

EMERGENCY COVID-19 UPDATE AND REQUEST FOR HELP.



April 2020

COVID-19 Update

Dear Swazi Kids Sponsor,

In these most unprecedented times, I write to you from our own social distancing regime here in Kelowna for help in aiding our sponsored children, women and families in eSwatini (Swaziland.)

I was in eSwatini again in late February, in part guiding a large group from Brentwood College. We were building a 3 room building at Emnotfweni Elementary School. The Covid-19 situation was warming up in North America as the Canadian students left to come to Africa and, as we all know, in the days that followed it heated up quite fast. We monitored the situation daily, 12 hourly and then it all was changing nearly hourly. Prime Minister Trudeau called all travelers back home, flights were suddenly changed for all 27 of us. By this point, schools had closed across North America, forcing some of the Brentwood students to return to such home destinations as: Germany, Australia, San Francisco and parts of Alberta, Ontario and BC.

We had to abort the original timing and leave Swazi a few days early, as borders were closing between Swaziland and South Africa. We all made it home safely, everyone has quarantined for 14 days and no one has reported picking up the virus in transit.

A mother with her 2 children receive their emergency response kit.





Short Gogo receives her emergency response kit.

Meanwhile back eSwatini, they also initiated a lock-down to the same degree as in Canada. Schools were and do remain closed, so feeding of our kids has stopped. Only essential services are open. A number of our working grads are now out of work. There is NO social safety net and no one coming there with food for these people. Further, when they are forced to travel, they all do so on kombi's (which are very densely packed vans run by private operators.) We also have one front line worker, Phindile (see her pic in plastic shield and mask.) Although we have another nursing student, he is not quite qualified and yet to be called into action.



Many bags of food & soap



Girls carry bags on their heads



Joe delivers to a mom with 8 kids

EMERGENCY RESPONSE KITS



Joe and I have put together an emergency response kit. It includes: 10 kg of dried beans, 10 kg rice, 10 kg ground up corn, 10 kg of a mash for breakfast porridge, 1 kg sugar, a 500 ml bottle of oil, 2 long bars of green basic detergent, 2 loaves of bread and 1+ locally made cloth face masks. The cost to put this together is \$35/family. We are making these available to all of our students' families, to our graduates, to our working young adults, for a total of 110.

In addition, for our students in tertiary education as well as grade 10 and 12, who have external-international-exams to write, we are adding a data package for access to the Internet and copies of old exams to enhance their abilities to study at home. This is an unbelievable task, to think that these kids will be able to sit exams under such circumstances, so I am anxious to help this group in any way that we can.



One of our graduates, Delisile, has also applied for special relief for a group of small children, where she lives who are in particularly dire situations.

Delisile and Joe purchasing for her village.



Crowd awaits at Emnotfweni while social distancing • Kids wearing masks in Matjana • Unloading bags of beans • Local women

As I write, there are 60 confirmed cases of Covid-19. eSwatini was quite late to record its first case, so it may be low on the curve. It is a country with an abysmal health care system, and I do mean abysmal. It possesses 9 ventilators, with only 4 of them functional at last report. If this hits the seniors, as it has here, this would be a social disaster. Recall that Swaziland was one of the countries with highest prevalence of HIV in the world, this resulted in the wiping out of a great number of young adults. Consequently, in most regions where Swazi Kids works, the households are led by a grandmother, auntie or perhaps a solo mother. Losing any of these critical caregivers would re-double the AIDS crisis, leaving a second generation without a senior person in the home.

I know in my annual newsletter, sent just a couple of months ago, that I indicated that I would not be asking twice in one year. But that was before this hit us all! I am asking for help in this crisis. Link to our website and select how many families you would like to help: www.swazikids.org.

Thank you so much at this time. Joe and I speak with our young adults and heads of families often, and they are locked in, lonely and very hungry.

Trusting you are safe and well,
Pam and Joe

Reach Out!

Our ongoing efforts to improve the lives of children in Swaziland require significant funds. If you wish to make a contribution make sure to fill out our **Ways To Help Swazi Kids 2020** form.

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Any more questions, just ask!

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