

From our CEO

Eswatini has a population of 1.25 million, with 67% living below the poverty level. The country also has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world and a high suicide rate among its youth.

There are other challenges. It is overwhelming when you hold a little girl on your lap, knowing that before learning her ABCs, she was sexually abused. Prostitution is common for young women because they see no other alternative to poverty. Exposed to drinking as preteens, boys often become alcoholics before age 18.

As SOHO strives to change this small corner of the world, we are grateful for the support and guidance Andrews University has given over the course of our decade-plus partnership. Their assistance has aided in the development of our infrastructure, financial planning, and comprehensive programs, helping us break the cycle of poverty in Eswatini as we mentor children to embrace a can-do attitude in their learning. Instead of joining the ranks of the unemployed, these children are gaining marketable skills to find employment – and may even become employers themselves someday.

Although Eswatini may be a small kingdom, the strategies being used here to change hopelessness into hope can influence other parts of the world where Andrews faculty and students are serving. It takes this kind of partnership to be the village that saves children and solidifies their futures.

Blessings,

Cynthia J. Prime



The healing power of love

Among new residents at Lentsaba Children's Village are five-year-old twin girls and their three-year-old sister. When the trio first arrived at our mountaintop home in Eswatini, they were silent, stone-faced and rigid, their eyes mirroring fear of the world in which they had been living.

These precious children came to us after an urgent call from social services in a rural community, reporting extreme violence between their parents. Authorities determined the children should be removed for their own safety. Underscoring the gravity of the situation, a social worker arrived at Lentsaba Village well ahead of schedule with the three girls in tow. The children walked like robots, sat like statues and didn't respond to the warm hugs from our Lentsaba moms.

We were concerned that the girls' behavior might be due to a disability, but medical evaluations indicated otherwise. Their silence reflected the devastating effect trauma can have on children.

On a happier note, within just a few months of the girls arrival, there has been excellent progress. They are learning to laugh and play. Their words are fewer than the average child, but they are clearly intelligent girls.

Lentsaba Children's Village is the first organization in Eswatini to provide trauma informed care, which shifts the focus from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" This is critical because the children who come to Lentsaba are all broken in some way. Yet thanks to the support of our donors, these children's lives are being changed. Silence is now giving way to love and laughter. On their behalf, we thank you!

Will you help us open a door of hope to more children who are waiting?





Marekamp update: Transforming a

The first thing that visitors used to notice about the Marekamp slums were large heaps of rubbish littering the community. You saw half-dressed children running around without supervision and older women with hopelessness etched on their faces.

Groups of young men and teenage boys hung about, observing what was happening around them with glazed eyes. Piles of empty bottles, which had been filled with homemade marula beer, were strewn about. You did not want to be here long during the day — and never at dusk.

Yet love and hope over the past six years is starting to bear fruit at Marekamp.

SOHO's feeding program provides a hot meal for the children on a daily basis. Women receive counseling, mentoring and encouragement. We

transport children from Marekamp to the nearby Seventh-day Adventist church in Sidvokodvo for church services on the Sabbath.

Pastor Nathi Dlahmini has organized clean-up campaigns at Marekamp and engaged children and youth to invest in their environment. These events are

(for pre-K through 4th grade, and 5th through 10th grades, respectively). The goal is to get children more involved in church activities, grow closer to Jesus and increase their faith.

Sporting activities on Sundays are designed to equip the children with the lifesaving information, services

Children are the key to making positive change at this squatter's camp near Manzini.

structured as celebrations of progress, and prizes are awarded to winners of the "trash pick-up Olympics." Snacks are provided and games are organized to engage the community.

Pastor Nathi has also started Adventurer and Pathfinder programs

and mentorship they need to live healthier lives. "Fun is a key element when working with the youth," says Pastor Nathi. Such activities keep the children engaged and help them retain information, which is important when you are addressing difficult topics, he



community

adds. Children at Marekamp are at high risk for drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy and exposure to HIV and AIDS. Our sporting activities are designed to engage young people and lower these risks.

Another goal of our outreach team is to address each child's needs at his or her own level. Counselors try to spend meaningful time each week with different age groups and spot signs of abuse, neglect and other problems that might require our attention.

We also teach basic writing skills to Marekamp children who are not in school. These skills will be useful when they go for their primary school interviews.

Marekamp residents have come to know and respect SOHO. The community is beginning to change for the positive and the children there are the keys to that change.

OPENING LOCKED DOORS

Many children living in the Marekamp slums lack birth certificates, which prevents them from attending school or gaining access to services, and otherwise ostracizes them because they are considered "nobodies."

Securing birth certificates can be time-consuming and challenging, but SOHO's outreach team continues to work with government, tribal leaders and community leaders in Eswatini to secure the information that will enable us to obtain these critical documents.

This is also where our Hope Discovery Learning Center (HDLC) makes a real difference. We have been able to enroll many Marekamp children in HDLC's preschool program in spite of the absence of documents. Here, hot meals, clean uniforms and interesting learning opportunities brighten their lives.

Help us open Lentsaba preschool

Education has always been part of our vision for Lentsaba Children's Village. The need for education has become even more apparent now that we are beginning to fill the first homes with orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). Our caregivers are able to confirm what we suspected — that these children simply aren't equipped for a public preschool or primary school.

Some of our young residents function approximately two years below the expected level for their age group. The five-year-old twins, who were silent when first admitted to Lentsaba, have started to communicate with us, but they are just beginning to catch up. Being in the presence of peers in a traditional classroom setting would retraumatize the children and set them back.

It's important to understand that all of the children who become part of Lentsaba are handicapped because they haven't had the benefit of a normal home with loving parents or caregivers



and learning opportunities. Traumatized children often use school as a place to revive rather than learn, and teachers are too tasked to pay attention to those who lag behind.

With that in mind, we plan to divide our multipurpose building (shown in the photo above) is being divided into classrooms to accommodate

prekindergarten learners as well as remedial classes for children who are trying to catch up. Sabelo Mamba, Lentsaba's administrator, envisions an environment that will foster academic excellence, skills training and holistic healing so children who have been marginalized by their circumstances can begin to excel.

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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