

A note from our CEO

Game-changing trip to Eswatini

My winter visit to Eswatini was impactful from the get-go. The jam-packed agenda included our annual Hope Rising summit, which focused on gender-based violence this year. We are grateful to our partners at the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse, who helped organize, publicize and produce this very impactful event.

A key objective of this trip was to prepare for the first children to be admitted to Lentsaba Children's Village. With that in mind, we visited Pasture Valley Farm, a Christian orphanage located less than an hour away in the Shiselweni region. There, Michelle and Peter McCubbin shared their work and best practices for serving orphans and vulnerable children.

Much time was spent meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister's Office of Social Services, getting the necessary inspections and clearances that would enable us to begin accepting children. We conducted interviews with prospective staff and prepared the homes for occupancy. The pace was hectic, and I shuffled between Lentsaba and Manzini.

I am excited to report that administrators and the initial staff for Lentsaba have been hired — and one home is almost at capacity.

We pray for God's continued guidance as we seek to mend the many broken young lives around us.

Blessings,

Cynthia J. Prime



SOHO news briefs

Welcome home! — At last, we have begun to welcome the first children to Lentsaba, and one of our two completed houses is close to capacity. Yet settling in takes time. Because of the trauma they have endured, these young souls initially meet loving hugs with suspicion. Still, we see trust beginning to bud. Among encouraging responses, one of the children told her counselor that now she is able to sleep through the night because God had chased the devil away.

Renewed focus — Lentsaba's vision has been slow to materialize as we struggled to develop both housing and agriculture programs at our 1,065-acre mountaintop property. At the recent board meeting of HOSA, the SOHO affiliate responsible for Lentsaba, it was determined to prioritize all initiatives that directly serve children. Rather than targeting external markets, farming efforts will now concentrate on crops for Lentsaba Children's Village and our feeding programs at Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDLC) and Marekamp squatter's camp. The farm will eventually provide skills training and other capacity-building programs that benefit vulnerable youth.

Expanding HDLC — This year the classrooms at HDLC are packed, which is both a wonderful growth story and a challenge. Sherwin Abrahams, HDLC's general manager, has a vision of expanding into additional classrooms and adding life skills for our preschoolers. With that in mind, we hope to organize a volunteer team to visit and help with renovations, including a rondavel used for activities that needs painting, a new roof and furnishings.

Children's Village dedication — At the close of the Hope Rising summit, 50 guests traveled to Lentsaba Children's Village to attend a prayer service and dedication. The local Shiselweni chief's spokesperson expressed his appreciation to SOHO for keeping local leaders engaged. "This shows that the village will be part of the community in every way and bring much needed support and services," he said.

Hope Rising summit is huge success

Hope Rising has been the theme of an annual event held in the United States to raise awareness for SOHO, broaden its base of support and raise funds. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, SOHO decided to resume the event and host it in Eswatini for the first time.

A joint effort of SOHO-U.S. and the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), the summit was a resounding success. Victor Masondo emceed the event with “Princess of Africa” Yvonne Chaka Chaka and human rights activist Josina Machel serving as keynote speakers. Music was provided by Gcina and Friends, popular inspirational performers in South Africa. Other special guests included SOHO adviser Gail Masondo, who helped coordinate the event and was a speaker.

The two-day event, which focused on ending gender-based violence, addressed the need for businesses, government and the community to collaborate. Highlights included:

- Presentations focused on inspiring and mentoring youth were held on the second day. More than 250 students from area high schools and primary schools participated.
- Drs. Stephen Campbell and Christopher Thompson from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, educated the audience on trauma-informed care and why its approach to serving vulnerable populations is critical to long term recovery.
- A choir of Markekamp children sang at the George Hotel where the summit was held, and later at a dedication service of Lentsaba Children’s Village. Dressed in



Clockwise from top: A choir comprised of children from Marekamp performing; students from SOHO’s enterprise program selling artisan bags; and youth from local schools listening to presentations.

uniforms prepared by HDLC’s sewing class and coached by HDLC staff, the children sang beautifully and their faces beamed with pride.

- Products from SOHO’s enterprise program, which included handbags, computer cases and other items, were on display and available for purchase. Mphumelelo Similane, who leads the SOHO enterprise program, spoke to the audience about the importance of the initiative, which enables girls and young women to support themselves rather than turn to trafficking.

- Phillip Prime, CEO of Prime Easy Learning Methods, made a presentation about “going places.” Using a car as an analogy, Prime showed how, like a well maintained vehicle that is properly directed, people can also “go places” by making wise choices. All of the children received a model car and “Going Places” booklet as a gift.

During the prayer service at Lentsaba, Gail Masondo observed: “We have talked about ‘Hope is Rising’ all along. Yet now we can change that to ‘Hope Has Risen.’”



Meet the Lentsaba team

Our new administrative team at Lentsaba is Sabelo and Thabelo Mamba, a married couple and the devoted parents of two young children.

A graduate of Helderberg College near Cape Town, Sabelo Mamba has served 10 years in leadership roles within the Eswatini Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. He has mentored other pastors and is a leader in community outreach. As a chaplain, Sabelo provides support and guidance to families in traumatic situations, and he is passionate about changing the future for children who have lived without hope.

No stranger to the hardships of rural life, Sabelo grew up as a goat and cow herder, was abandoned by his mother and raised by a distant father. “I know what it feels like to work hard,” he says. “I also know the joy that comes from serving children who have little chance

for a future.”

Thabelo Mamba, Sabelo’s wife, is a trained psychological counselor with expertise in both childhood and adult trauma as well as grief counseling. She has worked as a contractor for World Vision and is a member Eswatini Psychology Association, where she serves as vice secretary. Thabelo obtained her bachelor’s degree in psychology from Helderberg College and an honors degree in applied psychology from the University of South Africa.

At Lentsaba Children’s Village, Thabelo will provide oversight of social services, caregiver training and counseling. She will also serve as our liaison with the Department of Social Work. An enthusiastic musician, nurturer and mentor, Thabelo looks forward to working with the children of Lentsaba.

In addition to the Mambas, we have hired two wonderful caretakers.

As the new “mom” at Lentsaba, Thulisile Gamedze brings a rich history of working with children in various capacities. She has been a preschool teacher and child caregiver as well as a mentor. She possesses strong organizational skills and has served as treasurer for her church. Her passion for children is evident in both her professional and extracurricular activities.

Our new “auntie,” Tengwane Dlamini raised 13 children during her early adult years (three of her own and 10 fathered by her husband). Her compassionate, warm-hearted personality attracts children of all ages. Tengwane loves to cook and says the smiles of children are her greatest reward.

In photo from left: Thulisile Gamedze, Thabelo Mamba, Tengwane Dlamini and Sabelo Mamba.

Tackling trauma

Our holistic approach

A part from its almost palpable peacefulness and stunning natural beauty, Lenstaba Children's Village stands out by being the first in Eswatini to provide a trauma-informed care (TIC) approach to its services.

The TIC model addresses the whole person, from physical and mental health to emotional well-being and spiritual strength.

TIC shifts the focus from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

In addition to police clearance (a requirement for all staff members at Lenstaba), those who are providing services to children receive ongoing training in TIC to reduce any risk of re-traumatization. We are grateful to Dr. Stephen Campbell and Dr. Christopher Thompson, psychologists from Nova Southeastern University in Florida, for

providing us with pro bono training in TIC. These psychologists have a long history of trauma intervention in various parts of the world.

TIC is critical to the healing environment at Lentsaba because the children we are working with have lived through unthinkable occurrences.



Trauma results from any abuse, whether it is sexual, physical or emotional, and the response is crippling helplessness

and fear. Indeed, some of our newly admitted children shrink in fear when they see other children play roughly, and they are silent when adults are present. Trauma has stolen their speech and ability to have healthy social involvement.

Through a trauma-informed approach we can help them heal from the inside, ensure sustained growth and learn what true love is.



Meeting with the prime minister

During Cynthia Prime's recent trip to Eswatini, UNICEF ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka had a meeting scheduled with Eswatini's Prime Minister Russell Dlamini to discuss an initiative to end malaria. Yvonne asked if she could bring a guest, which enabled Cynthia to share SOHO's mission and the humanitarian activities of its affiliates, Seeds Of Hope Outreach and Hope Seekers Alliance.

The Prime Minister expressed particular interest in the trauma-informed care approach at Lentsaba Children's Village, noting that if the program proves effective, it could be a pilot for future efforts in the country.

JOIN US!

Help us reshape the destinies of orphans and vulnerable children in Eswatini by participating in our advocacy and fundraising efforts. There are a variety of ways you can make an impact:

- Donate online at PayPal or Give Lively.
- Send us a check at: SOHO, P.O. Box 78156, Indianapolis, IN 46278
- Leave a legacy by remembering us in your will or estate.

To learn about other giving opportunities and mission trips, visit our website at <https://saving-orphans.org>. Engage your church, women's ministries, youth ministry or family to become a game-changer. Together, we can alter the future for an entire generation of children who are literally dying for lack of hope.



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