



NOVEMBER



2022

I was back in eSwatini this October. With the two year break during Covid, I was feeling the distance with our older tertiary students, in particular. The lockdowns and school closures of 2020-21 blended right into a consequent and ongoing period of civil unrest. Likely simplistically, I view it as being rather like their version of the Arab Spring, only with a monarchy!

The worst of the rioting and protesting was Jun-July 2021 with up to 150 young people being killed by government forces, and many of whose bodies remain missing to this day. October 2021, when I was there, saw another resurgence, with shootings on buses full of people headed to a legal protest. Road blockages were abundant. This trip in 2022, things were quieter for me, thankfully. Two policemen and one prison warden were killed during my brief period there, shot dead by their own guns. So it's far from over.



Calls for political dialogue to bring peace and stability are met with deaf ears. **The King remains a no-show.**



My perspective hasn't changed in a year. I feel as though the young people's aims and goals for a proper democracy are worthy of fighting for, even dying for. What is tough is that this tiny country has no history, no leaders in their past, no civil rights periods and no one coming to lead them. They are immature, somewhat scattered in purpose, with little guidance, it would appear, and even fewer resources with which to fight. Two of the three disruptive pro-democracy MPs remain in prison, the 3rd is exiled. One amazing journalist who seems to have insiders working for him, broadcasts from outside the country. His face and name are well known, so I suspect that he will never return to his homeland.



**Meanwhile**, if one stays out of the cities at night and listens to the news for any upcoming disruptions, life rolls on without any evidence of the above! Tourism is non-existent still, but some of the usual tradesmen are back on the jobs from South Africa and they do bring some flow to the restaurants and lodging businesses. Building within the city of Mbabane, in particular, seems to be on the increase again. I surmise that post Covid there are still and perhaps even more, people moving into the country. They must be speculating on the civil situation settling.

## Elementary & Secondary



Our students at **elementary and secondary** schools are difficult to comment on at this time. The past two years has so disruptive, so cut and paste, in/out, on/off schooling that at least on an educational and developmental level they will be drastically behind. With so few, or no, resources at home, most with illiterate or absent parents, we really can't expect much at all. There was no "zoom schooling." No dance classes being mocked-up in their living rooms (as I had in mine). For the most part, our students are still present, but are they holograms of their former selves? Is there zest for education or any improvement in their lot in life still there? Only time will tell.

Our **tertiary students**, as I have written about in previous newsletters, were also slammed. But for these older students I do see light in their eyes. They are incredibly frustrated, and they feel behind in their timing, but they were older with more miles behind them when this hit. They really do understand what Swazi Kids is offering them, as such they are trying by all means to white knuckle it and inch their ways to graduation and a better future. Very sadly, there has been a sudden increase in suicides amongst these young adults (not ours!) This is due to the incredible financial constraints on the students, particularly those with no outside support but are relying on the government.



## Tertiary Students



## Comments from the field from our project manager: Joe

### The Political situation

Eswatini is in a fairly stable state as compared to last year. Despite the ban on protests, there have been some actions labeled as delivery of petitions by public service and commercial transport operators. They have been largely peaceful and the general public are going about their normal activities without major disruptions.

However, the quest for regime change has had targeted attacks and has degenerated into killing of security force by pro-democracy groups. Some state security forces have been known to leave the force and join then fighters for democracy. There is currently tension between the soldiers, police and correction services and their superiors over their safety.

### Mentorship program

Swazi Kids' student mentorship program is ongoing with 44 high school and some older students, in upper primary school. It is not rare to have a 19 or 21 year old student still in grade 7, for example. We currently travel to the schools within the rural communities for our sessions. But we are still working on bringing kids to the city to give them urban exposure. The students participate actively and the course material appears to be lapped up and loved by all. Attendance is always very high in these sessions.



*Joe does an amazing job*  
- Pam

### COVID UPDATE

This seems finally in the rear view mirror. Eswatini was one of the very last countries to remove all travel restrictions, the borders are now fully open, as of this week. Their overall vaccination rate remained quite low, as was their mortality, but the virus has made its way throughout the communities. Amazingly nearly none of the old grannies running the show/families in the rural areas have been affected. This must be due to their already robust immune systems and their rural, outdoor lifestyles. The ones I have seen all seem fine and oh-so-ready to put down the masks and restrictions. Seen at the top of page 1, is a group of ladies working with Gone Rural who we visited Oct '22.





### Cost of living and food supplies

On the economy; the global impact of the Ukraine-Russian war is felt through huge escalation in fuel costs and thus all transportation and jumps in food prices also. Swazi Kids had to increase our stipends for our university students twice this year to meet these rises. We also made adequate food supplies available to our 2 elementary schools at a time that other agencies and government could not provide for the schools. This has helped a great deal in the attendance of the students and we hope it will impact their academic performance. Seen here is a pic of our elementary schools food storage room. We filled it back up before I left.

## On a lighter note...



### Exam hall building

The exam hall building project, at Matjana Primary, which we began this year has been successfully completed, on schedule and budget. It is also being used for community engagements, social events and other gatherings. It has really given the school a facelift. They are going to use it as their examination center in few weeks time.



### Matjana library project

We began work on the construction of the library for the school and the surrounding community. It will play the important role of supporting these rural kids' education and literacy. It's also a great asset for the entire community and will be stocked with books of interest and education for adults as well. Plans are ongoing to source the books through some literacy organizations and the rotary club. The project is 90% completed.



### Career Planning Meetings

During this most recent trip I did a repeat set of interviews with my older tertiary students. I enjoy this aspect very much, as these young adults are so close to being done that one can feel their commitment to completion. Joe and I sit together and we have constructive ideas, maybe change in focus suggestions for their next stages of study or job applications. Joe does meetings with them on communications, dress, turnout and interview skills. A friend of mine has opened an employment center in Manzini with great help and workshops on useful life-skills such as CV writing and using Excel. We will be accessing these tools also.



### Our three senior rock star students

Many of you met these three when they were here in Canada five or so years ago, for a Canadian fundraising tour. They are Zethu, Phindile and Ncamiso. We had brunch together and I asked them to bring their significant others and their children. All 3 are now parents, 2 are in committed relationships and all are very engaged in their careers. It is immensely satisfying to spend even a couple of hours with them. We all adore each other.



Any more questions, just ask!

**Swazi Kids**

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Canada

## 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.

1-250-309-2522

[swazikids@gmail.com](mailto:swazikids@gmail.com)





## Ways to Help Swazi Kids 2022

I wish to help out in the following way(s)  
Please fill in the appropriate blanks

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):

I would like to help. \_\_\_\_\_

Our secondary students need \$500-750 per year, this is due in large part to expensive exam fees and uniforms:

I would like to help \_\_\_\_\_

A uniform for a student is about \$175:

Uniform \$175 \_\_\_\_\_

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.

Donations of any amount can go here \_\_\_\_\_

Matjana Library was quite over budget, we still need about \$5,000 to complete, build shelves and stock it with books

My donation to best use, as you see fit \_\_\_\_\_

## METHODS OF DONATING

1. Using credit card or Paypal, directly from our website. If this is your method, cut and paste this URL address into your address bar on your search engine; <https://swazikids.net/donate> It will take you to our donate page, which is a self-serve method of easy payment using your credit card or Paypal
2. If sending via an e-transfer, please use email address: [swazikids@gmail.com](mailto:swazikids@gmail.com) and use password: swazikids
3. Please make donation cheques payable to Swazi Kids Society and post the cheque along with this form

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