



Bredasdorp Soup Kitchen

# THE HEADSTART TRUST RURAL RELIEF EFFORT

by WP van Zyl

The HeadStart Trust has been working in poor and marginalised communities of the Cape for over 10 years. In the last 5 years, activities centred around Napier in the Overberg, where the Jack family farm is located. Working at Protea Primary in Napier, we started with an organic vegetable garden development, warm beanies for the young learners in winter, donations of extra furniture and annual stationery and art equipment. We also arranged outreach programmes from privileged schools in Cape Town to do community service in Napier.

In 2018 The HeadStart Trust introduced a Music Education Programme. The results reflected international experience and research, and were astounding. Music pupils showed an average annual attendance rate increase from around 75% to 98%. Their general behaviour and academic results in other subjects also improved markedly. In 2020 we hired more staff and acquired more instruments and were able to increase those receiving music tuition from 36 to 130 pupils.

**“As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the HeadStart Trust's focus has shifted to Food Relief.”**

## RURAL RELIEF EFFORT

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trustees of The HeadStart Trust have agreed to shift the short-term focus of the Trust to Food Relief.

There is a history of rural villages in the Cape Agulhas region being ostracised and disregarded, and when financial support isn't sucked completely away, these communities are often last in line. This underlines the massive challenge we face here: for a start, children don't have access to the usual daily school meals (only twice a week) and, in the past, local government bureaucracy has hampered efficient feeding schemes. The community is consequently wary of empty promises.

A majority of the community is not earning any income during the lockdown period and finding it very difficult to access the government relief grants promised by Pretoria due to consistently changing criteria and resulting confusion. Foreign nationals, who out of desperation sought refuge in these rural towns and send large portions of their piecemeal income to family members in other African states, are either unable or too terrified to register for any type of relief. The need for assistance is thus overwhelming.

We have begun our efforts by vastly expanding the Napier Primary organic vegetable garden and donating the required seed and tools for the village to contribute directly in their own medium-term food security.

But we require short-term, encompassing solutions as well. With the full support of Executive Mayor of the Cape Agulhas Municipality, Mr Paul Swart, and Napier's Ward Councillor, Mrs Evelyn Sauls, The HeadStart Trust will play a crucial coordinating role in helping to alleviate the growing social disaster catalysed by this pandemic and the lockdown.

We have begun lobbying civil society organisations, government funds and individuals to donate financially to a structured and inclusive Rural Food Relief Platform for Napier and surrounding areas. Furthermore, we will use our personnel and farm vehicles to collect and distribute donated food (under strict lockdown safety measures) to those most in crisis.

We will utilise the food storage and refrigeration facilities that have been established at the Thusong Centre and Packtown Food in Bredasdorp. Mr Swart has acknowledged that food collection and distribution is a new challenge for his administration and the municipality desperately needs cooperative partners to overcome the challenge we collectively face as a community.

The HeadStart Trust is also liaising directly with various community representatives and farmers. Communication is also continuous with religious leaders and on community social media platforms.

As agreed with elected representatives, we will channel food donation through the Napier Community Police Forum (CPF) and local farmer organisations. Local food donations can already be made at the Napier OK Minimark, but our intention is to expand this systematically and emphatically.

We need your help to support these communities that are a foundation for our own food security, but find themselves abandoned in this lockdown period.



Struisbaai Mobile Soup Kitchen



The main contact person for The HeadStart Rural Food Relief Programme is:

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The HeadStart Trust Charitable Trust Number is IT 721/2019(C)

## BASIC BUDGET

Each meal supplied from the soup kitchens mentioned below consists of a 250ml serving of soup/stew, some bread and a piece of fruit. Our current budget for this is R10/pp (\$ 0.57), this includes the electricity/gas the soup kitchens use in the preparation of these meals.

## WE CONTRIBUTE TO RURAL RELIEF EFFORTS IN THE FOLLOWING TOWNS:

- **NAPIER**
  - Nuwerus Daycare, Soup Sisters & Napier Farm Stall Soup Kitchen feed around 400-500 people a day, 7 days a week
  - Protea Primary School, we established the vegetable garden used by the school for their feed programme
- **STANFORD**
  - Rotary Club of Stanford soup kitchens feed around 2600 people a day, 7 days a week
- **BREDASDORP**
  - Antoinette Events Soup kitchen feeds around 2250 people a day, 3 days a week
- **STRUISBAAI**
  - Struisbaai Sea Shack feeds around 300-400 people a day 2 days a week
- **ELIM**
  - Black Oystercatcher Wines SMA feeds around 2000-3000 people a day, 3 days a week

Thank you and God Bless.

The HeadStart Trust Trustees



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