



SOHO

SAVING ORPHANS
THROUGH HEALTHCARE
AND OUTREACH

FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

Celebrating 15 years of Service
THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US



HOPE FOR THE HOPE SEEKERS

During this season of celebration and thanksgiving, we pause to thank YOU, our supporters who have given of your resources to help the children we serve. Child-headed households are living situations where a child is the decision-maker and where there is no identifiable extended family to take care of them. That is our target population along with vulnerable children who may be at risk although they may have a caregiver.

You have provided shelter for the homeless, surrogate parents for abandoned children, food for the malnourished, and education for girls without a chance. You have helped to teach children with no self-worth that they are valued and valuable children of God. From time to time, I want to reflect on some of their stories so that you can see the results of your generosity.

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STUDENTS ON THE FRONTLINES



Young people protest in response to lack of education and opportunities

It was only a matter of time before the peaceful, idyllic life of well-to-do Swazis would be disrupted by the thunder of human need. In the kingdom of Eswatini (formerly, Swaziland), there had been for years, groans of discontent in view of the grinding poverty of the masses and the lavish lifestyle of the Monarchy.

With a struggling economy which promised little reward of employment for the 20% students who got through High School, students were searching for a ray of hope for a life better than the dire poverty of caretakers and parents.

The tipping point may have been the truck loads of Rolls Royces purchased by King Mswati III, the Swazi monarch, for each of his fifteen wives, and the luxury vehicles for his children. In stark contrast, there was the shortage of funds to address bare necessities such as health care, food for

vulnerable children, education for poor youth, and some prospect of jobs for the future generation.

On June 20th of this year, peaceful protesters began to seek a voice in government by petitioning for the people to have a democratically chosen Prime Minister after the death of the incumbent due to Covid 19. The imprisonment of three MP's requesting political change, and with petitions rebuffed, violence escalated with the burning and looting of shops. The protest escalated to the point where the entire country was shut down. The UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the US Embassy have voiced strong support for political change. Currently, the violence has abated, but frustration simmers beneath the surface.

Children have been playing a role in this national protest that is costing them dearly. Students have been walking out of the classroom and taking to the streets or school yards in protest. Some have been shot and injured, and at least two have lost their lives. The SOHO School Principal sent a video of several preschoolers leaving the

campus, shouting political slogans, and tossing stones into the hills. The Government has responded with threats to withhold school subsidies and deny scholarships to children involved in the protest.

With almost half the population comprising youth under 20 years of age, and the largest segment of the population comprising teenaged children, their actions reflect a search for hope and a longing for opportunity. With the combined impact of the Covid 19 pandemic since 2020 and the economic crisis heightened by the political unrest, the biggest casualties are orphans and vulnerable children.

Currently, there is an increase of children begging and prostituting, as well as an increase of juvenile pregnancy even among those who have remained in their homesteads. Most abuses of girls take place where they live. Food shortage is resulting in increased malnourishment, and medical care is now more deficient with hospitals running out of resources to take care even of patients in crisis.

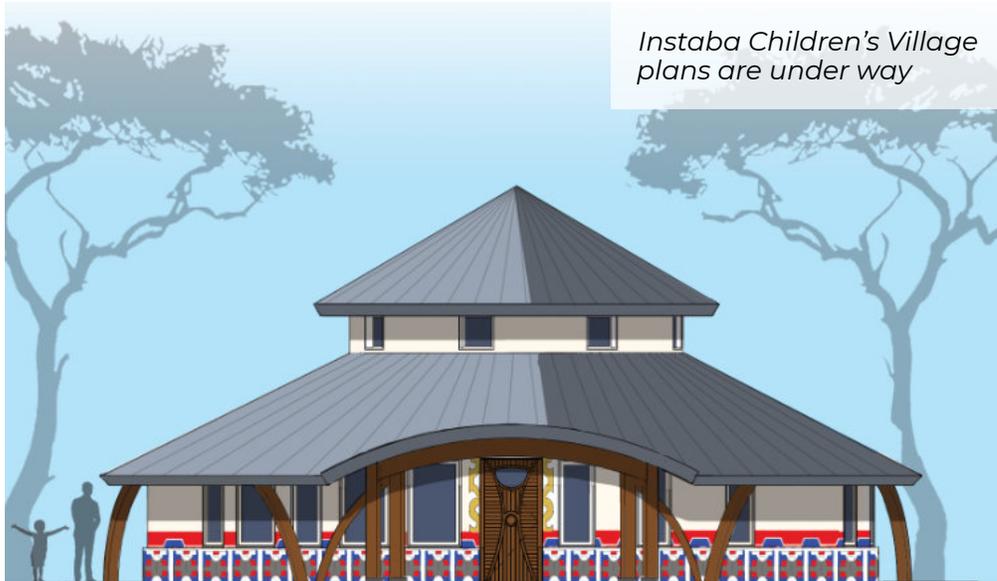
WHAT SOHO IS DOING

While our existing programs continue thanks to the leadership on the ground, we recognize that the current situation has created needs beyond the programs we have been implementing. We now have an opportunity to prepare for the humanitarian crisis we will be addressing in the foreseeable future.

For all of 2020 to the present, SOHO has been growing and distributing food from our Intsaba Farm to stricken communities to help children in crisis. Food deliveries have also been made to Marekamp and other areas where our Outreach programs are conducted. At the same time, SOHO has been working with partner universities (Andrews University, Michigan and Oakwood University, Alabama) to begin laying the foundation for what is certain to be a humanitarian crisis once Covid 19 restrictions are lifted and the unrest has settled.



Food distribution helps those in need



Intsaba Children's Village plans are under way



Families gladly receive food for their families



The children's village will be a safe place for all

Andrews University's School of Architecture has been completing drawings of the first structures to be built in the Intsaba Children's Village, including homes to create a safe, healing environment for children. They have collaborated with Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Eswatini, to ensure that designs are Swazi and not Western in influence. The Business School is working on income generating projects to help ensure sustainability and developing an Eco-block initiative to provide blocks for construction as well as skills training with a donated Dwell Earth block making machine.

Oakwood University is collaborating with Swazi professionals as they contemplate programs and structures for safe and wholesome child development. We are doing what we can to build a good foundation as we begin to raise the funds to allow us to respond effectively once the development on the ground begins.

RIPPLES IN THE POND

The experiences of Rina and Naomi, two teen girls, are like ripples in a pond. Their stories are breathing hope into the hearts of other girls that they too would have a chance to complete their high school education.

Naomi Frederick is the oldest of nine children of refugee parents from Rwanda. With no possibility of returning to her violence torn country and no support system in Eswatini, she watched her parents struggle to plant sweet potatoes to feed her and her siblings. Often the children would faint with hunger.

SOHO found a sponsor named Evangeline who paid for Naomi's school fees as she had been denied access to her classes till the debt was

settled. Food parcels are also provided monthly to supplement the family's food supply. Naomi hopes one day to work with a humanitarian organization to help children like her and her siblings.

Rina Masinga was determined to beat the odds and complete High School. When contact was lost with Carolina, the young psychologist who sponsored her, her plight was desperate. She would sit outside her class and plead for admittance. The SOHO Outreach Coordinator called night and day to see if her sponsor could be located. Finally she was, and the school fees were paid. Rina was able to successfully complete her last term this year.

Currently, although 97% of girls enroll at some time in Primary School, only 37.7% continue to High School, and beyond that, 5.5% enroll in College. One of the biggest obstacles is poverty as well as a high rate of teenage pregnancy, many resulting from sexual abuse by male relatives. One in three girls are sexually abused by age eighteen. Girls between the ages of 10 and 14 are twice as likely to contract HIV/AIDS. (The Borgen Project.)

The stories of Rina and Naomi are like ripples in a pond. We hope to continue replicating stories such as these so that a new generation can rise above their dire circumstances.



Rina



Naomi



Rina and her sponsor Carolina

"It is the responsibility of every adult...to make sure that children hear what we have learned from the lessons of life and to hear over and over that we love them and that they are not alone. If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."

Marian Wright Edelman – President, Children's Defense Fund

NEWS FROM NHLAMBENI

With Covid 19 precautions and budgetary limitations to work with, Outreach Coordinator Malvin Moyo has had to be creative to address many of the needs he encounters. Touched by the desperation of families at Marekamp, he encouraged parents from his residential community to invite their children to show compassion for those less fortunate by donating clothing to the vulnerable children at Marekamp. Parents joined their children and together an event was planned where the children sang, prayed and played together, and clothing as well as snacks were distributed to over 120 children.

As he worked with the younger children, he discovered that many of them were struggling with behavioral issues. Fights would break out frequently and communication often included violent threats or physical attacks. He began Group Counseling sessions, addressing the children patiently, providing a loving parenting role model for them. For the month of October, he conducted 20 group sessions and is gratified to see the children striving to reduce their aggressive behavior.

Once a week, on Saturdays, in a socially distanced setting, Pastor Moyo meets with the children to share Bible stories and impress upon them how beloved they are by God. For children without loving parents, this reassurance is comforting. Up to 100 children participate in this activity.



Clothing distribution



THEIR STORIES IN PRINT

I learned about these children 15 years ago on my first trip to Eswatini. I cudgeled my mind to comprehend what it felt like to see a 13 year old struggle to take care of a newborn, her own child, to have a homeless child brought to my hotel room, and a newborn foundling plopped into my arms.

The courageous, inspiring stories of some of these children are captured in the stunning photography of Josef Kissinger in the book: THE HOPE SEEKERS – Survival of southern African Child-headed Households in the Shadows of HIV/AIDS. Currently these photographs are part of an Exhibit in the gallery of Indiana Interchurch Center, 1100 West 42nd Street, Indianapolis. All the proceeds from the book that shares their stories of joy and pain and the challenge of survival, go to support the programs that improve their lives.



Staff and volunteers display Hope Seekers Book

IMPROVING THE ODDS

In Eswatini, where almost half the population is comprised of children and where 69%+ live at starvation level, below the poverty line, the odds are stacked against children, and especially girls, getting an education. Eswatini has an abundance of natural resources, a high literacy rate compared to other African countries, but one of the highest adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world at 26%.

Grinding poverty cripples the masses and education is recognized as key to poverty alleviation. Girls are particularly vulnerable as one in three experience abuse where they live. Too often the ones who help are the ones who hurt them. In the school system, Primary education is Government supported, but High School is not. With many vulnerable children getting a late start, pre-school is an essential bridge to success further on. Organizations like SOHO run pre-schools, and they are dependent on donor support to do so.

During Covid 19 shutdown, Principal Sherwin Abrahams of Hope Discovery



Celebrating their children's progress, parents gain an understanding of the value of education

Learning Center discovered how little illiterate parents value education. Children came in small groups to get a briefing and school work to do at home. Teachers and Principal visited homes and pleaded with caregivers to encourage their children to study and to turn in their work, but having a child handy to help with farm or household tasks appeared to be more appealing.

SOHO has created ceremony and celebration around pre-school graduations with artistic and athletic performance song and dance, cap and gown processing and diploma presentation for the community to see and cheer. This has impressed some with the value of education, making them more likely to send their children to school.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE

With continuous giving and reduced intake of funds due to Covid 19 impact, SOHO faces the challenge of needs way in excess of our ability to address them. We want to expand our Outreach program in the city, sponsor waiting children to attend

our pre-school once the new year begins, and we want to begin building infrastructure at the farm. The sooner we do this, the sooner we can begin to build safe homes and have a greater impact on the lives of more children.

Much depends on the success of our year-end fundraising campaign. Be part of the SOHO community. Your ideas, skills, funds, prayers matter greatly. Together we can be the 'village' that saves the children

FIGHTING POVERTY

With the Covid 19 pandemic crippling the tourism industry, Mphumelelo Similane, Manager of a crafts shop in the busy Swazi Candle marketplace, found herself seeking a new opportunity to use her skills. Trained in all aspects of crafts development and marketing, she had over the years, worked with

teams of grannies in rural areas, to train them and to employ their services to do piece work for the business she managed in town.

She was the perfect fit for the new crafts' enterprise team of Chikhu and Miriam Ngombe. Women with destitute children are being given

income generating skills. They are currently making bags, household goods and peanut butter. SOHO is seeking the required Trading License to enable the non-profit to do profit generating activity to help with sustainability.

TOUGH CHOICES

Grandmothers in Eswatini are faced with tough choices. Grow corn on their modest pieces of land or grow weed for the marijuana black market to feed children or keep them in school. The odds are stacked against Gogo 's like Grace who have as many as ten to twelve children living in her tiny hut at once. Many of her children have died and she has inherited their children. Even if conditions were ideal, the elderly poor still come up short because buyers cheat them knowing their deep need.

SOHO helps grannies such as Grace with monthly food parcels for which the Food Fund is used. Without this assistance many children become malnourished. The fund is dependent upon donations until skills training provides another option.



A HELPING HAND

The children of Marekamp live in squalor. They lack the basic necessities. Sherwin Abrahams, HDLC School Principal coordinated a clothing distribution to 155 indigent

people, many of whom are caregivers for the children. The distribution was done on the HDLC campus in Nhlambeni. Needy children from the surrounding community were served

as well. The community was also given words of encouragement by Pastor Moyo.

A TIME FOR THANKSGIVING

Every Saturday, children from the Marekamp are cleaned up and dressed, and Pastor Moyo collects them in the SOHO van to take them to a community space where they engage in singing, Bible storytelling and prayer. This is also an

environment where group counseling is done on things that would be problematic within the community. Up to 100 children participate in this outreach. It is the highlight of their week!



SCHOOL VISITATIONS

There were no school visitations during this reporting period as schools were closed due to the country's political unrest and subsequent protests and upheavals. However, the Outreach Coordinator

(OC) maintained contact with the schools and sponsored children via phone to ensure that SOHO related issues were resolved.

TOGETHER FOR THE CHILDREN

Every child deserves, a safe home, loving care, a chance to learn and grow. Help to change the future for children with little hope.

You can take action:

- *Support SOHO financially*
- *Sponsor a Child*
- *Engage your club, church, school*
- *Use your birthday or anniversary to raise funds*
- *Host a Book signing and Photo Exhibit*
- *Pray for SOHO's children*

Donate one-time or monthly:

Email: susanne@savingorphans.com

Donate securely online: saving-orphans.org

Call: **317-779-0001**

Mail: **SOHO, P.O. Box 78156, Indianapolis, IN 46278**



SOHO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization registered in the states of Indiana and Washington.



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Growing Hope • Changing the Future

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