



25 September 2020

Dear Friends

Thank you for being with us through this COVID-19 journey. Your support has been invaluable in keeping our schools alive. We would love to update you on the progress our schools have made.

Initially, some form of support was expected from government given the size of the sector in township economies but this was never forthcoming. Starting Chance made the decision to support the teachers across all 30 schools through the COVID-19 lockdown.

Subsidies...

Remarkably, despite not having had funds available to cover this, through the generosity of people within and outside South Africa we maintained subsidy payments from April to July of R1000/pp. A total of R737.250 was injected into the Mfuleni community between March and July. Amazingly each month funds were raised almost to the last cent needed! In August, although schools were trying to open, there was very poor response from parents and so SC decided to continue with the subsidies but reduce it to R750 per person. In September it became apparent that schools were still not able to pay their teachers so the SC Board made the decision to pay COVID-19 subsidies of R500 per teacher.

Reopening...

ECDs were formally allowed to reopen in August after a court case was won in favour of ECDs against the Department of Social Development who were preventing their opening. DSD made reopening as difficult as possible for reasons best known to themselves. Starting Chance aligned with another organisation called Learn to Live to learn about the reopening requirements so that our fieldworkers could support the 30 schools in reopening requirements so that our fieldworkers could support the 30 schools in reopening.

Training and PPE...

The fieldworkers opened the resource centre and principals were allowed to attend small- group support sessions enabling them to comply with all of the document submissions which had to be completed online. Using about R45,000 of the funds raised, we were able to provide each centre with the basic PPE and cleaning and sanitising materials to comply with the requirements to reopen. It was particularly satisfying being able to support a local entrepreneur in Mfuleni who was manufacturing and selling PPE visors, at much lower cost than Takealot *et al!* The fieldworkers were also able to provide training to the school teams on how to ensure they met standard operating protocols and social distancing requirements on reopening.

and more training...

In September our fieldworkers have been providing small group resource training and have been visiting schools. We opened our resource training usually only provided to the 9 schools in the Starting Chance programme to our 30 TTinT schools and the response has been remarkable. In the first week 77 teachers attended training in their small groups, followed by 88 teachers in week 2.

As in the rest of the world, emerging from lockdown is proving very difficult. Fear is widespread, trust is low and corruption is rife. Unemployment is worse than ever, and the prospects of people finding work limited. Against this backdrop we are pleased to be able to report that so far, all of our schools have survived.

Meanwhile, back at home...

From a Starting Chance perspective we have been able to maintain our education team on full salary, and we have used the time as constructively as we could to plan forward for training and development. We have restarted the provision of training and development during September to the ECDs. We hope to restart our support to the Lonwabo Special Needs Centre team once it reopens, hopefully in October.

Once again thank you for your support. Although the ECDs in Mfuleni are still in for struggles ahead, without your support their situation would be infinitely more dire.

Blessings,

the Starting Chance Trustees

PS Breaking news...

Heritage Day Fun! Vote for your favourite photo

Our Starting Chance schools celebrated Heritage Day yesterday by dressing up in traditional wear. We asked them to send us their photos for a chance to win a voucher to spend on educational games worth R300. [Please find the post on facebook](#) and vote for your favourite by 'liking' it. The winning school will be announced on Monday.