

MEDEA e.V. and the community of Maduma - Lubombo District, Inkhundla Siphofaneni

MEDEA e.V. is a humanitarian aid organisation from Germany and has been registered as MEDEA e.V. Eswatini since 2010. The main three pillars of MEDEA e.V.'s work are: Survival Support, Education and Health. Within the framework of humanitarian aid, we carry out projects based on the principle of "helping people to help themselves". We want to help people in poverty and need to improve their living situation by their own efforts in the long term; the focus is on children and AIDS orphans.

As part of an evaluation for a new project, we found the Maduma community in Lubombo District in 2015. The first contact with Chief Babe Mdlaka Gameze impressed our project coordinator from MEDEA e.V. Make Gertrud Langensiepen and her local Swazi co-worker Make Valencia van Vuuren so much that MEDEA e.V. decided to work with and for this large community to improve their living conditions. No sooner said than done!

With very committed, strong Swazi women's groups, the Sikhandza Bantfu Primary School was built with seven classrooms (three of which were built by the community itself), two teachers' houses, an administration block, a kitchen with a dining area for the children and a borehole. The borehole guarantees clean, clear drinking water for the children and is therefore vital - water is life!

It was wonderful to see the joy with which the Swazi women participated in the project. There was singing and dancing! We should also mention two Swazi boys, Jabulu and Mfansile, who actively participated. Sitting under a tree, the women told us at a meeting: "We are involved with MEDEA in our community because we are supporting the future of our children. This is the only way we can ensure a better future for later generations in the long run."

The total cost of the Sikhandza Bantfu Primary School is 2.9 million Emalangeni. The financing of this project is secured on the one hand by MEDEA e.V., on the other hand by Tatort - Straßen der Welt e.V. as well as by the German government in cooperation with the organisation Caritas Eswatini, which as a local partner is jointly responsible for the construction projects in Maduma.

After the completion of the work on the primary school, the question arose as to how to continue. The community asked MEDEA e.V. to build a high school. Of course, MEDEA e.V. saw the need for a secondary school. Again, it was the strong Swazi women and the school committee who worked hard on the project. Five classrooms, ten latrines, a laboratory and a container library are now available in Maduma for the students and teachers. The funding was also provided by MEDEA e.V., Tatort - Straßen der Welt e.V., i.e. 2 German NGOs and the German government. In the last one and a half years, a total of 3.8 million Emalangeni has been invested in the region for a continuous school career of the children and thus for sustainable education. In the future, up to 300 pupils will have the opportunity to attend a secondary school in their immediate neighbourhood without having to travel long distances to school.

The funds provided by the German government for the current project include not only construction measures but also capacity development measures in the form of workshops and trainings. Of course, this concept is only possible thanks to the committed and interested Swazis from the different communities. Our local staff member Valencia van Vuuren

organised the trainings. For example, the school committees and teachers were offered training on the following topics: psychosocial support, gender equality, domestic violence, economic empowerment of women, constitutional rights for women, prevention of human trafficking and child labour. Six school committees with a total of 40 participants took part in the training.

So, the people in the Maduma community are very committed in every respect and are happy to have the chance to improve their living situation in a sustainable way. That's why they lend a hand, that's why they learn! The MEDEA staff in turn feels comfortable in the Maduma community. We have been welcomed with open arms and have always felt welcome and appreciated. And this respect is mutual: many Swazis have become our friends! MEDEA and the Maduma community look to the future with joy and hope. We wish for a blessed coexistence far and wide.

Finally, we can only hope that the cooperation with the Eswatini government will also develop positively: although the construction of our secondary school is already finished and the school officially started in March, there are still no classes because the Eswatini government has not yet sent the promised teachers.

The children, the parents, MEDEA e.V., Caritas Eswatini, Micro Project, the inspectors and the school committee are therefore waiting for the government to keep its promise and for the school to start - into a future for the children that promises sustainable education!

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