



SOHO

SAVING ORPHANS
THROUGH HEALTHCARE
AND OUTREACH

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

A RACE AGAINST TIME

Swaziland is experiencing political unrest.

South Africa, which surrounds this tiny kingdom, is experiencing politically driven violence, looting and burning. The crisis that is resulting for orphans and vulnerable children will only intensify. Excessive food and fuel shortage, inconsistency in education, physical and emotional trauma for many is the result. SOHO is collaborating with academic and business partners to address three critical issues.

- *Sustenance – How will we feed them?*
- *Security - How can we protect their resources and their environment?*
- *Safe shelter - How can we provide loving homes free from abuse?*



Inside this issue:

- Children in Crisis
- Unrest affecting those served
- Updates on program
- How the current crisis is affecting those we serve, what we are planning and what you can do to help



CHILDREN IN CRISIS

As stores and businesses went up in smoke, some partially owned by the king, the police and military retaliated leaving an estimated 70 people dead and over 200 wounded.



Darkness has fallen over Eswatini (Swaziland). My first impression of a friendly, peaceful people in a kingdom of spectacular beauty has been consistent for close to fifteen years. The reputation of the small kingdom as a hidden gem in southern Africa with its dramatic mountainous terrain and its lush valleys, enticed, not only SOHO's many volunteer groups but thousands of tourists to experience Swazi culture and nature's beauty. While the beauty is still there, a dark blotch is seen on the landscape as Swazis struggle for equity and opportunity

With as much as 70% of the population living below the poverty line and over 100,000 orphans and vulnerable children in a country the size of New Jersey, there has been a growing discontent simmering below the surface in view of the King's extravagant lifestyle. The growing concern has erupted first into protest, then into outright violent confrontations as protesters demand that the king allow for democratic

government. Rubber bullets gave way to live ammunition resulting in the deaths of over fifty protesters.

Where it stands now, the country is running out of resources. Due to burning and looting in South Africa which supplies much of the resources needed as well as in Eswatini, gasoline is rationed. Lines are miles long with four to six hours wait. Grocery shelves are running out of stock with no idea as to when they might be restocked as the supply chain is completely disrupted. Schools are closed, not only because of the political unrest, but also because the country faces a third wave of Covid, with limited access to vaccines.

There is deep concern for the plight of vulnerable children who, in the best of times, struggled to have enough food and necessities to get by. With schools closed, the food shortage will hit the most vulnerable the hardest. Without the current economic challenges, I've seen children faint at school, only to have

the headmaster explain that it happens often. They faint for lack of food. Teachers have shared that many students have problems keeping awake and alert because of hunger pangs combined with fatigue from long walks to school.

During the 2020 Covid 19 pandemic, SOHO fed hundreds of orphans from INTSABA farm. Even though contributions were lower during this trying year, the demands for services continued. Just at the juncture when children returned to school and life seemed on the way to becoming normal, political strife and Covid combined are dealing a double blow to the country and its orphan population. That is the harsh reality.

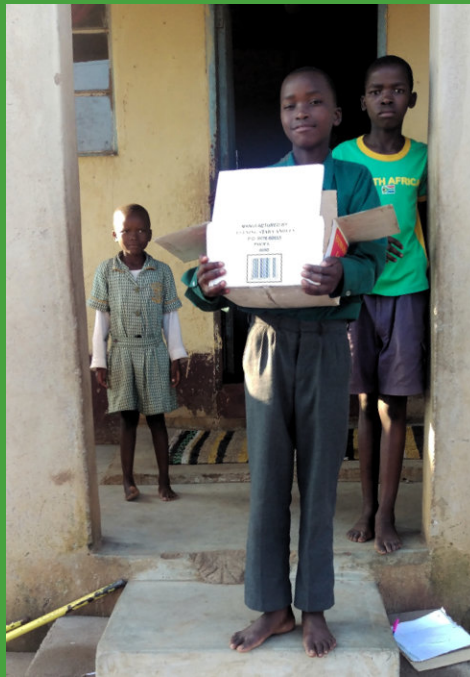
August 12 is the **UN International Youth Day**, a time to consider the value of young lives worldwide. I invite you to make this a day of Prayer for the children, especially those in child headed households. And join us as we seek to implement programs that are sure to make a difference in their lives.

KEEP THEM SAFE

Safety of orphans in Eswatini or elsewhere in southern Africa, is not defined in the same terms as in the West. Children head households because the grannies are either too tired, too overburdened, or too old and ill to care for them. The rural poor children walk miles sometimes on solitary paths to get to school. 'Uncles' who bring groceries occasionally may be predatory rather than generous. During this time, abuse is difficult to prevent especially since so much of it is shrouded in silence and fueled by dire need for necessities.

Right now, there is no escaping the fact that schools are closed, and that gatherings such as pre-schools are not allowed because of Covid, as much as safety from political strife.

SOHO has an Outreach Coordinator, Pastor Malvin Moyo, who provides counseling, mentoring and food parcels to destitute households where children are at risk. When there is a death or emotional crisis involving a student or a child, he visits the



homestead to bring encouragement and to assist as much as possible with whatever resources are available.

In the Shiselweni Region where Intsaba Farm is located, there are more child headed households than anywhere in the country. The farm sits between two chiefdoms, each with large populations of orphans in dire need. With help from Andrews

University's School of Architecture, a kitchen and multipurpose hall are being designed. A traditional 'cook house' would also allow the local women to do large scale food preparation for the children. We hope to feed the children on site, make use of teaching opportunities and return them to their communities every day. This activity will create a place of safety in which to spend a good portion of their day. This plan will necessitate a school bus for transporting the children, but it will be an initial step to creating a safe community where children could learn and grow.

Another aspect of safety is the hiring of 24 hour security for the farm. As food supply becomes more challenging, Intsaba farm could become a target for theft. The farm is completely fenced and currently benefits from two full time security guards. This staffing will need to be doubled and security posts established in at least four locations so that there would not be access on any part of the 1000+ plus acre farm.



FEEDING THE CHILDREN

With schools closed and a fuel shortage existing, providing food for the children has become challenging. The enforcement of early curfews put drivers at risk after 5:00 pm. as they wait many hours to buy fuel. Currently, food parcels are made available to accessible children.

The hope is that school would be allowed to re-open since there has been a lull in the violence. At the farm, the chiefs of the area have been asked to send women to the property to fetch supplies for the orphans because the men were pressed to support the struggle for democracy.

During this interim period, there is growing awareness that the billions of Rands lost from destruction or closure of businesses, disruption of the supply chain in South Africa and concern for looters, will mean

thousands of jobs lost in an already struggling economy. Higher food costs and the necessity to import from other neighboring sources, put adequate food supply farther out of the reach of vulnerable families.

Intsaba Farm has been producing vegetables and some fruits for the past year. Dr Tom Chittick, head of the agriculture program developing a program that will allow for rotating crops and growing food year round. We have to think of self-sufficiency if adequate food is not available for purchase. The discussion centers around planting hardy greens such as cabbage and kale that do not require refrigeration, starchy foods such as corn and potatoes, grains and vegetables such as beets, peppers and carrots.



During Covid 19, children were fed while socially distant. In the current situation, they remain at home until further notice.



SHELTER THE CHILDREN

The circumstances of orphaned children are apt to change with very little notice. Like the time SOHO staff were taken to a run-down homestead where four children were in the yard. The community member explained that the Gogo (Granny) who looked after them had recently died and the widow in charge was putting them out because they were the offspring of the wife with the least favor. She had children of her

own and had no interest in minding another woman's. There were three boys and a girl between the ages of seven and thirteen.

SOHO had no residential program to accommodate them and finding dependable foster care was challenging to say the least. The children wished to remain together but that was not to be their fate. A family in the community took the oldest boy and the little girl was sent

to a family some distance away. Whether the children were able to keep in touch was questionable, given their circumstances. SOHO provided a food parcel for them for the two weeks they were to be together before houses were found to accommodate them.

It has been at least eight years since the Founders began praying for title deed land to build safe housing, and almost two years since God answered

that prayer by providing INTSABA, a 1075+ scenic mountain farm in Eswatini. Prior to that, there was thought of building on a small plot of national land on the Hope Discovery Learning Center campus. A budget was established to do this although the space was inadequate, but by God's providence, there was a change of direction. Intsaba farm offered so much more than anyone might have expected. This pristine, scenic environment will be a haven for children, with safe homes, a school,

church, and assembly hall/gymnasium all located on one expansive site.

Building a Children's Village requires, putting in wells, building a mile long road and addressing structural challenges. Housing will cost more than the budget initially projected for homes at Nhlambeni, but these will be more suitable and more conducive to the wellbeing of the children. We are grateful to those who have expressed an interest in housing and will be providing you with updated information as plans develop.

Water, a sewer system and other infrastructure must be put into place.



A SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS SPONSORED

Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDL) in Nhlambeni began as a pre-school to accommodate children who met for food under a tree in the community. Benefactors from Australia and New Zealand designed and funded a three-room school with a kitchen and ablution unit where more than two hundred children got a head start in their education.

Just over three years ago, a representative from the Kirsh Foundation invited SOHO to consider helping children with disabilities because there were few options for their education in the country. With a grant from the Foundation, a wing with two additional classrooms was

added, and existing structures including a rondavel and a small one room cottage on the grounds, renovated.

Fifteen children with special needs currently are part of the 82 students attending, and the Principal, Sherwin Abrahams indicates that the existing facilities are very inadequate, and in some respects, unsafe. A clinic is needed, he said, or at least a space dedicated to health care. Fortunately, a small clinic has been built from a 20 ft container by Andrews University students, and as soon as the shipping is safe and funded, it will be sent with some supplies to the campus.

The Kirsh Foundation has committed to fund a school to be built on land adjacent to the existing school. Funding will cover a school building specially designed for the safety of children with disabilities, specialists to attend to health needs, teachers experienced in special education and the technology and resources for what Sherwin Abrahams calls, a first class special education facility.

This is a beautiful ray of light in a relatively dark moment in the country's history and we thank God and our benefactor for it.



LOOKING BACK AND MARCHING FORWARD

During 15 years of existence, SOHO has served over 40,000 children from various parts of Eswatini. A program that began with seeking to meet needs through distribution, mobile clinics and feeding, evolved into sustainable programs impacting communities in Eswatini where SOHO has put down roots.

Mhlosheni WP is a place where rural clinics have served an average of 250 to 300 community members each time. Currently functioning as a Care Point, in keeping with Covid 19 requirements, 34 children are served with social distance spacing and others join them for the 1160 meals served every month. Currently, groups of 15 women are being trained in craft creation and peanut butter making. Food parcels are provided to families with under nourished children, and counseling is provided to children upon request of their care givers.

The vision for Mhlosheni is to expand the population served by the Care Point when Governmental regulations and funding permit. The women learning skills are eager to establish a market place for their crafts so that they could generate income to help support their children.



15th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: *Reaching the top together*

FIFTEEN **4** FIFTEEN

You are invited to virtually climb INTSABA mountain and plan to take part in our Victory Celebration in Spring 2022. The funds raised will help provide ongoing support to the organization, so we can continue to change the future for the orphans and vulnerable children of Eswatini.

Be a FRIEND

- Give \$15 per month for one year

Be an ADVOCATE

- Invite 15 Friends to give \$15 per month for a year

Be a PARTNER

- Invite 15 Friends to become Advocates

You will be invited to participate in the dedication of INTSABA, Spring of 2022

It is as simple as asking 15 friends to donate the price of a fast-food meal or pizza once monthly for a year.

INTSABA - A Continuing Miracle

Far away from the rioting and violence in Eswatini, INTSABA has already been a beacon of light in the community. Priced at R8.5 Million, then reduced to R6.5 Million for faster sale, the farm was acquired for R5.5 Million just under \$500,000 after prayers of faith. The property was acquired free of debt, another Providential intervention. The farm of 1082 acres, with 250 acres of arable land, includes a potential 30 acre macadamia nut orchard of which 12 acres are already planted.. It may be the only farm of its kind in ESwatini which is completely fenced with galvanized fencing, making it possible to register the property as conservation area.

The farm is managed by a family of five and a team of eight workers who have grown a wide range of vegetables and greens which have been distributed to orphan families in the community. SOHO has enlisted the help of two partner universities to bring the vision of a full-service children's village to life. Andrews University's Architecture and Design School as well as the School of Business have been engaged in working on the physical development of the site. A master Plan has been provided by a graduate team of young professionals who spent time on the farm and among the children. The School of Business is working on the Business Development plan as well as enterprise opportunities to build skills and generate revenue for the Children's village.

Oakwood University is laying the groundwork to address the child development program where parenting training will equip Care Givers to rear children in a loving Christian environment. All the various Schools and Departments are prepared to make contributions in areas of their expertise. Both universities see this partnership as a long-term relationship that will bring rich and rewarding experiences to their students and much needed loving service to the orphaned children.



Tom Chittick grew up in New Brunswick, Canada with a love for the outdoors and a passion for humanitarian service. After serving seven years in Eastern Africa, he became the Dean of the School of Agriculture, Andrews University until his retirement. He has been a generous supporter of the agriculture program at Intsaba and plans to make it an asset to the children, community and to the country.

STRENGTHEN THE INFRASTRUCTURE

When donors give, most do not think in terms of the structure undergirding how the services are provided. Working with an extremely conservative budget, with the co-founders volunteering their services during the life of the organization, and with staff compensated very modestly, SOHO has kept a tight rein on opex. The organization has been blessed by a team of loyal volunteers as well as the humanitarian and spiritual

commitment of its employees to manage the company so that most of funds raised go to Eswatini to sustain our programs.

In the wake of the Covid pandemic, operational resources are low while at the same time, the needs and demands for service are at an all-time high. Please be generous in your giving as you partner with us to bless the children.

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...

- *Be a Prayer Partner*
- *Be a Financial Partner*
- *Help with our 15-4-15 Anniversary Campaign*
- *Host a Book signing and Photo Exhibit*
- *Engage your club, church, school*
- *Use your birthday or other anniversary to raise funds*

Connect with us so together we can grow seeds of Hope.

E-mail: susanne@savingorphans.com

Donate at: 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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