



# SOHO

SAVING ORPHANS THROUGH HEALTHCARE AND OUTREACH

December 2023 Newsletter



*Dear Friends of SOHO,*

*As the year comes to a close, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for being a friend, supporter, donor, prayer partner, advocate. In any of the ways you have shown your interest in our work and your concern for the vulnerable children we serve, know that you are appreciated. Wishing you a new year of many blessings!*

*– The SOHO Team*



## OPEN THE VILLAGE!

In the sixteen years we have worked in Eswatini (Swaziland), we have had to learn to adjust to the twists and turns of life as we have sought to help vulnerable children find a way out of abusive and destructive situations. Finding Gogos and safe foster homes was a never-ending challenge. Traumatized children wet beds, display anger, steal and misbehave in a manner that could make housing them a challenge to untrained caregivers.

Finding title deed land seemed an impossible dream, but God had a plan! Not just for a few safe homes, but an entire village where children's lives could be transformed. Lentsaba Farm, with its mountainous beauty and healthy lifestyle emphasis, is that kind of environment. It is expected that the impact of its programs will go well beyond the boundaries of the 1082 acre farm.

With the donation of funds to build the first pod of three homes, Lentsaba Children's Village has begun to materialize. The first houses will be completed by January if all goes according to plan. Opening homes to welcome the first 16 to 24 orphans requires preparation. A security system and 24-hour security guard are necessary. Staffing including a cook, caregivers, teachers etc. need to be hired and trained in trauma informed care, so that the children will have the best opportunity to heal and succeed.

As we celebrate the joys of friends and family and embrace a new year, join us in establishing new beginnings for children in search of HOPE.



*New homes nearing completion!*

*Caregivers and orphans receive produce near Lentsaba*



*Spectacular mountain setting of Lentsaba Farm*

## SOHO STATS

- 400 orphans in the Lentsaba Farm community benefit from produce.
- 200 children at Marekamp and Nhlambeni benefit Lentsaba vegetables
- 1000 meals weekly are served to vulnerable children



## INSPIRED TO LEARN

The year-end graduation was a momentous occasion at the Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDLC). This is a venue where underprivileged children discover the joys of learning. In Marekamp, where a large number of the students reside, there are teenagers who cannot read or spell, and children who are destined to fail when they begin primary school because education was never a consideration in their lives.

Sherwin Abrahams, the General Manager, continues the tradition of inspiring the

entire community by celebrating the graduation of the preschool children and impressing upon the caregivers the value and importance of education.

This year, the inspiration extended to the girls and women who are advancing their sewing and embroidery skills at HDLC. Mphumelelo Similane, the head of the skills training program, indicates that the number of participants in her program has grown from six to seventeen and there is a waiting list. They are creating bags, home décor items, and other crafts, which are being sold to sustain the skills training program. The children's graduation gowns were also

created at the Crafts Center. Skills are critical, as they can provide potential victims with an alternative to trafficking.



## STRATEGIC PLANNING AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Last year, a leadership team from Andrews University visited Eswatini to become better acquainted with SOHO's work. Among this group was Dr. Alayne Thorpe, Dean of the College of Education and International Services, Provost for Graduate Education; Dr. Amy Rosenthal, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Judith Storfjell, former Trustee of Andrews University, who has held key positions at several universities including Loma Linda University and University of Illinois, Chicago, and Dr. Carey Carscallen, retired Dean of the School of Architecture and current COO of Lentsaba Farm and all related entities.

A three-day Strategic Planning session was held early November at Andrews University to help SOHO in its organizational development in preparation for expanded services including residential care of children. Participating were members of the initial leadership team as well as Dr. Kimberly Pichot, Dean

of the College of Professions including the Schools of Business Administration, IT and Aviation; Dr. Tom Chittick, Retired Dean of the School of Agriculture with oversight of agriculture at Lentsaba Farm, and Dr. Larry Schalk, retired CFO of Andrews University. Guests included Phillip Prime, lifelong SOHO supporter, grant writing expert, Carla Wright, and Susanne Asato, SOHO administrative assistant.

The team discussed the Mission of creating a Hope filled future for the vulnerable children in Eswatini, recognizing that the learning and living

experience will need to be trauma informed. "The children we serve will have no roots as a traditional two parent family typically has. They lack role models they can trust as well as empowerment to overcome and achieve. Despite their disadvantages, these children are eager learners and have beautiful spirits. They have tremendous potential if given HOPE and opportunity. SOHO needs to provide a stable environment which is crucial to their learning and ability to embrace a new life", stated Dr. Alayne Thorpe



Leadership team from Andrews University who visited Eswatini





Unloading blocks

## GETTING READY

Recently, several SOHO Advisors were reflecting on how far-fetched it seemed for SOHO to acquire a farm such as Lentsaba with only the deposit in hand. But God touched the hearts of donors who made the acquisition possible despite the odds.

Once again, we plan for the children by faith. Team meetings are now being held to discuss the preparatory work required before they could come to live in the homes that are being constructed for them. The infrastructure, including security, staffing, furnishings and more, have to be put in place before we could 'open' the Village.

## LENTSABA FARM

### A PLACE TO GATHER

One of the highlights of the Lentsaba Children's Village and Farm is the spectacular setting in the mountains. Carey Carscallen, COO is taking a creative approach to containing costs by re-purposing or renovating whatever structures can be used. A sheep shelter with twelve stalls will be converted to workers' accommodations. A kitchen and showers will be added to modest studio units, thereby cutting the cost of housing for staff. Not only is this typical, but the location of the farm also makes it extremely difficult, as well as costly, for key personnel not living in the community, to commute.

The farmhouse is spacious, but lacks facilities to make it workable as a gathering place for guests, volunteers and management. Toilets will be added, and the patio enclosed, so meetings,

business activities or social engagements can be conducted there. We have a campaign goal of \$250,000. The walk of faith continues. Join us in changing the future for vulnerable children.

### FARM NOTES

There has been a lot of activity on the farm lately. Summer is here and temperatures are heating up with highs of 90 degrees plus, but at night it drops to the 60s at the farm. The farmhouse is situated at 3,290' elevation. We are always thankful to feel the cooler air as we climb the mountain grades on our return.

The new water tank for the Children's Village has been installed after laborious hours of pickaxe digging to prepare the site. Sandile, the Foreman, eased the strain by using the ripper with the John Deere tractor to speed the process.

Even as the homes are being constructed, Lentsaba Farm continues to provide

produce to feed children in two nearby chiefdoms, each with over 200 orphans in need of support. Truck loads of greens and vegetables and greens are taken to the caregivers periodically benefitting over 400 children, according to reports provided by Sean Hayter, who is part of the administrative team at Lentsaba.



Royal Swazi Prince and Carey Carscallen



Sandile, the foreman, prepares the site for a water tank.



Our new water tank



# THE OUTREACH REPORT

Food insecurity continues to be a challenge for many vulnerable children in Eswatini. Many rely on the meal received at school as the only sustenance they have. The feeding program at Marekamp serves 100 to 150 children daily averaging close to 1000 meals per week. The goal is to nurture the children as well, providing life skills and spiritual nurturing so that they will develop a sense of personal worth.

Many elderly grannies find themselves the sole support to large numbers of orphans in their family. SOHO's food parcel project helps to sustain 40 children. Many of them are one step away from starvation. Funds for this humanitarian effort are donated by friends of SOHO in Australia and the US. A special "thank you" to Lorraine Hope for her dedicated effort in helping with the food parcels.

## 1. Zandile Mercy Hlophe

The Hlophe family is under the leadership of matriarch Zandile Mercy Hlophe who is looking after 7 grandchildren. The family is grateful for the food parcel that provides relief for the Gogo while she seeks ways to grow some of her food on her little parcel of land.

## 2. Gogo Grace Kunene

Grandmother Grace Kunene is the matriarch to a family of 19 children ranging from 2 to 18 years of age. She was thankful for SOHO food parcels that help to sustain the family that will otherwise have a shortage of food for the children.

## 3. Nonsindiso Fakudze

Nonsindiso Fakudze is a mother of four who is battling with health issues that prevent her from being able to work. She lives in absolute poverty and the food donation is needed to sustain the family.

## 4. Gogo Khumalo

Gogo Emelina Khumalo is a matriarch who currently has 13 children under her care. She runs a small vegetable garden, but there is not enough to feed the family. The donation of a food parcel makes a difference in the health and well-being of the children.

## 5. Make Sibongile Mthembu

Make Sibongile Mthembu has adopted three double orphans (both parents deceased) and she is struggling to feed them. SOHO provides a monthly food parcel for the family.

## 6. Sikhosana Family

Thoko Sikhosana, mother of 3, is the victim of a hit and run accident which severely injured her in 2018. Initially, she was confined to a wheelchair, but she can now walk short distances. She has lost her employment and struggles with food security for the children. She is grateful for the monthly food parcel that enables her family to survive.



Zandile Mercy Hlophe



Nonsindiso Fakudze



Gogo Khumalo



Two of the three orphans adopted by Make Sibongile Mthembu



The Sikhosana Family



## SUCCESS THROUGH SPORTS

Pastor Nathi Dlamini is faced daily with mentoring and serving children who seem to be consumed with anger and who become combative quite easily. Many of the children of Marekamp are themselves victims of abuse, and the trauma in their lives is expressed in fits of rage or violent behavior towards each other. Through a sports-based intervention program, he is working to influence change in the behavior of the children.

"Fun is the key element when working with the youth," he says. "Especially when you must address difficult topics. It also keeps children engaged." He added that children at Marekamp are at high risk of abusing drugs and alcohol, as well as teen pregnancy. Soccer is used to teach them about life and to engage them. Pastor Nathi indicated that prostitution is on the rise at Marekamp as increasing numbers of truck drivers work near the area. Girls see the older women engaging in transactional sex and they begin to consider this as a way of survival.

The SOHO Enterprise program is engaging an increasing number of women and girls. Mentoring programs are being planned for the new year as resources are provided. Pastor Nathi has also emphasized the need for trauma counseling and mental health support.

## SKILLS TRAINING

As part of the Outreach program, Mesach Hlayjwako has been teaching the children to make wooden spoons which can be sold. Girls as well as boys are participating, and the quality of their work continues to improve. Mesach assists them in selling the spoons in the Manzini marketplace. This project cuts back on time spent idly and provides a skill that can be used to generate income.

## ENTERPRISE ON THE RISE

An exploratory program that began with two sewing machines has grown into a budding enterprise industry with thirteen machines and a growing number of girls and women creating products for the Swazi marketplace and abroad. Products range from home décor, bags of varying sizes, golf tee shirts, embroidered cushion covers and aprons. Mphumelelo Similane has also trained the women to make floor polish, dishwashing soap, pine gel and fabric softener for use at Hope Discovery Learning Center.

"There are no accredited schools in Eswatini that offer the courses SOHO offers," Mphumelelo indicated. "It is our hope to continue improving our work and to participate in Trade Fairs to showcase our Arts and Crafts products." The sale of products will help to sustain girls and women who may otherwise be at risk.



Sports Outreach



Learning crafts at the enterprise center



Bottle cap artisan craft



## LEGACY OF AN ORPHAN

Meet Sizo Mamba. He is a soft-spoken young architect with a passion for orphans. That is understandable because he grew up as an orphan.

A Christian orphanage gave him shelter, food, family and a sense of purpose. Today, Sizo is the builder at Lentsaba farm, pouring his heart into the homes he is building. He knows that the homes will be the difference between a promising future

for Swazi children or a disastrous end. He is thrilled to be what he considers himself, an instrument in God's hands to give back what was generously given to him – the priceless gift of Hope.



Sizo Mamba

## MISSION TRIPS FOR 2024

Those who have taken mission trips always find them inspiring and even life changing. They make a difference in the lives of the participants as well as the population served. SOHO offers a chance to visit one of the most beautiful places in southern Africa where children have the greatest need.

SOHO is seeking mission-minded churches to partner with us and leave a lasting impact in Eswatini. Schools are invited to take on projects that would engage the children in better understanding humanitarian needs, and to explore creative ways to help meet them.

### *FEBRUARY 4-18:*

Cooking classes, community outreach, assessments of children, garden project

### *APRIL 14-28:*

Music camp, community outreach and mentoring, feeding

### *JULY 15-29:*

Health emphasis: body, mind and spirit

### *SEPT 15-29:*

Women's ministries, mentorship, building project, week of prayer

Rainbow over Lentsaba Farm





# TRAVEL & SERVE IN ESWATINI 2024 SOHO MISSIONS TRIP



Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) is a small kingdom known for its natural beauty and cultural heritage. The HIV/AIDS pandemic left over 100,000 orphans and vulnerable children who face hunger, abuse and hopelessness.



Culinary training



Health assessments



Community Outreach and  
Mentorship

**TRIP DATE: FEBRUARY 4-18, 2024**  
**CONTACT US TODAY TO BECOME PART OF THE TEAM &  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

317-779-0001

[www.saving-orphans.org](http://www.saving-orphans.org)

[kris@savingorphans.com](mailto:kris@savingorphans.com)



# YOU CAN HELP. JOIN US!

**Current operating fund: \$20,000:** Help bridge the current operational cost shortfall for Lentsaba, Nhlambeni, and Marekamp programs, along with home office administration. Your support is crucial and highly appreciated.

**Child Sponsorship:** Unlike many programs, Lentsaba Children's Village prioritizes holistic child care and fosters a loving family environment.

**Food fund: \$30 per month** We now provide over 250 meals daily!

**Co-Sponsorship:** \$38 covers food, clothing and basic care

**Full Sponsorship:** \$305 covers housing and all living expenses.

*Choose from any of the these sponsorship levels,  
To give online, visit [saving-orphans.org/donate](http://saving-orphans.org/donate)*

\$30  \$50  \$100  \$300  \$500  \$1,000

Monthly  One time

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*Let's change the future  
for children in need!*

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



# SOHO

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*Growing Hope • Changing the Future*

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