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January 2023 Report

Introduction

Our academic year has started well. The opening of schools has brought back our learners, now at different levels, calling for different level of programming. We have had lots of rains and our garden was overgrown. All staff have been on holiday are coming back slowly. Our grannies' support group and academic support programme started well. We have had fewer, but effective international visitors during the month of January.



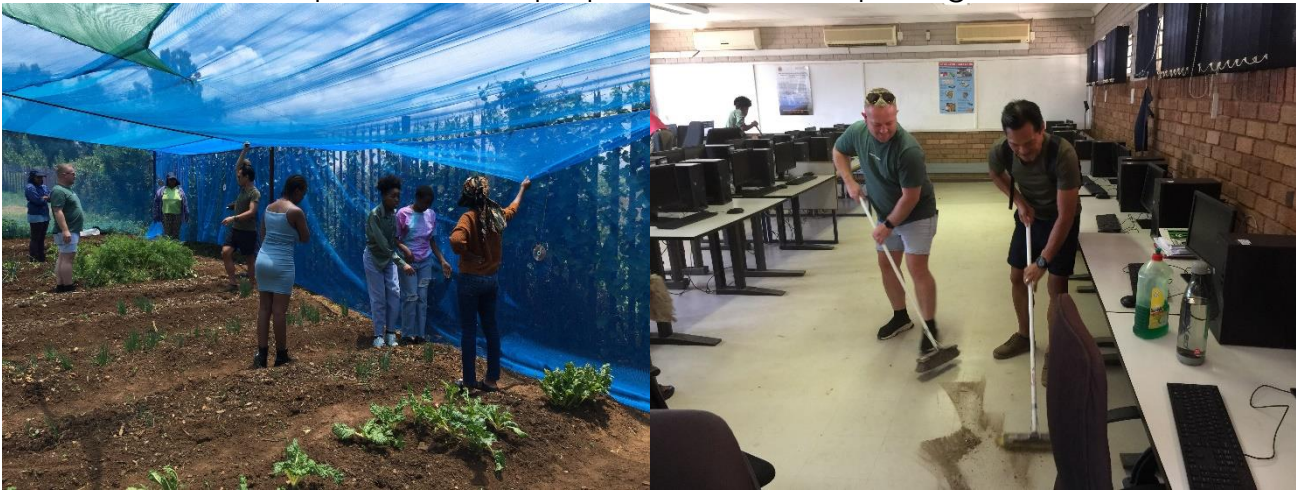
YOSA volunteer gardeners at work

We were pleased to receive flexible friends who could join us in whatever they found us doing. Sherwin and Phil Ford found us weeding and they helped to clear large pieces of land. Phil was visiting YOSA for the first time but he also immediately got down to business. We are forever grateful for such friends who get out of their way to come and labour with us.



Sherwin and Phil pulling the weeds and later proceeded to tour our community

Two weeks later Sherwin returned with Cam Scott Giddings and found us maintaining the garden shed and cleaning the offices and computer lab, in preparation for opening, and they joined in. Two days' work was done in one morning! The students we support in universities were also available to help with work in preparation for our opening of schools.



Sherwin and Cam helping with maintaining the garden shed and cleaning the computer lab

In preparation for opening of schools and varsities we provided clothes to our children and young university youths. Due to support from our friends in Australia, Janine, Donna, Karen, Brolin, Janet and Sherwin, we were able to clothes all our young people and prepared them for term one. The excitement of getting new clothes was indicative of restored dignity.



Clothes distribution to our youths and children

On second Thursday of January, our grannies commenced their support-group. From 8 the number of grannies has doubled to 16 this year. They were excited as each of them received a woolen blanket and binnies from their counterparts in Australia courtesy of YOSA ambassador Karen Glass.

The support from Compassion 4 Humanity is transforming the grannies' support group into an economically sustainable club through provision of sawing machines, materials, knitting wool and crochet needles. YOSA is also involving grannies in the nutritional garden and nurturing self-sustenance. Significant empowerment is taking place among the grannies who care for large numbers of school-going grandchildren. YOSA intervention has helped to reveal the grannies' strengths and provide resources for them to live independent lives. They have learnt to supplement their social grants through self-help activities. Total reliance on diminishing social grants was stressing them. They are relieved to realize that they can work and provide for themselves and their grandchildren.



Grannies conducting their meeting and staff preparing their day's meal



Grannies sharing information and discussing the benefits of herbs like Rosemary, Sage, basil, chives and others.

Curriculum Coaching

This has become a major issue in our schools, particularly given the lack of maths teachers in public primary and high schools. University students volunteering on YOSA programme are placed in schools to do maths mentorship during Saturdays. The meetings started in January and are growing as university students are returning from holidays. Maths skills and reading for understanding are the main issues in primary school especially due to the shortfalls in learning imposed by Covid restrictions. In high schools we are starting maths extra classes for grade 8 to provide the young people with strong foundations strengthening reading and numeracy skills.



Maths mentorship for grade four class by university students

Merit Awards

This year we have devoted significant resources in the Merit Awards for the schools we serve. We have gone a long way to address the lack of motivation to learn among most of the learners in our township community. We will collaborate with the district offices for the Merit Awards on 17 February 2023. The initial support from Trevor Lunney in our Australian friend, in 2020, became a seed in motivating learners to take their studies seriously. We have seen significant improvements in academic results since then.



YOSA team running weekend classes in January

Funding

We are grateful for sustained funding from FNZ and Compassion 4 Humanity. We are also appealing to other funders to help support our programmes. Our funding goes directly into meeting the needs of our beneficiaries including meeting transport costs for the university students who are volunteering on our project. We already have 12 social work students placed with our agency for internship. We also have 10 accounting students readily assisting in the mentorship programme.

Conclusion

We have started the year well and we pray for additional resources this year to expand our programming. Our relationship with the communities we serve is excellent. We continue to provide influence and motivation in education, learners' moral development, community self-reliance and parental involvement in education. Digital training is also preparing to continue in February in the two schools with computer labs. Wits University will also place social work interns that will help in running our programme.