

South Africa- Masiphumelele- A school for Luvo

The Story of Luvo and his kindergarten

South Africa: In the disadvantaged township of Masiphumelele people scrape by with piecemeal jobs – if they get one at all. Children are living on the streets, often traumatized and malnourished. In an attempt to alleviate some of this suffering some mothers from Masi joined together and opened the Waldorf initiative “Siyakhula”. The non-profit organization “Work For Love” (founded by Waldorf parents) is helping them. The occasion for founding the initiative in 2008 was the abuse and death of a three-year-old girl in the neighbourhood. The idea of a safe and sheltered place not only for their own children, but for the community made many parents decide to turn for help to “Work For Love”. The original building of the kindergarten was a corrugated iron shack on an illegal township property. In 2009, the initiative was able to move to a newly purchased and renovated property.

40-60 children now attend the new initiative Waldorf Preschool. The mothers are fully trained Waldorf teachers and after 7 years of mentoring and support are able to run the preschool independently under the umbrella of Work For Love. Work For Love opened further preschool classes at the Work For Love Family Centre to accommodate the need especially for the children of the adult skills training students. In January 2017, Work For Love opened a Primary School to provide ongoing quality education for these township children on a beautiful property next to Masiphumelele- a heaven from home.

Sitting on the banks of the muddy and littered creek, 4-year-old Luvo eats the partly rotten orange he just fished out of the dumping container next to the toilet blocks for the Wetlands settlement. He is hungry, his skin is itchy and he can't find his buddies. His mother had him when she was only 15. At 19 she is back at school, hoping to complete grade 10. There is no money to send him to a Kindergarten. His grandmother is busy, washing clothes somewhere up the creek. Boring! Therefore Luvo has decided to run off with his friends.

His grandmother has 4 young children and Luvo to look after during the day. His grandfather, Sithembele, is a minister who, among other things, will say the last rites in one of the shacks after a death has occurred and he helps resolve conflicts. There are 5 adults in the house looking for work. They live off the meagre income of occasional casual work and a child support grant.

To pay R 250 for a local Kindergarten or Educare in the informal township of Masiphumelele is not possible for this family. They do not want Luvo on the mud paths (there are no streets)! Only last month a little three year old girl went missing. She was found dead in the reeds behind the shacks, abused and brutally murdered by a drug-crazed youth.

Then, after another Cape winter storm had flooded the Wetlands shacks ankle deep - mixed with the water from the overflowing toilet block - a group of concerned mothers and grandmothers decided to start the *Siyakhula* (Xhosa for “We are growing”) kindergarten to keep the young children in a safe and clean place. A woman, Lucia, gave up her personal room for the kids and each teacher contributed R 100/month to feed the children.

When Work For Love, a non-profit organisation active in the community and established by parents of the Imhoff Waldorf School, responded to a plea for help in November 2008, they found many of the 40 children malnourished and in need of medical care. Luvo went to the clinic with one of our volunteers where his scabies and itchy skin was treated and he now receives a nutritional porridge daily until he achieves age appropriate weight. The children at the Imhoff Waldorf School started a

weekly vegetable and fruit collection to complement Siyakhula's nutritious lunches. Luvo would even visit the schoolrooms on weekends where he received a warm meal from Asanda and was allowed some time to play.

Through a charity run, which took place at the St. Christopher School in Germany as part of WOW-Day and with the help of the "weltwärts" program, the Imhoff school was able to help the small kindergarten, so that by December 2010, the school building was finally expanded and a kitchen was established. It is plain to see that the newly created place provides much more composure and order.

In 2014, the school expanded and can now hold 60 children. The teachers are fully trained and are an inspiration to teacher trainees who do their training practical there. The buildings are beautiful, the children receive two meals a day and have toys, blankets and mattresses. When they graduate they can look forward to attending the Work For Love Primary School.

During the past 9 years, *Work For Love* and the Friends of Waldorf Education have supported over 150 women from Masiphumelele in attending Waldorf teacher training both at the Centre for Creative Education and at Work For Love. Now, these women are teaching, training and assisting at the Imhoff Waldorf School, the Centre for Creative Education, Siyakhula and other preschools in the area that are implementing the Waldorf methods. Josephine, one of the original Siyakhula mothers and trainees, practices her new skills 2x per week at Siyakhula. Luvo loved "Aunt Josy" who brings along beautiful songs and stories, teaches the children how to make rainbow snakes and helps them discover that colors flow into each other creating new ones. Since 2012, after completing her training Josephine has been working at the Imhoff Waldorf School and is a well-respected teacher there. Her son Mango, who used to attend the preschool, is attending Imhoff High School and has a bright future ahead of him.

Luvo is now in grade 8 but he was not accepted at any of the schools outside Masiphumelele. He is attending Masiphumelele High School, a school rife with violence and student protests. Stabbings occur on a regular basis and gangs are controlling the situation. Luvo is holding out and hopes to become a policeman. We hope he will be able to keep his hope and vision for the future alive.

Since 2017, Work For Love offers children like Luvo ongoing affordable quality education that meets their needs. The Work For Love School provides primary school education based on the Waldorf Curriculum to children from disadvantaged communities.

Luvo's parents remain unemployed. Through Work For Love Luvo's father was able to fulfil his dream to teach the children at the community centre Marimba and they perform at community events. This brings in extra income.

Work For Love is committed to facilitating positive change in the social, economic, emotional and spiritual life of families in need. Through holistic skills training, job creation and the Waldorf School, Work For Love engages families who are willing and able to go on a self-activated path that leads from dependency to dignity. We educate to empower. Our aim is to enable parents to sustain nurturing families and be able to pay the ongoing school fees through learning to earn and then starting their own businesses.

It will take years before the businesses perform well enough to provide for the school fees. That's why we need your help!

For one child to attend our schools costs 90 €/month, out of which the unemployed families contribute the appropriate kindergarten fee of approximately 20 €. Trainees receive free tuition.

Sponsorship for a family (parent and child) is €275/month. This includes the training, business set up and mentorship for three years for the parent.

Every year massive fires destroy areas in Masiphumele. In fact, on Friday December 9th, 2016, at the time of writing this, 65 shacks burned down. Many of the teachers, students and parents regularly lose their homes and all their belongings. In winter the houses flood. Riots and community violence lead to forced strikes and fear. The problems are growing and we can't sit back even if we do not have all the answers.

Fortunately, Waldorf education can contribute to the healing that needs to take place under these difficult life circumstances. The parents remember their own childhood, when folk still sat around the fire at home and told each other stories. They say: "the school is like what our grandparents taught us and we like that."

Your support will enable us to carry on this important work assisting the forgotten people.

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