

ESWATINI SERVICE CENTRE, THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI

A PROFILE OF OUR WORK IN 2019

THE CONTEXT

The Kingdom of Eswatini is the only remaining absolute monarchy left in Africa. Many Swazi people live in abject poverty, and food shortages are widespread. In Eswatini, sexual abuse and incest occur in the home of many families. Cultural pressure has driven many Swazi men to take on wives and children they cannot provide or care for. Challenges in policing Swazi borders have contributed to a growing child trafficking crisis. Girls are especially at risk in Eswatini, often given up for marriage as early as age 12, causing an extremely high rate of girls who have never been to school or have dropped out at an early age. This reality is not only due to cultural practice, but occurs when families are desperate for income and give their daughters away for money. The HIV/AIDS crisis continues to plague Eswatini: 16% of the population is infected, and 66% of orphaned children are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.



THE TEAM

Vusi – Coordinator
Ntombifuthi – Field Coordinator
Melody – RST support
Ian – Service Centre Support
Chris – Service Centre Support

DEVELOPING THE SERVICE CENTRE TEAM

The Eswatini Service Centre (SC) has grown in size and depth throughout 2019. The year began with field coordinator Bhekamusa leaving for another employment opportunity, resulting in a large gap in the operations. This left Vusi and Melody to shoulder the work. Thankfully, God was raising up a local lady called Ntombifuthi ('Futhi'), a Care Worker from Msengeni A Community Based Organisation (CBO). As Vusi witnessed her leadership, passion and spiritual maturity, both in the CBO and in her local church, he invited her to walk with the SC for several months, after which time she formally joined as a new field coordinator. As part of equipping her and building capacity, Futhi has spent time at the Hub this year, walking with the Hazyview SC, as well as attending the October gathering in Zambia, where she was able to understand more deeply the vision of Hands at Work. Futhi is now a fully-fledged team member who brings much energy, experience and wisdom to the team.

The Eswatini team are committed to engaging in the weekly Hands at Work rhythms, such as a bible study each Wednesday morning, and a ladies prayer meeting on Tuesdays. The team have taken it in turns to lead and facilitate bible studies under Vusi's leadership. On the week when the Care Workers do their monthly shopping, the ladies prayer meeting is moved to the storage container in town, enabling the Care Workers to also join, having a space to be encouraged spiritually by Futhi and Melody. These set-apart times have united the team, and facilitated growth and maturity. As they grow deeper in their relationships, and learn to carry each other's burdens, they can better support the CBOs in which they work.

This year the SC house has been equipped with fresh paint, electricity a fridge, six beds, and toilet doors. An international team came to paint the house, bringing great encouragement to the SC team. Amongst other benefits, these improvements have allowed people to stay in Eswatini for longer periods of time, and more comfortably, and facilitated the hosting of larger teams more effectively. Ventilation was also installed in the storage container, ensuring that the food purchased in bulk is kept fresh.

DEVELOPING LIFE CENTRES

350 CHILDREN
CARED FOR
IN 2018



350
CHILDREN
CARED FOR
IN 2019



4
COMMUNITY BASED
ORGANISATIONS



Key areas of Life Centre growth for the Eswatini SC in 2019:

Maranatha Workshop: A highlight for this year was the Maranatha Workshop which took place for Msengeni A and B communities. During this week, themes of the gospel, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation were shared. Care Workers responded in amazing ways, and seemingly impossible situations were transformed through reconciliation.

Relationship Groups: In the community of Shoka, the Care Workers have grown in their vulnerability and unity through weekly Relationship Groups, where they study the bible, share their burdens and pray together. These groups are now led by the Care Workers, with the SC playing only a supportive role. As the Care Workers receive healing, they are able in turn to bring healing to the children they care for.

Basic Facilities: A local NGO partnered with Hands at Work constructed toilets for the Shoka Care Point. The same NGO has also donated a playground which has allowed the children to develop their motor skills and engage in new levels of play.



Non-negotiables of Providing Food Security

A key focus for Hands at Work in 2019 was caring for the holistic healthcare needs amongst the children. Hands at Work recognised that due to the dysfunction in the communities, together with generational cultural norms, even fundamental principles of health and hygiene were not always being followed.

Successes in 2019:

This year, handwashing stations were implemented in each CBO in Eswatini. Shoka and Msengeni B have made a great effort to ensure that hot water is used each day for dishwashing. This has decreased the contamination and sickness levels amongst the children. A local nurse was invited to visit Shoka, Msengeni A and Msengeni B, and deworm every child. She also gave a presentation on the importance of health and sanitation, helping both children and Care Workers understand the need for regular deworming and hygiene practices.

Focus areas for 2020:

Due to Bhandeni's rural mountain-top location, it has been challenging to get a local nurse there for deworming. The SC plan to ensure that this happens in 2020. The SC team have committed to modelling proper hand washing and cleaning of toilets each time they visit, helping the Care Workers to understand the importance of simple health and hygiene. In Msengeni A and Bhandeni, toilets are not regularly kept clean. In Bhandeni, this is partially due to the fact that there are no doors on the toilets, meaning that goats frequently use them as well! There are plans for doors to be installed early next year. Food storage continues to be an issue in the CBOs, as it is currently being stored in the homes of Care Workers. Plans are being made for alternative locations next year, closer to the Care Point, ensuring easier access for Care Workers and SC.

Making it Personal in 2019

Across Hands at Work, reaching the most vulnerable children must be a deeply personal commitment for each leader. Inspiring highlights from 2019 included:

Deny our own culture: In Bhandeni, there is a strong traditional belief system, where traditional healers are frequently consulted, and many unfortunate events are blamed on witchcraft. Futhi was able to courageously deny her own culture by sitting down with Care Workers to speak God's truth into this issue, even sharing how her own family blamed her for her father's death because she refused to take him to a traditional healer. Her courage to speak into this topic is slowly starting to influence other Care Workers.

Always Follow Up: In Shoka, one of the 15-year-old girls became pregnant, and stopped coming to the Care Point due to feelings of shame. Vusi pursued her, regularly visiting her home to show love and acceptance, and encourage her to come back to the CBO. As a result of his perseverance, this girl is now back at the Care Point. Her mother is helping to care for the baby, allowing her to return to school. Vusi's actions impacted the Care Workers, who then responded in a similar way when two teenage girls dropped out of school and the Care Point, due to struggling with learning disabilities. Care Workers followed up and welcomed them to the daily Care Point, where they are now helping with food preparation and caring for the younger children.

Fighting for the Lost One: One young boy from Msengeni A was taken with his brother to South Africa to spend time with their father who lived there. His brother returned to Msengeni without him. The SC went to South Africa to track the boy down, spending hours searching for his whereabouts. Eventually they managed to find him, and took measures to ensure that he could return safely to his family in Eswatini.



ENGAGING AND EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

The Local Church: In Msengeni A, local pastor Darias has been accompanying the Care Workers on Holy Home Visits. He has been surprised to see the level of poverty in the homes of children from his own congregation. This exposure is helping him to engage and care more holistically as a pastor. Another local pastor, Mabila, has been supporting the SC with community mapping, as well as recommending church members to support the CBO. Vusi regularly meets a pastor from Shoka to share about the core values of Hands at Work, as well as to support and pray for each other in their own personal challenges.

The Church on the Hill: A pastor from the nearby town has had a vision to plant a church in Bhandeni. Every weekend he goes up the mountain to preach about Jesus, and minister with integrity in this community. He comes into direct conflict with other churches in the community, who preach a different theology and are angry when he exposes their lies. The church meets in the same building as the CBO, and several of our Care Workers attend. Vusi and his team work closely with this pastor, and support him with his church. Other members of the community are starting to leave their churches to attend, recognising the truth, love and grace of the gospel proclaimed from the pulpit.

The International Church: This year, Eswatini has hosted 8 International teams and visitors from Canada, Germany and the UK. This has been a huge blessing as these individuals come alongside the SC to walk out the vision, and bring both practical and spiritual support.
