

A note from our CEO

Rays of hope

My heart overflows with thankfulness. Not because our mission of serving orphans and other vulnerable children in Eswatini is anywhere close to manageable, but because I see exciting rays of hope.

I see gogos who are caring for a dozen or more children in cramped spaces take on new life. SOHO is teaching them to plant gardens to supplement the monthly food parcels they receive from us, and they find joy in the exercise.

Entering the Marekamp slums in Sidvokodvo, you hear 150 to 180 children singing as they say grace to enjoy the hot lunch that SOHO provides daily. Pathfinder clubs (Scouting teams) are being started so children learn discipline, communication, camping and more.

Nearby in our Hope Discovery Learning Center, preschool children are learning the marvels of computer use. And an hour away, Lentsaba Children's Village & Farm prepares to accept the first wave of children.

Yet we must raise the necessary funds to furnish, staff and equip the homes that are now ready. We are inviting schools, churches, clubs and families to take on a small piece of the problem. Furnish a room or a house. Ask a friend to join you in sponsoring a child. These children will grow knowing that their home is filled with love — love from God and from the ones who care for them.

The prospect is exciting! Please join me and help us open the doors of hope to the waiting children.

Blessings,

Cynthia J. Prime



SOHO briefs

A head start — Preschool can make a big difference on a child's success in primary school. Most of the children at our Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDLC) lack caregivers at home to help them learn, so the assistance that HDLC provides becomes even more critical. Currently, our students are learning how to use computers and being introduced to art as part of their curriculum. Every new skill improves their prospects for a brighter future.

Marekamp Pathfinders — A common challenge with children from the slums is a lack of discipline. Experiencing abuse on a regular basis results in them using feet and fists as a means of communication. In response, Pastor Nathi Dlamini is developing Pathfinder clubs for Marekamp children. Similar to Boy and Girl Scouts with a spiritual emphasis, Pathfinder members are taught a variety of skills and earn honors on everything from outdoor survival and camping to science and learning Bible verses. We have 32 children in need of Pathfinder uniforms and shoes (14 are 5-9 years of age and 18 are 10 years or older). If you can help supply new or used uniforms, please contact Kris at 317-779-0001.

A hand up — Elderly caregivers in the HhoHho region receive food parcels to help them feed the large number of children left in their care. SOHO is assisting them to grow vegetables near their homesteads. At Marekamp, where young mothers who are unemployed watch longingly as the children are fed, land has now been identified where a community garden will develop. A team of women from Cape Town SDA Women's Ministries will arrive in late September with tools, seeds and seedlings to work with the community to get their gardens going. SOHO is helping them to help themselves.

New partner in Florida — While attending the recent ASI convention, Cynthia Prime spoke at The Ridge Seventh Day Adventist Church in Avon Park, Florida, and Pastor Donald Biurden invited the audience to return for an evening event. There, they learned more about SOHO's mission and were able to purchase products made by participants in SOHO's enterprise program (see page 4). Ridge Church will join the growing number of churches that are partnering with SOHO, and a mission trip is planned for 2025.

Sowing dreams, growing hope

An estimated 29% of Eswatini's population face severe levels of acute food insecurity. What's more, Eswatini also has a learning crisis with only 70% of children finishing lower secondary school and far lower rates for orphaned children. Below is a quick look at some of the families that SOHO is helping through our generous donors.



GOGO KHUNENE

Grace Khunene is the caretaker of 16 grandchildren, ranging in age from 6 months to 12 years old. These children were abandoned by their parents either because they could not afford to support them, had to seek employment or died from AIDS. Prior to SOHO's assistance, the family not only lacked food and clothing but also funds for the older children to enroll in school. With the generous support of donors, we initially provided assistance through food parcels and clothing. Eventually we were able to secure gardening tools, seeds and fencing to help the family start a garden and grow their own spinach, cabbage and onions. In addition, two of the children have been enrolled into high school, and SOHO purchased uniforms for them.



NCAMISO SIMELANE

In 2022 Ncamiso Simelane lost his father, and his mother, who is unemployed and has four other children, was unable to pay for his school fees. SOHO has been assisting with these fees, which has enabled Ncamiso to continue his education. A very bright young man, Ncamiso has achieved multiple certificates of academic excellence. What's more, even though Siswati is his birth language, Ncamiso earned the "Most Outstanding Learner in English Literature" this year, a very proud achievement. After he graduates from high school, the 16-year-old hopes to study medicine.



GOGO KHUMALO

Emelina Khumalo is the caretaker of 12 grandchildren, who range in age from 4-12 years. Most of the children are girls, and four share the same surname. Due to her scarce resources, Gogo Khumalo took the four children to their father's home and tried to get him to look after them. Yet the father abandoned the girls the very next day, leaving them at the nearest bus stop. Fortunately, Gogo Khumalo heard of their plight and collected the girls, determined to protect them against possible trafficking. SOHO has been assisting Gogo Khumalo with food parcels and paying for the education of two children who are in high school. In addition, we have donated gardening tools and seeds and repaired a fence in order for the family to grow their own food.



Changing lives through enterprise

Nomphumelelo (Phumie) Simelane grew up in an environment where resources were minimal. Yet she had a thirst for learning. Working as a nanny at a sugar cane farm, Phumie was one of several young women selected for embroidery training. She learned quickly and assumed a leadership role, teaching her peers and then helping elderly women get piece work to supplement meager incomes.

Phumie joined SOHO in 2020 where she trained girls and young women on how to sew and embroider, along with other crafts that helped generate income and free them from poverty and abuse. Since 2021 she has been leading a training program at our Hope Discovery Learning Center teaching similar trades, and the training program will soon be accredited by the Sebenta National Institute under Eswatini's Ministry of Education and Training.

Beginning with three sewing machines and 10 students, the enterprise

program now has 24 participants and more than a dozen machines. Currently, the first graduating class is poised to create commercially viable products. We also plan to convert two 40-foot containers into an enterprise center, which will breathe new life into a nearby community best known for trafficking.

The aprons, pillows, handbags, computer bags are being sold through an online marketplace created by Andrews University School of Business Administration (www.myvam.org). The

impact these products and life skills could have is profound. "If we can sell 15 items weekly from a young woman, the payment would put her in a home with a roof over her head, along with food and security she would need to change life for herself and her children," says Kim Pichot, dean of Andrews University College of Professions.

In addition to the online marketplace, the goal is to create a ministry that would enable churches and grade schools to sell these products and help raise funds.

Septic system needed at HDLC

The soil at Nhlambeni, home for our Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDLC), is mainly comprised of red clay. Due to clay deposits in two areas where soakaway pits were built as part of sewage control, unsanitary water is not soaking into the soil as it should, but rather remaining on the surface.

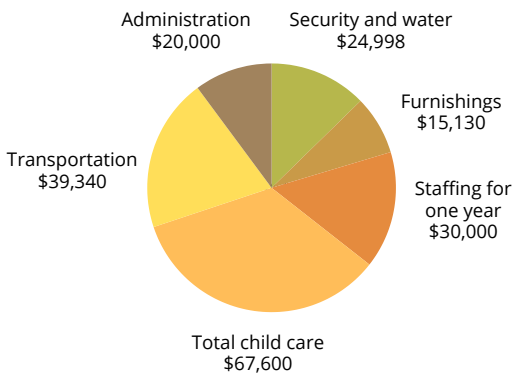
Sherwin Abrahams, HDLC general manager, needs \$1,400 to install a small septic tank and new pits. Funds are being solicited to address this urgent need.

Helps us open Lentsaba Village!

The first three houses have now been built at Lentsaba Children's Village Farm in Eswatini. This beautiful 1,065-acre mountaintop property will eventually provide homes for up to 250 orphans.

Two of the completed houses will accommodate 16 children, and the third house initially will serve as a multipurpose center. There is a waiting list of children in desperate need, but the homes still need to be furnished, staff must be hired and infrastructure put in place before we can begin to welcome children home.

We are on a fast track to raise \$197,068 for the first year's operating budget. Sponsorship funds are needed to cover all aspects of life, including child care and development, health, food,



clothing, schooling and more. (See chart for a breakdown of the budget.)

The journey to open these homes has been even more demanding because Lentsaba will likely be the first trauma-informed care facility in Eswatini. This means that all staff, from caregivers to gardeners, will be trained in trauma-informed holistic services before the children arrive.

Indeed, Lentsaba is more than housing, schooling and feeding children. It is a holistic program addressing body,

mind, and spirit, aimed at restoring broken children and healing hurting lives. This includes mental and physical well-being, as well as nurturing spiritual strength. It is our vision that these children will be equipped to be peer leaders and have a positive influence in their community and country. Together, we can open the door to a bright future for a child now without hope.

To donate online, visit our website at <https://saving-orphans.org/donate/>

SAVE THE DATE

Hope Rising! summit coming to Eswatini

In past years, SOHO has hosted several Hope Rising! events in the United States, which bring together leaders and community members to address social issues that affect vulnerable populations such as SOHO serves.

After a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic, SOHO will host its next Hope Rising! on Feb. 6-8, 2025 — the first time in Eswatini. Guests will include well-known personalities and community leaders who will discuss critical issues affecting vulnerable children. This summit will end in an interfaith celebration of prayer, praise and thanksgiving for the children who are the future of the Swazi nation.