

A day in the life of a child from disadvantaged communities during COVID-19

It is Monday morning just after 8AM. The entire country is currently under Lockdown Level 3.

Daleen Labuschagne (KDG Programme Director), Andriëtte Diedericks (KDG Social Auxiliary Worker) and I (Bianca the Communications Manager) just parked our vehicle at a Primary School in Paarl-East. A school where a teacher tested Positive for COVID-19. Due to the teacher's test result, the school will be closed with immediate effect.



By Bianca Oppelt
KDG Communications Manager

Learners sharing an
educational activity book
on the side of the road.

Doing our rounds, it becomes apparent that the lockdown legislation can't be effectively implemented in disadvantaged communities. The issue is not that people are reluctant to the lockdown rules, but maintaining social distance in overcrowded homes is difficult. Therefore, lockdown legislation is not adhered to. The entrance to a formal settlement is literally the size of my body. There is a lack of sewer systems and everything is wet and muddy. The kitchens of some homes, if it can be classified as such, are situated outside. There is no access to running water, electricity and the situation was not hygienic at all. With high rates of unemployment and no money to put food on the table, the wearing of facemasks is not a priority either.

On our way to the homes of learners enrolled in our In-School Programme there is so much life in the streets. Learners are excited to see us and recognize us by the Khula Logo on our backpacks. We ask them what they were doing during the lockdown. "We play outside with our friends" is the most common answer. We try to make our encounters as educational as possible

and ask learners to count with us. Whether they are Khula learners or not, they willingly participate. Full of smiles, we see that none of them are wearing facemasks. They are not maintaining social distancing either. Leading by example, we encourage them to do so and to regularly wash their hands. A group of four girls and one boy grabs our attention. Sitting on the side of the road they are sharing an educational workbook. "We miss school" they tell us. They spend their days reading and doing educational activities with each other.

Welcomed into the home of a Khula family, a primary caregiver is so eager to talk to us. She reveals that there was great confusion around the return dates for learners and expresses concern over them losing interest in school if it remains closed any longer. She wants to send her daughter back to school. She admits that for various reasons there is not much home learning taking place. While there is a lack of communication from the schools, they were advised not to do enquiries at school for health and safety reasons. At the same time, she does not have a telephone to contact the school for information or a cell phone enabled

with WhatsApp to receive educational activities. Andriette, our Social Auxiliary Worker puts her at ease by giving her daughter one of our Go2school@home Packs. This pack holds a variety of child development materials and play resources. The girl is curious and excited and said that she cannot wait to start learning again.

After that, we arrive at the home of one of the women enrolled in our Primary Caregiver Programme. She reveals that since the beginning of lockdown she endured more physical abuse than before. Her forehead is swollen, and one eye is blue. She took another beating by her boyfriend. She is emotional, and desperate for help. Besides the physical and emotional abuse, she is also struck by poverty. Her physical appearance is neglected. The toll that the abuse took on her face and her body, made her look older than she really was. Andriette and Daleen listens to what she has to say and realises that advice alone will not solve her problems. She needs to get out of her abusive household for the sake of herself and that of her children. Emotionally overwhelmed and susceptible to pain and suffering, we pray with and for her.

What did we achieve during this period – 1 May to 31 July 2020?

Active in **22** schools in **5** areas
in and around **Paarl** and **Stellenbosch**

5 057 interaction and home visits

811 active cases

471 Go2school@home packs distributed

44 primary caregiver care packs distributed

During our home visits, we helped learners and primary caregivers make their own cloth face masks.

The main benefit of everyone wearing it, was to reduce the amount of Coronavirus (or Influenza virus) being coughed up by those with the infection, thereby reducing its spread through droplets.

Cloth face masks needed to be worn and cleaned properly. The face mask must cover the nose and mouth completely, and should not be lowered when speaking, coughing, or sneezing.



Go2school@home

With the South African President's announcement of the National State of Disaster, schools across South Africa were closed with immediate effect on 18 March 2020. This remained in place during Alert Level 5 and 4 of The Lockdown until 8 June 2020 when Grade 7 and 12 learners were permitted to return to school. The reopening of schools, however, came with strict, pungent, and almost impossible regulations to adhere to from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). At home, primary caregivers were struck by fear and anxiety about sending their children back to school. Consequently, most of the learners remained at home in fear of the deadly virus.

Although the WCED put an e-Learning initiative in place, it was not realistic to implement in disadvantaged communities. These communities were faced with severe socio-economic challenges and disadvantages even long before The Lockdown. This was where our staff started to express concern about the needs of the learners enrolled in our In-School Programme. With the closing of schools and strict health and safety protocols, we were unable to continue our educational journey with vulnerable learners. This was when our Go2school@home Project was born. It was important that learners participate in school related activities even while they were at home. With the help of Linda Zietsman our Programme Coordinator and in-house Occupational Therapist as well as other collaborations we were able to develop a Go2school@home Package that contained a variety of child development materials and play resources. Learners were enjoying this at their homes as it is filled with everything they needed to complete an activity. On a weekly basis our staff members did home visits and facilitated various activities with learners. Whether their homes were equipped for educational activities or not, we made it work, enjoyable and fun.



Emma Dippenaar one of our Programme Facilitators during a Go2school@home visit.



A Khula learner who just received her Go2school@home package.

SAgo2school



It is uncommon for GoGo and SoSo, our SAgo2school Mascots who promote attendance not to show up. Lozanne Venter, SAgo2school Programme Coordinator quickly adjusted this programme according to the needs and demands of the current education situation in South Africa. Lozanne felt that it was extremely important that we remained the bridge between the schools and the community by taking learning home.

Five mentors enrolled in our mentorship programme, volunteered to join our team on home visits to our SAgo2school Captains. The purpose of these visits were:

- To reconnect with one another
- To raise awareness of COVID-19 and its safety measures
- To motivate returning to school
- To highlight the importance of continuous learning at home
- Handing out Florence and Watson Activity books

Learners and Primary Caregivers showed appreciation for these visits and gladly accepted advice on routines and home learning tips. The highlight of these visits was to see that the learners were eager to return back to school.

PRIMARY CAREGIVERS



A Primary Caregiver and her son participating in a practical activity at home.

During The National State of Disaster and Lockdown, most of our primary caregivers enrolled in this Programme were at home and unable to work. Although this weighed heavily on the wellbeing of the families, primary caregivers committed to use this time for frequent intensive engagement with their children. Home tutorials and practical activities were facilitated by a Khula Primary Caregiver Facilitator. Engagement took place through play by making clay and toys through recycled material.

Our Primary Caregiver Programme Coordinator Marie-Louise Rautenbach delivered Care Packs to the homes of the women enrolled in our Primary Caregiver Support Group.

Each pack contained:

- A Magazine
- A Chocolate
- A Bar of Soap
- A Shower Cap
- A Pack of Instant Soup
- Yarn
- Knitting Needles
- Hot Chocolate

We were unable to continue with our weekly sessions during the National Lockdown. However, we continued to pray for these women and support them in any way we could.



Marie-Louise Rautenbach and Susan Botha embracing elbow bumps, the new way of greeting.

Time to say goodbye.

After loyal and committed service to our organisation, we said goodbye to two inspirational employees. Sandy Heswick worked as a fieldworker in our Paarl area for the past 6 years and Theys Stuurman as a Pastoral Carer for 3 years. We wish both Sandy and Theys a happy retirement. Here Hanlie van der Merwe Paarl Branch Manager is handing over special memorabilia to them.



Hanlie van der Merwe Paarl Branch Manager with Sandy Heswick and Theys Stuurman.

Advertisement of the first webinar we had with the WCED.

Collaboration with the WCED

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that many learners will not attend school at all, and some will only attend on certain days. With the poverty and inequality in our country, those who have access to Online learning will continue to thrive and the gap will continue to widen for those who have no or limited digital access. Khula became part of a forum to develop workable models to support @home learning in this community. We are extremely excited about this opportunity that will have a lasting impact on the children of our country and keep the flame of education burning. To know more about our collaboration, visit our website to get the link on a webinar that took place.

Miles 4 Minors



Jaco Lategan and Hugo Potgieter known as Team Bodytec entered to participate in The ABSA Cape Epic scheduled to take place in March 2020. Due to the Corona Virus Pandemic the event was postponed to March 2021. To raise R300 000 for our organisation, Team Bodytec's initial fundraiser had a R50 000 travel prize from Flight Centre Associates up for grabs. With the ban on domestic and international travel, the prize was upgraded to a R50 000 cash prize. The live draw for the R50 000 cash prize took place on 22 June 2020 at our Head Office situated in Paarl.

The lucky winner was **Marchia Crowster** from Cape Town. Marchia was in awe of her prize and will use it to help her family with things they really need. We raised an amount of just over R100 000 and will allocate the funds towards promoting school attendance through our four programmes. Team Bodytec remains committed to achieving their target of R300 000 and will continue to raise funds for KDG while they prepare to participate in the ABSA Cape Epic in 2021. To donate, simply visit our donation page on our website. We would like to thank all entrants for their contributions that are making a difference in the lives of vulnerable primary school learners.



STAFF TESTIMONIES

During home visits in Paarl-East area a Khula Family was very happy to see our staff. When we explained to them why we came to see them, they were very grateful. The father's reaction was "This is a frustrating time for us. Before the Lockdown I was able to do seasonal work. Now we must try and keep our heads above water. My children are okay, but as usual they are either in the house or outside. We are taking this virus very serious and we will go to school to get homework and assignments".



During Child Protection Week 2020 we aimed to empower children in a fun and interactive way with knowledge and skills regarding relevant topics such as: Education, Child Abuse, COVID-19 Safety Measures and Positive and Negative behaviours. Principal Social Worker **Carien van Zyl** designed a board game that learners enjoyed at home. We would like to thank Minuteman Press Paarl, who sponsored the printing of 500 boardgames handed out to learners. This game is also available to download under the COVID-19 section of our website www.khuladg.co.za.

In honour of Mandela Day Val de Vie Foundation and Gift of the Givers donated 533 blankets to help keep our Khula Kids warm this winter! Each blanket donated will be handed out during our Go2school@home sessions. We are excited to present learners with something to warm both their bodies and hearts this season.



A Community @Home Learning Project took place on Fridays in Stellenbosch. During sessions, learners who were not enrolled in any of our programmes received academic activities and support from KDG. Volunteers from Stellenbosch Unite facilitated this Project and helped with the implementation of social distancing and hygiene. This project was proudly sponsored by Berryworld.



Our fieldworkers received a pair of rain ankle boots sponsored by The Val De Vie Foundation. This surely came in handy during their home visits in winter. In addition, each staff member also received a branded umbrella.



Carien van Zyl, our Principal Social Worker was nominated as one of the Valcare Protea of the Valley Inspirational Women in the Cape Winelands. This forum acknowledges and celebrates the contributions of extraordinary women to their community. To find out more about Carien's journey, visit the Valcare Facebook Page.

In commemoration of Mandela Day MPACT Paarl reached out to our organisation with a heartfelt donation. We received 200 face shields, 21 food parcels and 2 boxes of A4 printing paper.



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