



# MASAZANE

SOUP KITCHEN & CHILD  
PROTECTION PROJECT

**October 2020**  
**Covid-19 update**

Dear friends and supporters of Masazane Soup Kitchen,

Our previous newsletter tried to paint a picture of what was happening during “lockdown” in Mbekweni, where our project is located. It was a very tough time indeed as many residents were placed on reduced wages, some lost their jobs, and most importantly for us, with schools closed, children lost the assurance and comfort of the one good, nutritious meal we were able to provide each day.

There was a national outcry at the closure of the state-run school feeding scheme, and it was estimated that over 9.6 million children went hungry during lockdown, simply because the government couldn’t find its way to keeping the national scheme going. Our team was ready and willing to cook and help children in need, but because our project is located in the grounds of Mbekweni Primary School, our doors had to remain closed for a few months.

But only a few months! As soon as we could, we opened again, and the kitchen is now up and running, and almost back to normal, with all the necessary precautions in place.

Each of the gogos who are part of the team is a hero for the selfless care and dedication they bring to the project, fueled by their love of children.

In August, Women’s Month, our project manager, Shireen Willemse, was recognised for her work. **Valcare**, an organisation that collaborates with multiple stakeholders to activate social change in the community in the Paarl valley, has, since 2012 honoured inspirational women - calling them Proteas of the Valley. Here’s what they said about Shireen:



## VALCARE PROTEAS OF THE VALLEY 2020 | SHIREEN WILLEMSE

Shireen Willemse is the Voluntary Project Manager at Masazane Soup Kitchen and Child Protection Project in Mbekweni.

It wasn’t always easy to be raised as one of seven children, but it taught Shireen to work hard for what she wants in life. After a career of teaching, Shireen retired due to health reasons and focused on sewing work and volunteering in the community.

At the soup kitchen, she supports a team of six volunteer grandmothers who prepare, cook and serve meals to over 400 children, four days per week. She has given of her time and energy unstintingly to ensure that hungry children get fed nutritious meals.

During the lockdown period, she continued to access provisions from supermarkets for the kitchen, as well as making masks for the volunteers and children, and rolling out the sanitising regulations to everyone involved. Over and above this, she also used to fulfil the demanding role of the Church Secretary at Bethel Congregational Church Paarl. She is a mother to three boys and a grandmother to five.

She is warm, generous and empathetic.

**She is a Protea of the Valley** – women who flourish and flower despite difficult conditions.

[www.valcare.org.za](http://www.valcare.org.za)

## Covid-19 forced us to do things differently...

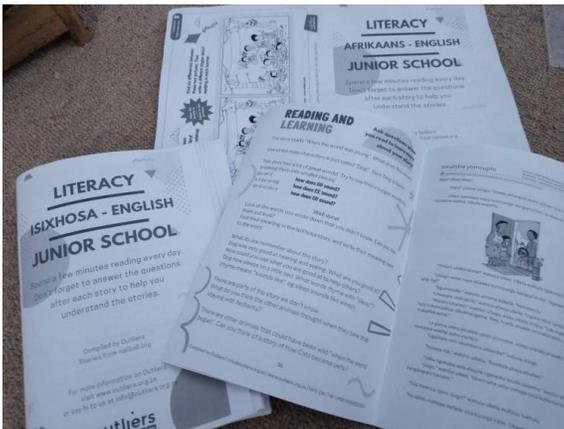


Children could not go to school.

In a township like Mbekweni, this meant that many lost access to their main (only?) nutritious meal of the day. It also meant that all children lost valuable months of education. All around the country, schooling continued at home for those able to afford online learning, with teachers preparing lessons and checking in with students.

**But precious few children or their families in Mbekweni have reliable access to internet.**

**Covid-19 thus increased the divide between those students who enjoy access to online learning and those who do not, and the ongoing inequality of access in our country was brought into clear focus.**



Thanks to a wonderful organisation, **Outliers**, we were able to distribute age-appropriate printed worksheets for children to use so that learning did not need to stop completely.



**Outliers** collated workbooks for distribution to students who do not have access to any learner-support. The worksheets have helped to keep them engaged in learning activities over the extended school closure. The gogos were able to hand out this material (along with some basic stationery) when children came for food, and the children were delighted to receive both!

**Outliers** was set up in response to the injustice of unequal education in South Africa. In their belief that every child deserves access to a safe place where they can develop their love for learning, small after-school programmes were set up.

Ten years later, **Outliers** is now a network of more than 200 programmes reaching over 15,000 students. Under Covid-19 restrictions, their programmes were not able to run, so they developed printed material that their students could use.

We were glad to be able to link up with this wonderful organisation.

See more about **Outliers** here: [www.outliers.org.za](http://www.outliers.org.za)

Photos: *Outliers*



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<https://www.facebook.com/Masazane-Soup-Kitchen-and-Child-Protection-Project-1408662505907226/>

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**Donations to:**

**Masazane Soup Kitchen and Child Protection Project**

First National Bank  
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**NPO: 207-414**

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We are thankful for the support from Rondebosch United Church, Cape Town, through their Samaritan Partners Trust, contributions from church services, and ongoing prayer support.

**Masazane Soup Kitchen**

c/o Rondebosch United Church

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[www.rondebosch-united-church.net](http://www.rondebosch-united-church.net)