

2020 - 3rd & 4th Quarter Highlights

DECEMBER 2020 | ISSUE NO. 6



The Covid-19 Curveball - Challenge or Opportunity?

The Covid-19 Curveball has turned our lives upside down in every respect. Yes, chaos everywhere! Funding restrictions, travel limitations, disconnection with friends and family, and of course new challenges arising with every presidential speech as new lockdown regulations were announced.

There is a saying that goes: "When you squeeze a lemon, you get lemon juice." During the squeeze of 2020 we did a lot of assessing of what the outcomes of our programs are. Over the years, what has really made a difference? Or are we just going along with our programs year-in and year-out not realizing we can actually do so much more even with fewer resources and funding?

This was the opportunity of 2020! Innovate, rethink and dig our foundations deeper, where healthy families & relationships are once again at the core of what we do after such a disconnected year. We trust that this newsletter will give some insight into the opportunities that we saw within Sihamba Sonke to relook at our programs and innovate where we needed to. On the other hand, we invite you to celebrate with us the impact stories where our roots were deep enough to overcome the Covid-19 storm.

We trust that we will continue with this journey that we started in 2020 as we practically learn to live out what we are about... Building thriving communities with healthy families and relationships as the foundation. We believe in what we do, more than ever!



Three Chess Clubs Launched as Youth Transformation Platforms!

Sihamba Sonke is about building platforms where friendship and mentorship relationships can flourish. One of our longest-running platforms has been our in-school chess program which faced a massive challenge to gain momentum in 2020 due to Covid-19 regulations and lockdown restrictions.

We had to innovate and rethink how we can create a platform that will be able to function within these restrictions so that we can continue to grow the chess culture that we have steadily built over the years. Something that we have dreamed about for years, was starting chess clubs for different ages, but the timing never seemed right.



With Covid-19, it presented the perfect opportunity to realize these dreams as we had to adapt our in-school chess program. We are excited to announce that we managed to pilot three different chess clubs in our third and fourth term. Our Wednesday afternoon Chess club for high school students (grade 7 and higher in our context), our Wednesday evening Chess club for young adults, and a weekend chess club for our primary & high school students.

The purpose of these chess clubs is to prepare our students, for tournament readiness, learn new chess skills, but most importantly have a platform where friendships can grow as we grapple with life struggles together using our chess values as reference points to learn to navigate these real-life challenges. We are excited to grow and establish our chess clubs as a strong force of youth transformation in our community in 2021!

CHESS PROGRAMME





Sakha Ikamva: Building the Future

With our second Sakha Ikamva group of graduates walking out of 2020 with their completion certificates, we look back at the highlights of these young men's journeys. Taking into account the program had missed out on 2 months' worth of planned sessions, we applaud the leadership team for working really hard in making the last few months possible for our participants.

With exercising being allowed, 5 out of the 8 participants completed their first ever 21km race! This was a large part of their physical development of the program. Another highlight was when all of the participants completed their ICDL base modules, equipping them with basic computer skills. On the innovative side, Sihamba Sonke's building team hosted an eco-brick workshop with the participants teaching them innovative ways of re-using materials by building furniture.

The year ended on a high note as the participants embarked on their year-end exposure trip. It kicked off with a 2-day hike in the Drakensberg mountains. This was the first time any of them hiked on a mountain, carrying all of their gear, food, and sleeping in tents. Each one had a chance to lead the team, by analysing the map and working out the next section of the hiking route. They learned teamwork, to trust each other, and to help each other when a team member was struggling, for example carrying each other's bags. Thereafter, they travelled to Durban where they visited organizations such as, Hillcrest AIDS center, Thanda Community projects, and the uShaka Marine World.

We are looking forward to welcoming our class of 2021!

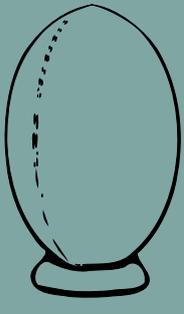


GAP YEAR PROGRAMME



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Touch Tigers VS. Covid-19

After being on the back-foot most of the year, our touch rugby team (The Touch Tigers) was allowed to start training again in October of 2020. Our first few training sessions were slow in getting momentum. However, we managed to attract many youths from the community, and eventually, after two weeks, we had more kids keen to train than before lockdown! This gives us a great platform to build depth and impact for future teams and leaders.

We have also developed our very own Coach Training Curriculum to help train new local coaches. Our hope is to grow the Touch Tigers to have more permanent coaches and teams, as well as to scale the program to other communities. Well done to Sipehelele and assistant coach Kamva for inspiring more players to become coaches and referees and make a bigger impact in the team environment!



Mail & Guardian: Top 200

This is definitely one of our top highlights for the year as our head coach, Sipehelele, has been chosen as one of the Mail & Guardian's Top 200 Young South Africans for 2020! This is a very prestigious award as it can open many opportunities for him in the future and inspire many young people in our community. We are very proud of Sipehelele for all his hard work and commitment! He is not only an inspiration to us, but to our whole community and youth whom he serves.

200 YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS 2020
SPORT

SIPHELELE MQWASHELE, 25
Community sports development coach and mentor: Sihamba Sonke
@28395sipehelele | Sipehelele Sphoo Mqwashela

KGOLAGANI
Head of basketball: Royal Bafokeng S
@ikgolaga

COMMUNITY SPORTS DEVELOPMENT COACH AND MENTOR
Sipehelele Mqwashela leads young rugby players from the Eastern Cape by exemplifying that commitment opens doors. Rural students often don't get the same opportunities to be transformed by the sport as students in affluent urban areas. Mqwashela takes the time to nurture their talent. He was part of the team that started touch rugby in the Transkei village of Zithulele. They went from losing all their games at the national interprovincial touch tournament in 2012 to winning the tournament in 2017. Mqwashela was then selected to learn more about the sport in New Zealand.
- Jabulile Dlamini-Qwesho



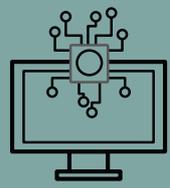
Farming And The Community

In the second half of the year, our Agriculture team launched a trial where they facilitated training sessions in partnership with the local chief. Residents from the community participated in these sessions. They were excited to hear that the Farming God's Way's methods that we teach help to reduce water evaporation; reduce soil erosion; and increase the quality of the soil over time.



After the training sessions, the Agriculture team members visited the participants to monitor how their gardens had been doing and to give advice. Although these training sessions were a short-term experiment and the first to be done, it has been a valuable experience for them.

As the program is still in a developing stage, the team will be using the next few months to plan and conduct research on more feasible ways of modelling and encouraging the community to make use of their valuable pieces of land.



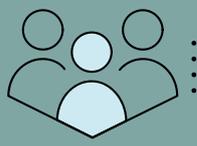
Our Computer Course Pass Rates Growing! Climbing Mount Everest, Step by Step!

With the generosity of Dell and Computer Aid International, who donated two Solar Labs at the end of 2019, we were able to considerably expand our reach into the community. Currently, we are using ICDL (International Computer's Drivers Licence) as a metric to measure our impact. The project is set up so that our community members should pass 4 base modules with the required 75% pass rate. But one thing, that is so hard about any rural programme in our context, is that something as simple as doing a computer course and getting an internationally recognized certificate sounds fantastic on paper, but in practise the journey is similar to conquer mount Everest.

Being situated in an area with very low English literacy skills, we realised that we had to dramatically adapt our teaching strategy to help ICDL participants pass. We had to innovate and design our own contextualized "ready-test". Additionally, we invested more into our teachers, Zimasile and Nkosikhona, who have grown exponentially in their teaching strategy. They have shown a 125% increase in their pass rate from 8 to 18 modules, comparing the first and second half of the year.

In December, Zimasile finished the year strong by training teachers from our neighbouring community who are in the process of running their own ICDL training centre. We were also approached by a corporate CSI programme to train their teachers in Durban. It is amazing to see our team growing from strength to strength as we scale our impact and conquer this mountain step by step.





Computer Aid Building Project - A Story Of Hope



COMMUNITY

While doing renovations on the Computer Aid Computer Lab in November 2020, rumours of a violent young man went through the village of Zithulele. Messages of fear were spread on the community Whatsapp groups as a "strong & powerful gangster" had returned from Cape Town, and was being accused of threatening and stealing from people at knifepoint. The streets of Zithulele didn't feel safe anymore. These rumours stirred Sihamba Sonke employees as well, and they decided to take action. A meeting was held during which all Sihamba Sonke employees decided that we ought to give this man an alternative in life. Mbuyisi approached him and thereafter he came to Sihamba Sonke, where he shared stories from his background and acknowledged the mistakes he had made. He explained that he is very willing to go on a journey of redemption with us.

Sihamba Sonke then gave him the opportunity to work with the building and agriculture team. How can we provide tangible hope for someone, without providing an alternative way to earn honest money? At the time, Mergon Foundation gave the opportunity to help organizations like ours, who lost funding & income during Covid-19 to apply for a GAP Fund. The Fund was granted and this helped us to have the funds available to ask him to join our team.

Sfundo, now not known as the "powerful and strong gangster" that we must look out for, but a person with a name, joined and eagerly helped. Instead of just earning honest money, this opportunity also gave Sfundo purpose during the day to help contribute to his community, including a new family of friends who can support him during this time. The chief and elders endorsed the intervention of Sihamba Sonke and thanked us that Sfundo made no trouble over the festive season, bringing hope to our community, where many lost hope in the redemption of Sfundo. And although only time will tell whether change took place that can endure the challenges that still lies ahead for Sfundo. We do know that a journey of hope has started in his life and although it is the harder, narrower path, he is not alone on the road less travelled.

We thank everyone behind the Mergon GAP Fund, who helped us to make stories like this possible! An amazing team effort where each one plays his part.



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leaders driving rural community transformation.

Not One, But Three Sihamba Sonke Homestays

At the beginning of 2020, we welcomed the Kay family to Zithulele. Zirk and Charne and their 3 sons moved into our rondavel on the Makhubalo family's land, next to our bigger homestay. With Zirk being an exceptional architect, he transformed our one-room hut into a more comfortable two-bedroom and living room home for a family of 5. The family raised their own funds to complete these tasks and we are so thankful for their contribution to our homestays! They have done such a creative job, that it even landed a spot in the famous Home/Tuis magazine with our own marketing manager, Nicole Jonker, being the photographer behind the photos featured with the Kay's hut.



Homestay nr. 1

Homestay nr. 2

Homestay nr. 3

Pieter Truter joined Sihamba Sonke at the beginning of 2020. In this same year, he also got married and realized the need to provide his wife with a simple, yet cozy living space. Zirk's smart design was followed for our third homestay renovation.

The building team sectioned a rondavel into a bedroom, living room, and a shower area. With accommodation options being very limited in Zithulele, we are thankful to be able to have these homestays offer skilled volunteers a place to stay while helping us build our organization and living out our vision.

New Year, New Beginnings!



Legal On The Road

The New Year kicked off with a bang as two of our programme mentors, and brothers, Zimasile (Computer Programme Mentor) and Bhekisisa (HR intern and Gap Year Mentor) both passed their driver's test in one week! For Zimasile, this is a particularly exceptional achievement, as he failed his third attempt 2 years ago on the last day before his learners expired. His other colleague, Ntlahla Nkqwili, passed on that same day. To have the resilience to start with the whole process again, and to pass two years later, shows amazing character and grit! A big celebration is due, not only because of what they achieved but also how! The Hotyo bothers supported one another during this journey, which is extremely tough in a rural setting, as the lessons and traffic department is ± 100 km from our village. Well done Zim and Bheks! Your lives are stories of hope, teaching us how to stand up and try again after a major disappointment.



Computer Course Success

Whilst the management team was busy with planning and strategy meetings the first few weeks of the year, the rest of the Sihamba Sonke team put in a lot of effort together to complete the base modules of our Computer Programme to upskill themselves. We are proud to announce that five of our employees passed the Computer Essentials course and are currently completing Word and Excel.



New Team Members

How wonderful is it when people that buy into our vision want to be apart of our team? We are so excited to welcome two of our 2020 Gap Year Programme graduates to our team: Sipho and Kamva. We are also welcoming two new volunteers from the Western Cape, Adrian, and Julian, who will be supporting our programs this year and adding their knowledge and skills to our team!

JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY

It's the R100, R200 & R500 a month that made all the difference!

We particularly want to thank our partners that consistently gave us a small donation each month. Your R200 a month seems little, but ten people cover a salary of a local mentor. These were the funds that helped us over the line in 2020 it allowed us to plan, knowing what our guaranteed cash flow will look like.

We want to encourage you to join us on this amazing journey or share this opportunity with anyone in your network who share our passion to build thriving communities with healthy families and relationships as the foundation. Know your monthly donation, doesn't matter how small is the game-changer. If you want to want to make a monthly contribution of R100, R200, or R500 a month, use the bank details below.

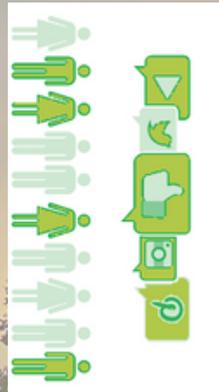
Acc name: Sihamba Sonke
Bank: First National Bank
Account Type: Cheque
SWIFT Code: FIRNZAJJ

Account No: 62759245676
Branch Name: Umtata Mall
Branch Code: 210643
Reference: Donation – Name

SPREAD THE WORD

It is such a privilege to see our mentors grow as they are empowered to be the drivers of community transformation through our skills & character development initiatives. Help us to scale our the impact by sharing our wesbite, Facebook & Instagram page.

Website: www.sihambasonke.org
Instagram: www.instagram.com/sihambasonke
Facebook:
web.facebook.com/sihambasonke.walkingtogether



Funding: 18A Tax Certificates

Due to the massive amounts of growth, we are stretching our capacity and finding funds remains a challenge. If you would like to contribute or know of funding opportunities, don't hesitate to contact us. Note we are 18A registered, so you will get a tax deduction for your donation. A great win-win! :-)



My School - My Village (www.myschool.co.za)

An excellent funding opportunity that will cost you nothing is the MySchool MyVillage initiative. **Just swipe your MySchool card or link your Woolies Card to Sihamba Sonke and THEY will contribute to our project.** Just go online on your MySchool or Woolies profile to activate up to three beneficiaries.



If you want to apply for a MySchool Card, all you have to do is to follow this link, bit.ly/myschoolform and e-mail the completed signed copy to nicole@sihambasonke.org



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