



MATJANA PRESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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SCHOOL LUNCHES ARE BACK THANKS TO ASSISTANCE FROM WORLD FOOD PROGRAM

In October, parents and teachers were excited when the Matjana Preschool Kitchen received food assistance from World Food Program (WFP). It came in the form of rice, mealie meal, beans and cooking oil, which will be cooked to provide lunches for the preschool students (when schools are open) or children from the community (while schools remain closed- see Update on school closures).

This is the first time we have WFP food assistance this year. During the COVID-19 lockdowns school

and community kitchens were closed due to government regulations, so we were unable to help our students with food.

It is a great relief to get food assistance! Having food donated by the WFP allows us to use the money donated by our supporters for wages and purchasing resources for running the school.

Matjana Preschool has always prioritised buying food for the students using money from donations when

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the WFP assistance was not received. However, we've struggled a bit financially over the past couple of years and have not always had enough money to buy the students' food.

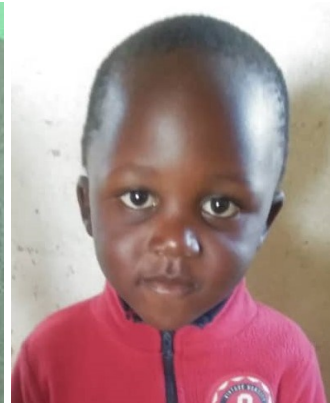
What teachers said

Matjana teachers said they are happy that WFP delivered food for the kids. Teacher Londiwe said. "We have been buying all

MEET THE



MATJANA KIDS



NAME:	Hlelolwenkhosi	Mandisa	Siyanda
MEANING:	Gods' Plan	Multiply	We are getting many
FAVOURITES AT SCHOOL:	Playing with dolls	Dancing	Playing with blocks
FAVOURITE FOOD:	Rice and chicken	Pap and beans	Meat
WANTS TO BE A:	Teacher	Singer	Police
TEACHERS SAY:	She has a cute smile	She always wants to lead	He is so creative

SCHOOL LUNCHES ARE BACK (CONT)



the food for the kids since schools reopened in April 2021, using the money from Matjana supporters. We cannot teach the kids when they are hungry, but it is a strain to put money aside for buying all the food, and sometimes we run out.”

Teacher Qiniso said, “We are now at peace that students will be getting food at school for the next little while and we hope the WFP will keep providing the food so that it doesn’t run out. Before COVID lockdown they (WFP) would

give us food once in a while and once it runs out they would take 3 or 4 months to deliver the food again.” “We sometimes used to run out of money for buying food and our kids had to bring food from home. This would be a problem for many of our students, who would come to school without lunch and tell us that they did not have food at home.”

Benefits of school lunches

“Now we can watch all the children eating the same food and every student eating until they are full,”

teacher Londi said. “It also means our students are not getting upset because they are comparing their food to the person next to them. So, it somehow boosts their confidence.”

Providing school lunches at Matjana is also important for improving nutrition. The economic impacts of COVID-19 have increased food insecurity by 5% since 2020. Currently 22% of the Swazi population face acute food shortage, that is, need urgent food assistance and 29% experience food stress.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Thanks to new and old supporters who have contributed donations since our last newsletter! We are so pleased to have a bit of money in the bank for the first time in years and be in a position to start thinking about school improvements and pay rises for our teachers. We hope in 2022 to return to a normal school year and if COVID regulations permit, to start enrolling four-year old students for the first time. Please keep the donations coming- they will enable this important work.



	Swaziland	Australia
Bank	Standard Bank	The Community Mutual Group
Account Name:	Matjana Preschool	Friends of Matjana Preschool
Account Number:	9110001038268	719585
Bank SWIFT code:	SBICSZMX	-
BSB Number:	66056441	932000

SCHOOL LUNCHES ARE BACK (CONT)

While not having enough food affects people of all ages, the consequences are especially severe for young children. For example, stunting affects young children who are chronically undernourished (i.e. don't consume enough calories for a long time). It causes children not to grow as tall as they should and impairs physical performance forever. Malnutrition also affects young children's developing brains and has a lasting impact on intellectual abilities.

Providing school lunches is thus an extremely important part of providing quality early childhood education in Eswatini.

What parents said

There are also benefits for parents, despite a few extra responsibilities. Parents (usually mothers and grandmothers) take on the responsibility of fetching firewood to cook the food provided by the

WFP. Those that can afford contribute E 10 per month for buying other things like vegetables that the WFP doesn't provide.

One of the mothers named LaMbonane, who lives about 3 km away from our school volunteered to cook for the kids at Matjana every day. As the WFP have not provided a food packet for the cooker as a token of appreciation for their efforts, the school pays her E 250 per month.

Although this is a tiny amount of money, LaMbonane said, "I am so excited about the school kitchen opening and coming to school to cook for all the children. I don't have to be stressed about what to pack for my son. I do not mind coming to Matjana to cook every day. For me this is better than getting my son's lunch every day." If she is not able to come and cook, she would ask another parent to sub in for her.

Other parents are also relieved that their kids get lunch at school. A grandmother of one of our kids said, "Thinking about what to pack my grandson for lunch stresses me because the food we have at home is not good."

Our youngest mother, who cares for three children attending Matjana preschool (her daughter and two nieces) said, "I am so relieved these days about the issue of food. Packing lunch for three kids isn't a joke".

Caring for three 5 year olds is no joke either! We're pleased that the re-opening of the school kitchen is also providing a bit of relief to the women in our community that do so much work to give children the best possible start in life. We hope with the assistance of the WFP and Matjana Preschool's friends around the world, that our students will never need to provide their own school lunches again.

UPDATE ON SCHOOL CLOSURES

The Government of Eswatini announced the indefinite closure of schools on 17 October 2021 in response to political unrest. The unrest included college, primary and high school students protesting and delivering petitions to demand better school conditions and to be refunded school fees paid in 2020 when schools were closed for most of the year. The protests led to the burning of several primary and high schools. The government called on the army and police to intervene and local media reported that some high school students were shot. Schools remain closed. We are thankful that none of the students and teachers in the Matjana community were injured. However, like the United Nations we are concerned that our children are once again missing out on school. We can't wait to welcome back the Matjana kids and serve them healthy meals again!