

# HANDS AT WORK IN AFRICA

## HOUTBOS COMMUNITY

### SOUTH AFRICA | OSHOEK REGION

The community of Houtbos is located in South Africa in a mountainous region near the border of Eswatini. Many residents have come from Eswatini to South Africa seeking a better life, but without proper identification papers, children cannot finish their education and, in turn, find jobs. There is a lack of sufficient employment in Houtbos, and many people survive by ploughing their fields for food. However, this often yields a limited profit. If there is food to sell, people have to walk to the border, but those opportunities are also limited. There is also little access to clean water.

Child-headed households are common in this area as parents have either passed away or left to find work in other areas.

Hands at Work began working in Houtbos Community after recognising that many of the families from the Oshoek Community Based Organisation (CBO) were unable to come to the Care Point during the rainy season or when school transport was limited. There is a distance between Oshoek and Houtbos, and when there is rain, the roads are impassable.

Through the support of the local church and the local community leaders, volunteer Care Workers were mobilised and the Houtbos CBO was formed. Houtbos local Ma Nester, who was previously a member of the Hands at Work team in Oshoek, has played a key role in establishing and maintaining these relationships.

In 2017, the most vulnerable children in Houtbos began coming to the Care Point where they could receive a hot, nutritious meal daily and support with their education and basic health care. The children previously going to the Oshoek Care Point started coming to the Care Point in Houtbos, enabling them to be closer to home and have the ability to play without worrying about needing to rush home before dark.

In 2017, two toilets were constructed, increasing the health and hygiene of the children and Care Workers. Throughout 2019 and 2020, there were a number of physical projects that took place in Houtbos: a new Care Point building including a children's shelter, kitchen, food storage, a water tank, and a fence were constructed with the help of the local church in Houtbos. Each of these projects contributes to ensuring good health, hygiene and safety for the most vulnerable children.



Number of Care Workers **6**  
 Coordinator Name **Nelisiwe**  
 Distance from Local Office **15km**  
 Basic Services Started In **2017**