – who claimed that the foreigners were stealing their jobs and livelihoods – and claimed they needed South African identity documents.

Ange, 8, Cameroon



Artwork: Mercy, 10



I am a refugee

I am a refugee, I glow in the dark,
I think with pride of where I come from.
Even as a refugee, I am full of knowledge,
I know the roots of my mother land.
I am a refugee, I am full of wisdom,
And I am proud of where I come from.

Samuel, 13, Democratic Republic of Congo



Artwork: Amida, 14

I am a refugee

I did not choose it,
No, it was not my choice!
Yet, I found myself lost in this world!

I committed no crime,
Neither did my parents,
Nor my fore parents,
In the land, where I belong.
Yet, today, I live as a stranger,
On a foreign land,
Forced to leave my mother land,
And enter the gates of a foreign land!

Please help me understand,
I am only a child,
An innocent refugee child!

Peter, 13, Burundi

Untitled

When my mum and I walk along the street and I see a Police van of police officer I immediately ask her Mama do you have your paper? ... If you dont have it you're going to be arrested. I'm happy my mum always has her paper with her. I wish that one day she can get a permanent paper so that she does not have to worry about renewing it. During the lockdown last year, her paper got expired. She usually tells the Police that she's waiting for the Home Affairs to give her a valid permit. I pray she get it. I love my mum.

Nonhlanhla, 9, Zimbabwe

Untitled

I am a refugee
I come from Congo
The first day I came in Suth Africa I
Could not even speak English

Jovannie, 11, Democratic Republic of Congo



Artwork: Mayibongwe, 10

Victim

Broken, shattered, scarred they run
They know not why they run
But they know most, death follows should they stop.
Their pasts, torture and hate
Their future, non-existent.

Their juvenile minds stained
By scenes, not even the bravest of men would survive
Bright stars light up the skies,
Bigger and brighter they become.
Shooting stars never been a symbol of death.
As they say their final prayers
In their remains are promises of a brighter future.

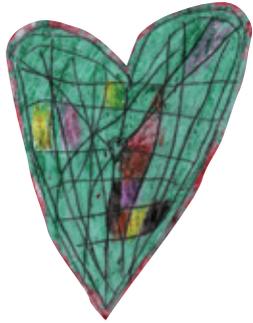
Bodies pile up,
As the innocent suffer the ultimate penalty,
It is the price they pay for being born
Their cries silenced by screams on playfields,
Oceans away.
Their Dreams of paradise have become impossible
How could they be possible?



Artwork: Nonhlanhla, 9

“Casualties of War” they are called
“Outcasts” they are believed to be,
“Myths” they are considered by the ignorant
Their stories represented in Films,
But only understood by few.
How could they be understood?
They never lived to tell the tale.

Paul, 19, Democratic Republic of Congo



I am a refugee

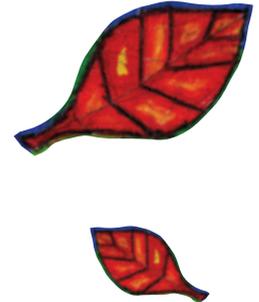
I came to ask for help,
I was threatened to be killed,
Now, I am strong!

People still hunt me down,
They chase after me,
Like after a rat,
But like a rock I stand!

I move, I flow towards my destiny,
I am a wonderful refugee,
Loveable, faithful, loyal and strong.

Help me build my future,
Near you!

Platini, 13, Democratic Republic of Congo



End note

I am always encouraged by the resilience of our children. These poems and stories provide a glimpse of the everyday obstacles encountered by the children. Refugee families have been severely impacted by lockdowns and disruption to the economy. Parents have struggled to keep money coming in and to support their families.

Yet despite this the children have continued to come to school and learn. While public schools have staggered their teaching days, we have continued with daily schooling and mitigated the impact of COVID. The teaching time lost during school shutdown was made up through teaching in the holidays.

We are proud of our teachers and children for continuing to do their best during these difficult times, and we are grateful for the support of our partners this year.

Dr Mark Potterton: Project Director



If you would like to support our activities,
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<https://three2six.co.za/donate/>

Each donation counts and helps us make a valuable change in the lives of our learners.



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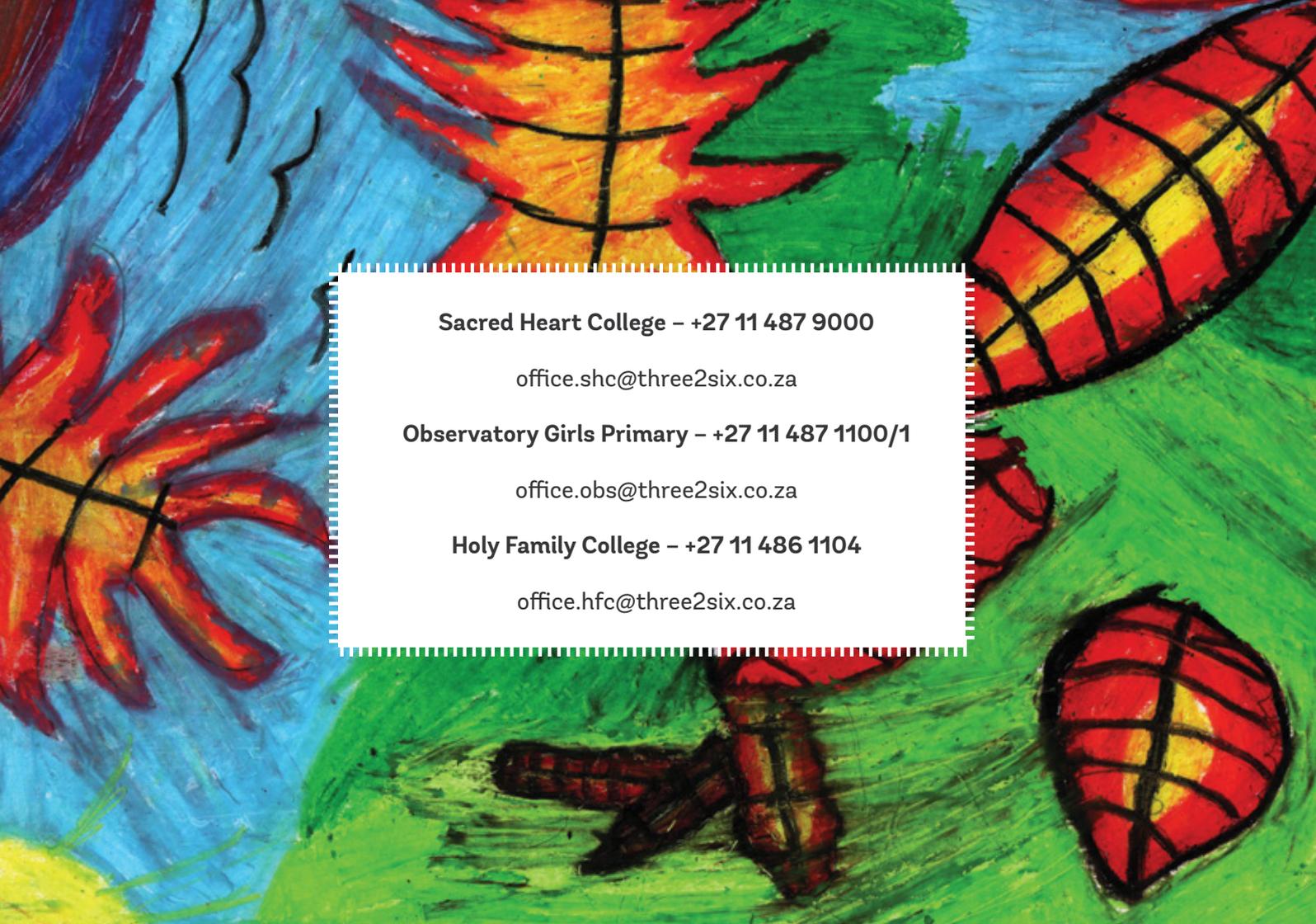
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