

SOS Children's Village Mbabane

Progress report

The SOS Children's Village Mbabane was the first programme in Swaziland, officially opened in 1990 starting with SOS Families. In 2002, the Family Strengthening started with two communities and now the programme provides quality care to families and children in five communities around Mbabane

175 children and 34 young persons live in the SOS families or youth facility. The age ranges from a 17-month-old toddler to a 23-year-old young person. SOS Children's Villages believes that children and young persons' development is best realized in a caring family environment, supported by strong social networks whilst basing all decisions and actions on the best interest of the child. This is achieved through involving children in finding solutions to the challenges they face in their lives.

Preparing youth for leaving care

Various initiatives have been embarked on in preparing the youth for leaving care. These included sessions with the youth leaders and social worker, visits to their families of origin for assessment and group discussions. Educational and career guidance programmes were offered to youth to help them make the choices which will lead to their future independent life and career. During their studies, youths are encouraged to find part-time jobs to expose them to working realities and to supplement their income. SOS mothers and other village co-workers offer career guidance on an ongoing basis to all youths.

Career Choice

'Now I have a clear direction of what subjects to choose towards achieving my dream career'. These were the words of Thembalami after a career day hosted by the Limkokwing University of Technology situated not far from the village. The main objective was to assist young people to align their subject choices with their interests for future study and employment. Pupils enjoyed this day as they got to learn about the different career paths. 'Wow, I didn't know Information Communication and Technology was a profession with so many exciting programmes. I am impressed' said Thembalami. The university emphasized more on entrepreneurship than being employed, which is vital for Swaziland as there are currently a number of graduates without employment.

From an orphan to a graduate

'I am looking forward to getting a job. I never would have imagined that this day would come so soon,' says Sicelo who got his degree in Financial Planning Law from the University of Free State in South Africa. Sicelo was talking to his SOS mother after graduation with much excitement. He was brought to the village at the age of ten in 2000. 'Sicelo has always shown an interest in his school work since he was in primary school,' his mother Patricia said. 'He always put his school work first and while others were playing after school he would be busy doing his homework. I encouraged him to give his school work a priority. This did not come as a surprise to me. I am truly excited that my son will soon be independent'

Helps families stay together

251 families and 721 children are getting support through the Family Strengthening in Mbabane. The programme ensures that families and communities are empowered to be self-reliant through access to essential services, ability of caregiver to provide child care and sufficient family resources. In ensuring that caregivers have access to essential services or basic survival needs, the programme ensures that children have adequate diet and nutrition through gardening inputs where families are given skills for the production of their own vegetables. Educational support and health care are also a priority area for the children and caregivers. This is mainly achieved through working with partners.

Caregivers are empowered through workshops and meetings to provide quality care to their children. These workshops include basic childcare knowledge and skills to meet their own health needs so that they may be able to care for their children. Caregivers have been capacitated with income generating activities and these include; handwork, production of floor polish and dish washing soap.