



ESWATINI



IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS

In 2018, a sobering report from The Luke Commission, our distribution partner in Eswatini, shed light on the healthcare crisis gripping this small, landlocked nation in southern Africa.

The majority of its 1.1 million people lives in rural areas, far removed from vital medical care. The devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic has left a staggering impact, orphaning one out of every five children. Eswatini's median age is just 23.7 years, ranking it in the bottom quarter of all countries.¹ Dark forecasts indicated that without swift action, the population could decline to a critical point by 2040.

The country was already struggling. Then, COVID struck.

The pandemic mercilessly targeted Eswatini's fragile healthcare system, which was already stretched thin by limited resources and insufficient infrastructure. A dire shortage of critical medical supplies, including life-saving personal protective equipment (PPE), threatened healthcare workers who were already exhausted by months of relentless toil. The ability to mount an effective response to the pandemic grew increasingly strained.

In the midst of this chaos, Free Wheelchair Mission was able to offer a lifeline by providing much-needed medical supplies, wheelchairs, and other mobility aids to the people of Eswatini, thanks to the continued support of our work by friends like you.

DONATE NOW

Provide the life-transforming gift of mobility and give someone renewed hope, freedom, and independence.

FreeWheelchairMission.org/donate



**FREE
WHEELCHAIR
MISSION**



DISABILITY'S LINKS TO POVERTY

Eswatini grapples with a poverty level of 63%,² which permeates its predominantly rural communities. Contributing factors include a weak economy, high unemployment rates, rapid population growth, and a decline in agricultural production attributed to the HIV/AIDS crisis, which has led to the loss of both manpower and farming assets that are sold off to pay for medical treatment and funerals.

One effect of poverty is malnutrition, which, along with insufficient prenatal care, can result in congenital conditions that lead to disability. Additionally, poor and hazardous living and working conditions have led to a substantial number of accidents, which are another considerable cause of disability. Nearly one out of every eight people in Eswatini lives with a disability,³ with more than a quarter of them being mobility related.⁴ These individuals often encounter social exclusion, isolation, and inadequate access to essential healthcare, education, and vocational training, further exacerbating economic hardship: the unemployment rate for people with disabilities here is 85%.⁵ Poverty and disability form a cyclical relationship, reinforcing each other as both a cause and a consequence of disability.⁶

Still, there is hope. The World Bank asserts that “the near-term outlook is positive,” with a boost

“NO LONGER LOOKED DOWN UPON”

Wheelchairs like the one received by Waynand (37) help battle harmful myths about disability.



in the wholesale and retail, construction, public administration, and tourism sectors projected to drive growth in 2023.⁷

For those living with disabilities in Eswatini, mobility would open doors to increased independence, allowing them to not only go to school, make a living, and participate in community, but also get to medical clinics and receive crucial healthcare services that would help prevent further issues and stem a decline in their overall wellbeing.

MOBILIZING IN ESWATINI

Free Wheelchair Mission has been sending wheelchairs to Eswatini since 2012, when the country was known as Swaziland. In addition to wheelchairs, Free Wheelchair Mission also provides mobility aids such as crutches, walkers, and canes, along with medical supplies such as bandages, gloves, masks, and surgical tools, to The Luke Commission, our local distribution partner, through our Medical and Mobility Emergency Fund. Initially designed to meet various mobility needs such as crutches for those who can walk with assistance or corrective surgeries for conditions like clubfoot, this program gained newfound significance during the height of the pandemic, when the PPE included in these supplies was in high demand. “This shipment contained many types of masks and gowns, which were very useful in the COVID response for personal protective equipment,” reports The Luke Commission. “There were also many surgical tools, sutures, and consumables that were so useful in the need to provide additional procedures.”

However, wheelchairs remain the primary reason behind our partnership in Eswatini. “The wheelchairs give new life to families who otherwise feel hopeless,” maintains Dr. Harry VanderWal, who co-founded The Luke Commission with his wife, Echo. “They are so needed and are so life-transformative for many patients.”

¹ CIA World Factbook.

² United Nations Population Fund.

³ Swaziland 2017 Housing and Population Census.

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.4102%2Fhsag.v27i0.1861>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Swaziland National Disability Plan of Action, July 2015.

⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/eswatini/overview>.



EQUIPPING THE FRONTLINE

In addition to wheelchairs, Free Wheelchair Mission also sends much-needed medical supplies to Eswatini through our Medical and Mobility Emergency Fund.

“A VERY IMPORTANT TOOL”

Waynand is a 37-year-old whose life took a drastic turn in 2018, when an accident left him paralyzed from the waist down. He was left completely dependent on his mother, who would often leave home for up to two weeks at a time to find work and support the family. During these times, Waynand would have to move about and do household chores on his own, without any assistance or mobility aids.

Waynand regained his independence when our local distribution partner fitted him with a new GEN_2 wheelchair, made possible by the generosity of our supporters. “This wheelchair has been a very important tool for my mobility,” said Waynand. “I am now able to move from one place to another and I am also able to complete my daily routines at home.”

The impact of Waynand’s wheelchair extends beyond the confines of his home. With mobility, Waynand is free to go to the local store, attend church, and explore his community, embracing every opportunity to connect with other people.

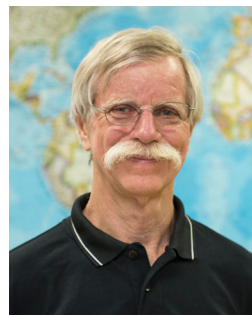
The wheelchair does more than just provide mobility to individuals like Waynand. “The wheelchairs do help break stereotypes and myths about the disabled as they traditionally are believed to be cursed,” reported Dr. VanderWal. “Giving them a wheelchair to elevate them to be able to move around and take care of themselves opens the eyes of those around. Suddenly, they are no longer looked down upon, but rather included and respected.”

Dr. VanderWal continued, “The wheelchairs continue to open doors for us to listen when we speak about spiritual matters, about how Christ loves the people of Eswatini. They allow us to provide a full comprehensive service as recipients and their families are offered medical screening and HIV testing. In addition, families are more willing to listen when speaking about spiritual matters and listen when explaining how Christ loves them and desires a personal relationship with them. Patients feel valued.”

The impact of a wheelchair extends far beyond its immediate recipient, reaching deep into the emotional, spiritual, and social fabric of communities: Echo VanderWal estimates that one wheelchair can touch the lives of up to 600 people in Eswatini. Furthermore, these wheelchairs are serving as catalysts for our distribution partner in Eswatini to combat other devastating health crises.

With your support, countless lives are being transformed—and saved—in Eswatini and around the world. Thank you for making a difference.

Blessings,



Don Schoendorfer, Ph.D.
Founder and President
Free Wheelchair Mission



MIRACLE OF MOBILITY

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023 • LIVESTREAMED

SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 • IN-PERSON IN ORANGE COUNTY, CA

You are invited to join us for Miracle of Mobility, our annual event to raise funds to provide life-changing mobility in developing countries!

This inspiring event will feature special guests, musical performances, interactive ways to participate, and heartening messages from friends around the world, including opportunities to virtually meet wheelchair recipients.

Livestreaming

Sunday, September 17, 2023
Starting at 5:00 PM PT/8:00 PM ET

In-Person in Orange County, CA

Friday, September 29, 2023
Doors open at 5:00 PM • Dinner begins at 6:30 PM
Other regional events are currently being planned.

You won't want to miss it!
Check MiracleofMobility.org for updates.

Give Today to Transform Lives



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Go online 24 hours a day for easy one-time or monthly giving.



Please send checks to:

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Suite 300
Irvine, California 92618



800.733.0858

Call Monday to Friday
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM PT

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Transforming lives through the gift of mobility®