



SUMMER



2022

We're Back!

I have just recently returned from eSwatini. And what a different trip this was, as compared to last October's trip of unrest. The Swazis have endured the two years of Covid, the one year of political upheaval and now a winter of horrendous rains and perpetual flooding. But as classic Africans, so resilient, they are still in the fight!

Things in the town squares, on the roads and highways were quiet this time, so Joe and I were able to make it out to our rural schools. We inspected our recently completed exams building, attended one of Joe's signature "mentoring sessions," we checked on the Gogo shacks and on food stores. We sited a potential school library and more. We had our annual senior students' event, when we gather together as many of our tertiary students as we can muster. They socialize and Joe and I have "power meetings" with each. It's kind of like speed dating, but no dating takes place.



Some of our Tertiary Students Updates:

The lingering civil situation has rendered the postsecondary learning environment extremely difficult. It seems that there is a revolving door of school closures, student strikes or forced online learning. I think these past two years has been hardest on these young adults, who have come so far in their lives, to have their best efforts thwarted, halted, stalled, and interfered with. All of our university students report that the last year has been a virtual waste of time and energies. HOWEVER, they persist. None have dropped out, but all wait for things to smooth out.

Here are a few of our university level rock stars:



Angel is 24 years old and is in her 2nd year in IT. She comes from the same background as all of our young students, with zero financial support behind her. In these times, her resourcefulness emerged. She began and still runs a small sneaker cleaning business. She picks up, scrubs, sun-dries and delivers back shoes to clients. This is one of the most unusual business ideas that I had heard of. I admire her.



Mcolisi is our male nurse-midwife. He was making a decision last year as to whether to specialize in midwifery or psychiatry. I love his choice. He is a positive, upbeat, and lovely young man who has been with us for over a decade. He is yet to be employed, in the current climate the government is not hiring, but instead going short staffed. His day will come though. I am confident.



Sihle is another incredibly hard working young woman. She does child care to get herself through school, she is in her 3rd year of teacher's college. She is always smiling and not easily knocked off her game, she will go far!



Tabani is our first ever female civil engineer. She is cheerful and upbeat and loves the field work, where she reports that things are changing between men and women in her country, for the better. We are proud of Tabani! She begins her internship soon.



REVIEW FROM OUR PROJECT MANAGER: JOE

As you know, there is no economic back-up plan, there is no social safety net, except for some international food aid. For those of you who helped us with our emergency Covid relief, you should know that the feedback from the families was that our aid arrived much faster than the large international NGO's. Our food packages were much more comprehensive, including dried beans for protein, dried veggies, oil, sugar, salt and soap in addition to the base of maize (corn) which is the only thing many other NGO's delivered. We also had re-usable cloth face masks sewn and distributed.

Our people did not feel lost, but instead they felt seen and cared for. Critically, they felt some hope. In total, our aid has gone out to 331 families. About 250 of those are rural families, many of whom we help with school aid for their children. The balance are young adults, most with children, who had jobs in the urban areas and were abruptly unemployed.

COVID-19 UPDATE

The incidence of the illness is now very low and nor is it talked about much either. The land borders are re-opened with the neighbouring countries and overall life appears to be resuming. Vaccinations are still ongoing but the uptake has been very low. Current data shows it at about 29%. What is not reflected in my comments are the small businesses shattered from the closures and the complete loss of tourism, which is just beginning an early recovery. We are no longer supporting families in the rural areas with food packages. Their gardens are doing well and those who need food aid (World Food Program and World Vision for ex.) are able to receive that now also. However, their gratitude is still felt. I received hugs and genuine thanks in many stops along the way, for the support that our sponsors provided. So thank you to those who participated in these efforts at an extreme time!

POLITICAL SITUATION

A level of welcome calmness has evolved over the past six months. This was after a series of violent protests from last June to the end of 2021. Finally, the King agreed to dialogue in January. Expectations were high that headway could be made in the beginning of 2022. But so far, the king is a no-show on these meetings. So the momentum is now stalled and the prodemocracy groups have become less focused and scattered in their goals and objectives.

Students' unions in almost all the tertiary institutions are involved in the push for democracy and this influences the running of these schools which do try to remain open for learning. Many have had to resort to virtual learning and this has hit our young adult students very hard.

The delay in the dialogue with government, coupled with the arrest of more prodemocracy actors has stirred up pockets of protest, burning of structures and businesses linked to the King. There are also some burning of the homes of members of the police, in response to the killing of civilians during the protests in June 2021. Thus there does remain a low level of political tension. However, as a visitor, it is not difficult for me to remain clear of these issues.



How are our Elementary and Secondary Students Doing?

As best I can tell, having just been out to the schools, the carnage has been less than I would have expected. We lost a couple of teen girls to pregnancy and a couple of boys to... not sure what, but they are now absent. We have had one very unpleasant case of family sexual abuse to deal with, but we have the perpetrator now arrested. The kids have all essentially lost two years of schooling, so there is that to consider, the weight of which will be measured for years to come! We are in the midst of updating school uniforms, restocking school food larders and even trying to get one school repainted.



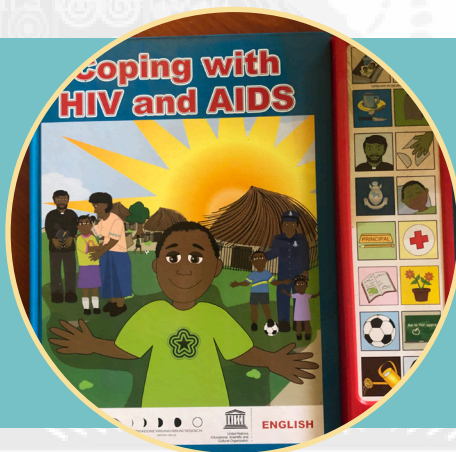
Award Winning Student

One of our really smart young men was awarded top honours this year. He finished in the top 25 students in the entire country and is a candidate for university scholarship. Congrats to Okai!

Matjana Exams Hall

We completed an exams hall at Matjana Primary which was a Covid windfall for them! The community had done such hard work to dig the foundation and lay blocks up to about knee height, then Swazi Kids was able to complete the structure for them.

[Click Here for a mini tour of the school.](#)



Matjana Library

We are working up a quotation for a school library now at Matjana. We will be looking for sponsorship and help with this project, more as it happens!



What we need help with

I admit that at times I feel as though I am done with the work. It has been 22 years, after all! Sometimes the desk work is a real drag. With borders being closed, I feel a disconnect if I can not get back to the country. But then, I rest, I recoup and most importantly, I go back. I spend time with these children and young adults. They hug me. They thank me, I mean they really thank me, from a very deep place. No one else has come along to give them a leg-up at all. Even their parents, if alive and functional, have all long since tapped out! When I see the progress they are making individually, it's unbelievable. When I see Zethu cheering on the young in our mentoring sessions. Or I visit with one of our nurses, Phindile. I see what a model parent she is, and how she is raising her gorgeous son Or I meet with 2 of our more successful young business men, Ncamiso and Ndumiso and encourage them to network and try to find employment for one of our recent civil engineering grads. This kind of stuff simply makes me joyful! We, and I do mean "we" (as in you donors), have done some amazing work down there. Truly, it still makes my eyes well and my heart swell.

When we were called home from eSwatini by our government in March of 2020, I didn't know if I would ever get back there again. A genuine concern! And I couldn't for 18 months, then I did and the reasons for the work all came flooding back. So, no, I am



not done yet. I am close to retirement age, true, but this work pays it back folks and I want to keep going. They have been through too much to abandon them now!

Thank you all so very much for reading all the way down to this point. If you would like to donate to our work, please see the needs below and the "ways to help" page for more details on how to donate.

Much love and thank you,
Pam





Any more questions, just ask!

Swazi Kids

4531 Gaspardone Rd,
Kelowna, BC, V1W 5A7
Canada

Specific areas of need:

- An elementary student is helped in various ways and \$200 per year goes a very long way, (but does not get them a new uniform)
- Our secondary students need \$500-750 per year, this is due in large part to expensive exam fees and uniforms
- A uniform for a student is about \$175, school shoes are another \$50
- To support a student in university averages about \$2,000 per year. We can choose a certain student who is studying in an area that you would be interested in supporting, they are also old enough that you could have an email type communication relationship
- We need about \$7,000 to build a new school library at Matjana



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 2022 form.

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