

Quick numbers

100+

supporters

250+

pairs of shoes

5

partnerships

Over 100 of you came together to support the two initial partnerships we identified. Those were with Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres - similar to our creches - and schools for which students face basic needs (such as access to shoes or sanitary pads) to ensure continued education with dignity. We ended up with over 250 pairs of shoes and some cash funding for our initial projects. It allowed for additional activities which surpassed our original expectations, as summarised below.

5 partnerships

Dede Ntsoelengoe Giving Back Initiative

One of our first partnerships has been with Dede Ntsoelengoe, an ex-political prisoner on Robben Island during the apartheid. Dede's initiative includes supporting students in his community with shoes and sanitary pads. Such support often follows from people moved by stories Dede shares when acting as a tour guide on Robben Island, now Dede's main job to ensure history is not forgotten.



One of us had visited Khayelitsha in 2016 and met Dede on a subsequent visit in 2022. It felt natural to work with Dede as our very first partner for Together Through Mountains, to illustrate the way international projects based on the skills core to our association can make a difference.

Thanks to all the support received from friends (including many friends from Swiss schools Coeur de la Côte in Rolle and La Côte International School in Aubonne), we handed over a first batch of nearly 300 pairs of shoes to Dede and his family, which Dede's wife, Mandisa, helped deliver to students and families in their neighbourhood. A true learning experience, we received feedback from parents who told us the project helped them discuss with their children the importance of recycling and other topics such as cultural exchanges and problem-solving across borders.



The above photos are from Dede's neighbourhood in Khayelitsha, one of South Africa's busiest and fastest growing township. Visiting with Dede couldn't have provided for a safer experience. We were welcomed in his house and kids were simply keen to engage and play together whilst we discussed our future plans. We are much grateful for Dede's time on Robben Island and his family's warm welcome (first photo from the left at the bottom of page 1 above).

Feminine hygiene products

We also raised enough funding to supply the two schools in Dede's neighbourhood with feminine hygiene products for 12 months. This initiative took a little more organising as it is not practical to

deliver all such items in one go and a plan is being put in place for optimal distribution. Many thanks for the support received in the UK as well as Europe and Switzerland to fund over 15'000 sanitary pads.

We are working with trusted local drivers to dispatch those feminine hygiene products on a regular basis and are exploring contacts in our network to partner with global brands to extend continuous supplies.

Youth4Life

Our second partnership identified before travelling was Youth4Life. We spent time getting to know their amazing unsung hero Madri Schuch who amongst other things works hard to foster a network of good samaritans to support dozens of creches looking after the education of children in various townships of Cape Town. Madri brightens the days of hundreds of kids when teaching on various topics and bringing support along the way. Thanks to one of our main supporters, we contributed educational material and are planning additional contributions to support Madri's activities.



Madri took us to a creche where the children were learning about emotions (in English and Afrikaans) through playful time and crafting their own emoji with food that then served as an afternoon snack. Beyond the energy of Madri and the engagement of the children, we met extraordinary women running creches in challenging conditions to enable newborns and toddlers to learn in a happy place.



In another creche, we facilitated with Madri a lesson on the importance of respecting nature and insects, to help protect the balance of life. We worked with the children on crafting an insect and planted seeds in a separate garden area.



Each child planted their own seed and discussed how they would care and grow their vegetable to eat them later on in the season. A wonderful lesson teaching about stewardship and healthy food.



Additional visits took place to understand the way Youth4Life partners with others to manage the daily issues faced by local communities, keeping children entertained with critical learning experiences and interactions. We delivered a lesson about colours and the children crafted their creche's mascot to

build their identity. It was also an opportunity for the children to make their own comforter to take home with them at the end of the day.

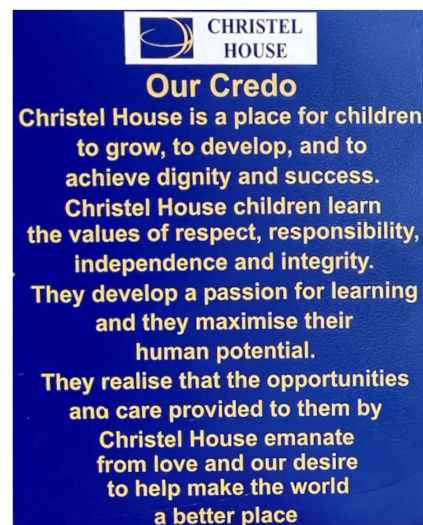


We met many amazing women who dedicate their time to create a safe space for learning, playing critical roles to improve their community and impact on the challenges of South Africa as an economy. Three of those women are below (from left to right): Cynthia, Cindy and Mila.



Christel House South Africa (CHSA)

Continuing to establish meaningful partnerships to connect children in line with the spirit of our association, we identified a further partner which is one of Cape Town's hidden gem, CHSA. That partner also immediately appeared very aligned with the spirit of Together Through Mountains.



Founded by Christel DeHaan (1942-2020), CHSA is part of Christel House International transforming the lives of children experiencing poverty around the world. Whilst the network has its highest number of schools (4) in the United States of Americas, the one school in Cape Town is looking to expand.



We are very grateful to CHSA's wonderful team and Elspeth Donovan (Fellow of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership) who introduced Together Through Mountains to Christel House South Africa. Our two 7yo children were greeted in one of CHSA's classes for a few hours whilst we spent time discussing the collaboration that we could develop in the future. It made for a very productive day as we explored the establishment of our partnership.

In the words of Founder Christel DeHaan, *the obstacles facing Christel House students are daunting - daily exposure to gang warfare, drugs, alcoholism, hunger, abuse, negative role models, violence, suffering and discrimination - but every day their students come to school, learn, and set their sights on a better tomorrow. They have dreams, and while at Christel House their aspiration is to make those*

dreams become reality. This resonates much with Together Through Mountains association's aim to equip the future generations with skills to better approach and tackle tomorrow's global challenges such as climate, economic and immigration crises.



As we discussed with some of the school's management and professors, it was obvious that CHSA are better equipped than Youth4Life and the people in the creches we discussed above who work with minimal facilities/means to provide the much needed learning opportunities to children. There was however one major problem we felt we could help CHSA through our association and it would make for a win-win partnership: it would consist in organising purposeful activities during school breaks based on the principles behind Together Through Mountains. The goal is to enable children/students to take part in projects based on collaboration, environmental stewardship and creativity when they are disconnected from CHSA and most exposed to the challenges of their communities and vulnerable as they live surrounded by gang warfare, drugs or alcoholism away from school routine.

We will be offering CHSA the opportunity to create activities which will empower children with appropriate leadership opportunities, whilst delivering socially useful projects adding value to less funded organisations such as the creches supported by Youth4Life, as further explained below.

School break hiking & painting activities

As we explored the right projects to develop in line with the aims of Together Through Mountains, there was this obvious partnership that came to our mind to bring a "nature experience" to the way we are hoping to connect the children whilst they learn how to tackle challenges together.



We met and spent a lot of time with Riyaad and Nabel, a most friendly duo of Captonians, who are both dads and entrepreneurs. One of the things they do is helping deliver safe hikes, looking after larger groups of people given the risks associated with hiking alone or in a small cohort.

We organised a test hike with a few children and their relatives living in the townships, and discussed subjects such planetary boundaries, the use of plastics or how to look after nature and its biodiversity.



Separately, as part of projects we supported during our various visits, there was this idea from Madri about painting a wall separating a soup kitchen and a community garden area. We provided all the tools and the paint itself. It made for a great project bringing people together. The feedback received was much positive and highlighted how the community came together to deliver on the project.



These activities could be repeated with CHSA students taken on “leadership hikes” and planning together with our partners some improvements to the creches supported by Madri’s network.

With the above project, we hope to support the development of communities in the most sustainable way possible, combining educational, environmental and social usefulness in a context focused on protecting the next generations and fostering a sense of community engagement in a peaceful way.



The above photo on the left is Mila's ECD centre in Helderberg. We plan to use it as a pilot to report in our next update about this new partnership we will be developing.

Coding competition

Last but not least, we spent time with entrepreneur and philanthropist Lonwabo Marale who founded Successful Journals to promote innovation and businesses issued from the township economy. One of the projects that Lonwabo is keen to deliver is about teaching children digital skills such as coding.

We are grateful to Pierre who kindly supported this initiative through the delivery of online coding lessons for students in selected Cape Town schools coordinated by Lonwabo. We plan to try source secondhand computers to equip schools with the material to practice coding.



Special thanks to Lonwabo Marele and Successful Journals for spending time with us during the trip to capture our various projects.

What's next?

During April and May 2024, we formally incorporated "Together Through Mountains" as a Swiss association and established the required governance. We also opened the association's bank account.

Over the next few months, we will further develop our projects with Dede, Madri, CHSA, Riyaad/Nabiel and Lonwabo and formalise our existing partnerships.

As part of the above, we will be finalising our monitoring & evaluation processes so we ensure appropriate feedback is in place to demonstrate as and when needed that donations received for the initiatives supported by Together Through Mountains always make the expected impact.

In parallel to setting up and piloting the leadership hikes and community painting projects with Y4L and CHSA, we are hoping to organise online talks and debates for children to share on key topics such as plastic pollution in the oceans, or other engaging conversations.