

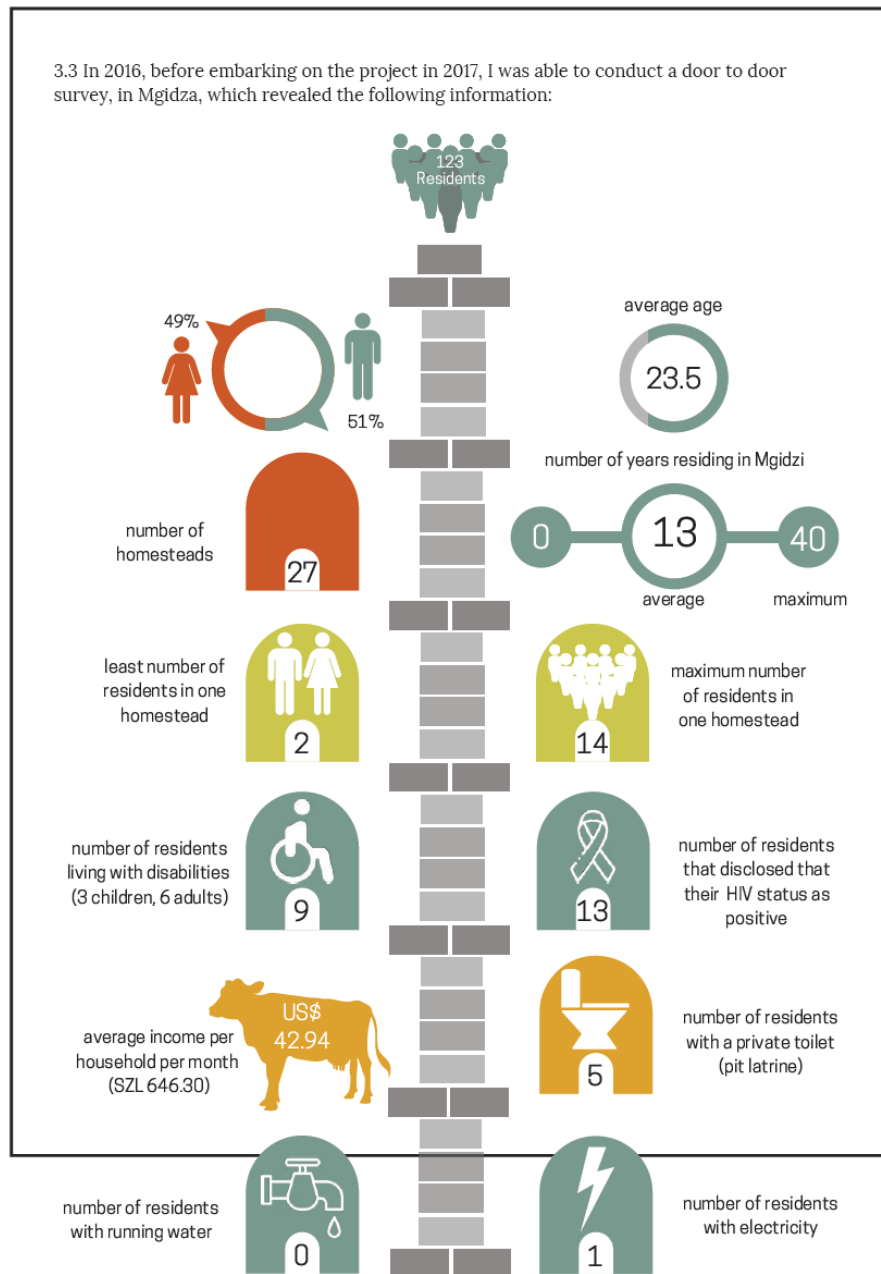


COVID-19 Relief For Vuvulane, Report
07. May 2020 – 15. June 2020



PROFILE - Vuvulane OVC Outreach Foundation (VOVCOF) is a community based and legally registered non-profit organization in Vuvulane, Lubombo Swaziland. Its founders, the Msweli family, live and work in Vuvulane. Vuvulane is an area with a high rate of poverty. The NPO has a core focus on caring for the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children in Vuvulane, by providing adequate health/nutrition/sanitation/safe housing.

BACKGROUND - Vuvulane has five areas (Mgidza, Khomba, Macethuka, Section 19 & VIF) which are informal settlements. Each area has an average of 130 residents (equating to an average of 30-50 households). That results in 150-250 households that are in need of food relief. The diagram below shows a detailed survey carried out by Khulekani Msweli in Mgidza (area with extreme poverty).



(Msweli,2020) Page 8. Vuvulane Orphans & Vulnerable Children's Outreach Foundation, 2020 Report.

All the residents of this area are mostly farm workers, in desperate need of food relief.

Our Mhlume Inkhundla Bucopho official, Bibo Shabangu (76128036), mentioned that, with regards to Vuvulane residents' assistance, the Government of Eswatini will only be offering cash incentives, via Mobile Money, to registered pensioners, the disabled and those who prove that they have lost their jobs during COVID-19. Yes, a majority of the Vuvulane farmers are pensioners but that means the residents of the informal sector, who are farm workers and young in age, will be left without any assistance yet they are in extreme need of food and contribute immensely to the food production of Eswatini.

There are 269 officially registered farmers in Vuvulane.

100 farmers were contacted, for COVID-19 relief assistance, 29 offered responses to the attached survey questionnaire. For the purpose of convening farmers to a meeting or distribution point, the head of the Vuvulane Bandlancane, Prince Mpisi Dlamini can be contacted on 76067316, or the Mhlume Inkhundla Bucopho, Bibo Shabangu 76128036.

The recurring needs are as follows:

1. Food
2. Money
3. Fertiliser
4. Tractor ploughing
5. Seeds
6. Seedlings

Unfortunately, up to now, there has been no food aid assistance to the official Vuvulane farmers nor the to the farm labourers, despite their details being recorded by individuals who said they were tasked by the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) to do so.

The media clipping shown below narrates the story of a malnourished child who was handed over to the Sidvokodvo orphanage on the 9th of June 2020. Upon further investigation, it came to our attention that the child is from Vuvulane. On the 16th of June 2020, Khulekani Msweli (organization's board secretary) met with the Mhlume Inkhundla (Vuvulane's official inkhundla) social worker, based in Mhlume, to get further clarity with regards to the current social cases that she has had to deal with during the Covid-19 period. The findings were very grim (a report from the social worker will be presented to us soon, together with police and the Vuvulane Rural Clinic statistics) as the social worker narrated that the malnourished child, pictured below, had a sibling who died of malnutrition not too long ago, therefore the child, would have also died if she did not request immediate fostering. She also mentioned that the rape cases, homelessness and various forms of abuse have been escalating. Yes, children are dying of poverty/hunger in Eswatini! This is the sad reality of extreme poverty in Vuvulane and the Covid-19 effects.



Source: Facebook

EDUCATION OBSERVATION - Having spoken to the Vuvulane Primary principal, she narrated that the school is nowhere near ready for reopening as they have been without running water nor functional ablution facilities way before Covid-19. She expressed her efforts in contacting the various departments, responsible for making sure that the school's sanitation is hygienic and of acceptable standards, but without any assistance. As an organization focused mostly on the welfare of children in Vuvulane, we are extremely concerned about the lack of quick action from the Government of Eswatini. This type of situation will further plunge backwards the access to education for the children of Vuvulane, who were mostly missing out on the radio classes as most of them do not have electricity in their homes, thus access to a radio has been a great challenge. Most of the children in Vuvulane have been subjected to burdensome home chores, since the schools closed, with chances of some not ever returning to school.

HEALTH FACILITY OBSERVATION – The Vuvulane Rural Clinic did not have an easy transition into Covid-19 preparedness yet it is a clinic that provides health care to a very wide area. Our organization's chairperson, Paul Msweli, had to request PPE, for the clinic, from Royal Eswatini Sugar Corporation, which they honored and provided it to the clinic. Training the clinic staff, on handling Covid-19 patients, also took a very long time to be implemented. This has also been another demonstration of how rural health facilities are not made a priority thus risking a lot of people's lives.

INTERVENTIONS – As an organization we had to rise up, no longer wait for NDMA's supposed assistance, and forfeit plans we had made for the year and embark on a fundraising campaign so that our community would not go hungry. Just to note, on the 26th of May 2020, the NDMA only brought us hand soap to use within our soup kitchen. Through our soup kitchen, Mondays and Thursdays have become our hot food serving days for the children of Vuvulane. We are currently serving an average of 140 meals per serving day, compared to only 90 meals, a week, we were serving pre Covid-19. The ideal would be for each family to receive their own food parcel so that there is minimal queuing up for food. Sanitary products, face masks and sanitizers are being simultaneously distributed. We are sourcing most of our fresh veg and fruit from local traders so that the donated money can spread widely within the community. Assistance is very much still needed.

STATISTICS – 07.05.2020 – 15.06.2020

- Meals Served - 1,784
- Food Parcels - 89
- Sanitary Pads - 76
- Face Masks - 350 (Children are finding it difficult to keep them on. They are also battling with keeping the social distancing recommendations, when in the company of other children)
- Money Donated - E53,793.02
- Money Spent - E48,568.57
- Balance - E5,224.45
- Online Crowd Funding - \$10,000.00 (To be split amongst our NPO and three others. It has not been deposited yet)

POST COVID-19 INTERVENTION – We have already started planning on our post Covid-19 interventions. We will be using most of the crowd funding dividend to introduce backyard gardens for the most vulnerable families in Vuvulane. The community has expressed the need for good fencing and starter seedlings and chickens so that they can grow their own food as we phase out the food parcels. A permaculturist will be tasked to capacitate the community and monitor the progress of the home gardens.

CONCLUSION - We will continue to monitor the general needs, within our community, but most of all, we will be lobbying with our local political structures to urge the Government of Eswatini to strengthen its social intervention framework, within our community. The Covid-19 crisis has widened the cracks that were already there but unattended to. In order for us not to find ourselves in such a shocking situation we have to deal with the social issues and general governance with far more commitment.

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