

Newsletter No. 18 – November 2024

Despite hard times, there is plenty to celebrate



The SCT's Eswatini manager, Phindile Ndabandaba, joins in with the celebrations at Mphetseni Primary School where the SCT has provided fencing and home economics equipment.

A very successful visit this year, thanks to Phindile's fantastic organisation. We visited over 45 schools and I talked to all but one of the children on the orphan support scheme. Meeting so many of our graduates and seeing how successful they are in a range of different jobs and professions was really uplifting. For example, meeting three qualified teachers, a paramedic, a midwife, a pharmacist, a dressmaker, an accountant and three engineers.

It was my 14th trip to Eswatini, schools and my Swazi teaching colleagues remain my main focus. A particularly moving experience this year has been the return of two students to the SCT office with offers of help, as a way of showing gratitude for the support they received for their education.

I visited twelve infrastructure projects, including two school kitchens, the Zondle broiler unit and a brand new Neighbourhood Care Point at Etiyeni.

I want to thank all the generous donors to the SCT in 2024 and the wonderful team of people I am lucky enough to have round me both in the U.K. and in Eswatini.

V. McDonaugh UK Chair

Transforming Lives

Pharmacist: Zilindile Kunene



I am Zilindile Neliswa Kunene and I'd like to express my gratitude and share my journey with the SCT.

I never thought I would be under the Trust's wing right up until I received my qualification, because I had a number of unfortunate mishaps which were in breach of the Trust's Terms and Conditions. I am so grateful to them for not giving up on me.

In spite of the SCT taking care of my school fees, uniform and stationery needs from primary and high school years, I dropped out of school in the middle of my final year (Form 5) in 2018 due to pregnancy.

A year later, my wish was to go back to school to finish my studies but I couldn't afford the fees. I therefore wrote to the SCT asking them to support my request to restart my studies. Fortunately, my application was accepted and I returned to Lamawandla High where I excelled and passed with flying colours!

Zilindile's high school results paved her way to enrolment at Southern African Nazarene University (SANU) where she obtained her Diploma in Pharmacy.

My relationship with SCT did not end after Form 5. Since the Trust truly believed in me and my capabilities, they assisted me in paying for my first year's deposit at tertiary level, with the rest of the fees taken care of by a government scholarship.

Zilindile currently works as a Pharmacy Technician.

Without the SCT, I would not be where I am! Today, I have a certificate with a distinction, my head held high, all thanks to SCT who believed in me and gave me a second chance to achieve my ambition. I am so grateful God sent them to Swaziland and into my life to help me strive to be the better and independent woman I am now. I wish God will continue to give them infinite love for the destitute children and to bless them abundantly. I believe in Isaiah chapter 60 verse 22 that they came into my life at the right moment.

Zilindile was supported from 2007 when she was in Grade 4 at Ekutsimleni Primary School. She was first supported by Abigail Akbaba Gray then by Caroline Egremont.

Help us support students in tertiary education, visit our website at www.swazilandcharitabletrust.org/how-to-help/ to make a donation.

Nurse and Midwife: Bakhona Nxumalo

How Swaziland Charitable Trust came to my rescue



I'm the 9th born of 10 and thanks to the SCT, I am the only one with a high school education. My family survived by farming in an area with uncertain rainfall and by looking after our neighbour's cattle. For my first 12 years, I herded cattle. Unable to afford school but keen to learn, I attended free adult literacy classes run by Make Mahlobo, the local Health Motivator. It was she who took me to Manzana Primary School, where I begged to pay my school fees with all I had to offer: 4 chickens.

Indeed, I am the product of the trust

The head teacher, Mr Patrick Nxumalo, was touched. He took me under his wing and, along with Make Mtsetfwa, introduced me to the SCT. With my school costs assured and their guidance, I was able to race through primary school, skipping 3 years but still managing to be in the top three students and getting the nickname Gudaguda [from being a good /gud student]. In Grade 7 I graduated from primary school with a first class pass with merit.

With the Trust paying all my costs, I then became a boarder at Mhlatane High School in Piggs Peak. It's the main town in Hhohho region, 64km from home and another world. Students in the hostel were mostly from rich families and some were royalty. All I had was brains and a talent for playing soccer. I needed to have a strong backbone not to be influenced by bad company. Knowing that members of my family were sleeping on empty stomachs motivated me a lot. All I needed was an environment conducive to learning and Mhlatane High provided it. Without financial worries, I continued to do well getting top marks. I was a prefect from Form 2, I received prizes in Siswati, Agriculture, Home Economics, and Computer Science; I received a First Class pass with Merit in Form 3 and was made head boy in Form 4.

I passed my final Form 5 with credits in 6/8 subjects, a result that qualified me for a government scholarship. Without a further bridging grant from the Trust, I still wouldn't have been able to sign up for a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing Sciences, majoring in Midwifery and Community Health Nursing. I qualified as a Nurse Midwife in 2018 and have worked as a Staff Nurse at Mankayane Government Hospital to date.

After starting work, my first task was to replace the stick and mud huts at home so that my mother and siblings could all live in greater comfort. With that complete, I can now start my own journey as Bakhona. I want to travel, build my own home, and develop my community.



Prizes at Mhlatane High School, graduation in 2018, and with the Mackenzies. The late Mrs Brenda Mackenzie supported Bakhona throughout his studies.

Transforming Lives

Engineer: Nkosephayo Dlamini



My name is Nkosephayo Dlamini aged 22. When I was doing grade 6 in 2013, my life changed for the better. This was through the help of the Swaziland Charitable Trust as I got sponsorship from them.

Through their help, I did not have to worry about stationery, uniform and shoes and when I got to high school, my fees were sorted. In Eswatini, school fees are charged by the government and every student is expected to

pay. Things got even better. Because my high school was far from home, they provided me with transport money to and from school everyday. Even when there was a school trip to Durban, I got a chance to go there since the SCT provided for me.

After completing my high school, my results were not competitive enough to get me to university, so through the help of SCT, I was able to enrol at Resource College where I am studying Mechanical Engineering (N-series). It's a 3-year course which I started in 2022 and I am doing my final year now, 2024. When I finish this course, I will be able to apply for a job and work with power-producing machines such as electric generators. This was not going to be possible but through the help of SCT I've made it!

Nkosephayo went to Hhohho AME Primary School then Mhlatane High School. He was supported by the late Bill Wallace then by Vicky McDonough.

Undergraduates



Without support, it is difficult for our most able students to take advantage of Eswatini Government scholarships. Clockwise above - some of the students being supported with their tertiary education: Takazulu, year 1/5 Bsc General Science; Bandiswa, year 1/5 BSc Computer Science Education; Mzamo, year 4/5 BSc Biochemistry; Nkosinathi, Year 2/5 B Com; Siphesinhle, year 1/5 BSc Electrical Engineering; Simangele, year 4/5 BA Humanities.

Cheshire Homes of Eswatini



The Cheshire Homes of Eswatini provides comprehensive rehabilitation services. Their professional physiotherapy and occupational therapy services foster hope and facilitate greater independence for individuals with disabilities, whether caused by ill health or accidents. They are one of the local charities which receives an annual grant in recognition of their service.

Other regular recipients are Hope House, for their Manzini-based palliative care centre; SWAGAA for their wide-ranging action addressing gender-based violence and sexual abuse; the Phumelela Project for their work preventing and responding to gender-based violence, addressing drug & substance abuse, the rehabilitation of youth in conflict with the law, and assisting those with mental health issues.

Zondle: the Methodist Boys Home lives up to its name



Zondle gives a home to destitute boys. Its name roughly means 'be responsible for yourselves' and since the SCT helped build a poultry house in 2022, this has become a reality. Profits from the sale of broiler chickens help to buy food for the boys and pay staff wages.

The Trust also pays the boys' school fees in memory of Dr Ben Sibabze, SCT Director, Zondle neighbour and long-time supporter of the orphanage.

Caretaker Bongani has been managing the poultry project since its inception.

School Projects

The calm after the storm: St Joseph's Primary roofing

2021 was a difficult year for Eswatini. Just when schools were recovering from the lockdowns and severe economic hardships caused by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, political unrest, ignited by the death of a university student, forced the schools to close again. Then in November, the country was hit by a devastating storm with gale force winds and hail stones the size of golf balls. Windows were smashed in classrooms and cars. Roofs were damaged and blown away leaving school books, equipment and supplies ruined. The destruction was particularly bad at St Joseph's.



St Joseph's Primary School admin block before and after the repair of storm damage

The main rebuilding, renovation and repair were financed by the EU MicroProjects programme. The SCT then paid for the rewiring of the admin block. Primary School head teacher Ms Dlamini said, "The school expresses sincere regards to the Trust for what they have done for the school. As a school that admits children with disabilities, there are a number of challenges faced by the students, including limited vision. Now, with the new admin block having been rewired through support from the Trust, our work as teachers will be much easier, students can more easily follow lessons and charge the appliances that they use for learning."

Black Mbuluzi Nazarene Primary School: sewing machines

The teaching of practical skills is now possible at Black Mbuluzi Nazarene Primary



Sewing lessons in the consumer science lab.

School, following the purchase of 10 electrical sewing machines for the school's Consumer Science lab. The school serves central Dvokolwako, a rural area in central Eswatini on the edge of the arid low Veldt.

Students are taught how to use the machines, make clothes and even mend their own uniforms. Mr Mnisi, the Principal hopes that "the SCT's support will produce more fashion designers in the future as our learners are keen on knowing how to use the machines, both boys and girls."

Mphetseni Primary: fencing, home economics and projector



UK Chair Vicky McDonough admires the maize harvest with Mr Mathokoza Dlamini, Mphetseni Primary School's Governing Chair, and the School's Principal, Mr Humphrey Mavuso.

The SCT's involvement with the Mphetseni community dates back to the 1970s, when the Trust's predecessor, the Swaziland Settlement, established a pineapple growing scheme for Swazi farmers.

The current school's Principal, Mr. Mavuso praised the Trust for transforming the school into a safe environment for both learners and teachers. Fencing the school has improved safety, by channelling visitors through the main gate and it has made practical agriculture possible with the exclusion of cattle and goats. The Trust has also assisted in the construction of an ICT laboratory and provided chairs, sewing machines, and a projector for the Consumer Science lab.

Malamlela Primary School



Built in 1984, Malamlela Primary is a single-stream community school. Like all such schools, the Ministry of Education only provides teachers. Poor communities struggle to build suitable facilities. At Malamlela Primary, the SCT financed a staff lavatory block and, following its completion, it is now financing the renovation of the delapidated kitchen, where they cook for the 270 students.

Not the most glamorous of projects but essential for health and wellbeing, and the retention of staff. Head Teacher, Ms Khumalo shows the SCT visitors the newly built lavatories.

Long-term sponsors meet their students

By Catherine and Edward Cochrane



Matsanjeni High School girls' football team were delighted to receive a new football.

Edward and I have been sponsors of the Swaziland Charitable Trust since we were both very small children, and growing up, we looked forward immensely to the beautifully written letters from our orphans. The children we sponsored were always the same ages as us, meaning that as they became teenagers and young adults, so did we. Visiting Eswatini to meet them and see the work that we had heard about in the newsletters was something we often spoke about wanting to do, but the pandemic got in the way. Eventually our students finished school and we started sponsoring another child each, always looking forward to their letters and wanting to visit. When we worked out that our dates lined up for February 2023 when Chairman Vicky and Secretary Rob would be in Eswatini, we took the opportunity to join them.

We landed at Johannesburg and met Vicky, Rob, Phindile and Rob's daughter Gcebile. After a long drive through some of Eswatini's most awe-inspiring scenery, we were met at the other end by the wonderful Lee Howe, a long time supporter of the SCT. She was very kindly letting us stay in her lodge on the Dombeya Game Reserve. After two days acclimatising to the heat, giraffe spotting, and meeting the rest of Lee and Rowan's family, the week started proper with a 6am wakeup on Monday morning.

This was the morning that we got to meet the children that Edward and I sponsor.

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First it was Telesuku, a high school student at Lamawandla who I have been sponsoring for four years. It was fantastic to see the pride she took in her schoolwork and how grateful she was for the SCT helping her to excel in her classes. She is one of the top students in her year. It was clear that the SCT had profoundly impacted her life, and it was great to see that it was so often the girls who were coming top of the year! Telesuku was immensely grateful for the work of the

SCT, and in turn we were full of admiration for all the hardwork she was putting into her studies, clearly making the most of every opportunity she had been given.

Gcebile and Phindile were amazingly good at knowing the needs of each child. It was clear that Telesuku and all the other children that we interviewed valued the SCT. Most importantly they felt able to trust us, and knew that this was a charity which would not let them down.



After this and a visit to another primary school in the area, we went to see Milonhle, the 8 year-old girl who Edward sponsors. "Meeting her was one of the most surprising moments of my life, as here was a young girl who had endured immense hardship in her life, yet she had on her face the biggest smile I had ever seen, and once she got over her initial shyness, we had a lovely conversation; the impact she had on me was infinitely greater I'm sure than the one I left on her.

The SCT has been invaluable in providing support for her, and the charity has just started sponsoring both her younger brother and her young aunt."

The rest of the week passed in a whirlwind of early wakeups, smiling children, and visits to schools where we were often welcomed with beautiful choral performances. Vicky was often seen dancing and singing along! We were also lucky enough to meet representatives from SWAGAA (Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse) to hear about the important work they have been doing, generating change in attitudes towards gender-based violence.

The whole trip was an absolutely incredible experience and one that we will both remember for the rest of our lives. The trip would not have been possible without Rob and Phindile's organisational skills, the hard work of Gcebile in interviewing all the children, and of course Vicky, whose love for Swaziland and the children the SCT supports is infectious! Edward and I have returned home and continue to spread the word about the great work the SCT and SWAGAA are doing, in the hope that more children like Telesuku and Milonhle can receive the support they so clearly deserve.

Running for Eswatini in the 2024 Royal Parks Half Marathon



On the 13th of October, a group of 30 dedicated runners, proudly representing the Swaziland Charitable Trust, took to the streets of London for the prestigious Royal Parks Half Marathon. Starting and finishing in the iconic Hyde Park, this event provided a scenic route through some of the capital's most beautiful green spaces. Each runner had pledged to raise funds in support of the Trust's ongoing projects, turning their steps into a powerful statement of solidarity and action.

Despite the crisp chill of a Sunday morning, our team arrived full of enthusiasm, donning custom-made Swaziland T-shirts, specially crafted and imported from Eswatini. Fuelled by determination and a passion for the cause, they tackled the 13.1-mile course with energy and heart. Collectively, the team raised an incredible £17,724. This will go directly towards supporting orphaned and vulnerable students as they pursue tertiary education. These young individuals have been supported by the Trust throughout their schooling, and we are thrilled to be able to continue backing them as they embark on the next important phase of their lives.

A special mention goes to James St John Davis, who spearheaded the fundraising efforts, raising a remarkable £4,500! His commitment and dedication were truly inspiring, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to James for his wonderful contribution.

We are excited to announce plans to make this race an annual event, and we warmly invite anyone interested in joining us next year to get involved. Together, we can continue making a difference, one step at a time.

Organised by Jonathan Gilbert, the SCT's newest trustee.

Trustee: Jonathan Gilbert



Jonathan was raised on a pineapple farm in Swaziland and attended school in Natal before pursuing his university education at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He spent seven years working in Johannesburg for software and tech specific organisations, before moving to London. Currently, Jonathan works in sales for a large tech firm, where he applies his expertise in international markets and technology solutions. His primary role for the Swaziland Charitable Trust is fundraising and PR, with the aim of contributing to sustainable development and positive change in his home country.

In memory of author Laura Fish



When author and academic Laura Fish died unexpectedly in October, her partner Michael Wild chose the SCT to channel tributes from family, friends and colleagues to a cause that was close to her heart. Laura was in Eswatini in the '90s during the AIDS epidemic and saw the impact it had upon women and families. Laura was deeply affected by her experiences and these inspired her latest novel, *Lying Perfectly Still*, described as a 'powerful and beautiful story told with empathy and respect'. She

died only a fortnight before its publication. Over £3,000 has been raised to support the education and well-being of children in Eswatini.

What goes around, comes around



The SCT paid the salary of an IVS volunteer, Susie Miles, to set up Speech and Hearing clinic services across Swaziland from 1985-87. Susie taught deaf children at Siteki School for the Deaf 1983-85 and was invited by the Ministry of Health and the Swaziland Society for the Disabled to respond to the needs of deaf children and adults in their homes and communities. Now a Professor at the University of Manchester, Susie raised over £485 for the Trust at Edinburgh's Free Fringe by sharing her heartwarming and sometimes disturbing stories from her experience of living and working in Siteki and Mbabane.

The SCT is still a regular supporter of Siteki School for the Deaf.

Trust News

Eswatini staff: Phindile & Slindele



Phindile Ndabandaba (Manager) - Since starting in 2011, Phindile (on right) has maintained support for projects, while building up the student support programme. More than just a manager, she offers social support and care to over 150 students. She knows them all personally, is on call to deal with their problems and is still in contact with students who left the scheme years ago. She has built up a veritable Charitable Trust

family. Her big heart and dedication are an inspiration.

Slindele Nkosi (Assistant Manager) - Since 2021, Slindele Nkosi has helped Phindile with her massive workload, concentrating on administration and record keeping. Her PR skills have also been invaluable, allowing newsletters to be produced annually.

Rowan H H Howe RIP

It was with great sorrow that we heard the news of Rowan Howe's death on July 15th. He had led the local board with skill and dedication for so long, his wisdom and support will be much missed by us all...in the U.K. and in Eswatini.

Senator Rowan Howe was an Eswatini board member from 1971 to 2023. During his 1986 – 2015 chairmanship, he oversaw the transformation of the post-colonial Swaziland Settlement into the Swaziland Charitable Trust, the vibrant charity it is today.

Rowan and Lee Howe.



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