

Report from the Good Neighbours Nutritional Outreach Program, South Africa (March 2005)

Prepared by Matthew Hayden, Trade plus Aid Project Manager

Hooper's Soya

Mike Hooper has been very helpful in all regards of the supply of maize and soup Soya mix for the program. He has gone out of his way many times helping with immediate direct deliveries in a crisis.

Informal settlement in Cleveland, Johannesburg.

To my surprise the group of people who committed themselves to the maintenance of this project has been, to a large extent, very well-organized and they have only missed a few collections of food in the time that it has been in operation. This I put down to community pressure on these people to "get it right" as well as the involvement of the local Induna. Although the area has had its ongoing problems with TB and the occasional fire, the situation is rather stable. Because this area is home to people from the Natal region in Johannesburg looking for work, however, it seems to be overlooked in terms of the government grants for job creation and poverty alleviation. There is a drive by the local authorities to relocate the settlement which is looked upon rather sceptically by the inhabitants of the settlement as they are of different political persuasions.....

Denver Mission School

The one disappointment has been that the school in the informal settlement had a very poor pass rate, resulting in the Department of Education denying the application for financial assistance which is desperately needed. The morale at the school at the beginning of the year is low with teachers having hoped for the stability of government assistance which is now not materialising.

After spending time with the administration of the school we all agree that possibly the biggest hurdle to overcome in the equation is that the level of English among the senior students is at a conversation level at best resulting in a written exam being complicated. Many of the students said that in retrospect they knew the answer however the way the question was worded confused them. I am therefore trying to get the better schools in the area to help with extra assistance and an emphasis on English and exam skills, possibly two days a week at the school for the senior students of this year.

Denver shelter

This relatively small group of teenagers is doing well and most are attending the Mission school mentioned above.

Malvern Clinic

Due to suspicions of pilfering this project has been moved to the Trauma Unit of the South African Police Station in Cleveland.

Food that has reached the sell-by date is donated to the Trauma Unit by the local Spar and Woolworth's and the volunteers at the Trauma Unit make up food parcels that are given to the people on TB medication and the destitute in the area.

Othandweni

This street children project located in Hillbrow, Johannesburg needs a lot more help than we can currently give. Social services have frequently promised to assist however not much has been forthcoming. We will continue to drop-off food once a week and do what we can.

Community Care project

This church-run project is run by volunteers and in constant need of hands-on help. They concentrate on food parcels and are reaching the very people we are trying to assist.

Ekuthuleni Crèche - Hillbrow

Here we help with baby food and have passed on any clothing donations that we receive. Mostly used by single parents while they look for day work.

Poor and Needy

An overnight shelter we help with maize and Soya

Impilo

HIV/AIDS Care centre with mobile clinic and health awareness program - Johannesburg city centre

Twilight Children

This is turning out to be a very successful project in the slums of Berea. They have put a lot of effort into creating a skills training centre that is teaching silk-screening and pottery skills. I have repaired a large kiln for them and the product they are producing is going to be displayed at the South African gift expo. SACDA (same show that Aid to Artisans use). We supply the maize and Soya requirements for the street children outreach program.

Impilo - Orange Grove

A shelter for abandoned infants. We are supplying not only the maize and Soya needs but the baby formula requirements as well. As of 16th March there are 150 abandoned infants at this shelter between the age of 2 days and 11 months. I

have been working with this group a lot recently and the number of abandoned babies on the streets of Johannesburg is staggering.

Trauma Unit - Cleveland Police Station

This unit of the Cleveland Police Station has taken on the responsibility of collecting "sell-by date" food from major retailers in the surrounding areas. We are supplementing this food with the supply of maize meal and Soya soup mix. 400-450 people arrive at the Trauma Unit, twice a week, and are given food parcels made up of all that has been collected. The Trauma Unit has made a point of directing this project to assist the elderly, frail and infirm, within their station area. Great emphasis has been placed on ensuring that the food is going to the people that truly need it most.

Hosanna Soup Kitchen - East of Johannesburg

This project is still administered the husband and wife team, who have taken the responsibility upon themselves to assist the destitute in their area. They are currently feeding Monday to Friday from their garage, and are distributing food parcels.

Johannesburg Region 9 - Hospice

The terminally-ill patients who attend the Malvern Clinic, who we already assist, are referred to this Hospice facility in an endeavour to make their transition as comfortable as possible. There are now 15 patients in this house, who are cared for by 3 Social workers. We are supplying all their maize and Soya requirements.

The Central Methodist Church Jhb - Outreach Programme

A group of volunteers from this Church in central Johannesburg go out onto the city streets, twice a week, and supply 1,200 meals a night to the people living on the streets. These people are mainly "illegal" immigrants, who have come to South Africa from north of our borders. Many of these people cannot get refugee status and therefore cannot share in the "system". We supply all the maize and Soya required for the support of this project.

FLOC - (For the LOVE of Children)

This project is also run by the Central Methodist Church which provides daily shelter for children of single parents, while the parents either look for or go to work during the day. We supply maize and Soya for the 160+ children that are looked after on a daily basis.