

The Sophia FOUNDATION

Raising consciousness for the good of the whole



Issue 10 | Dec 2022 | End of Year Letter

How can we place the challenges of our times in the higher context of world evolution and the complex interrelationships between ourselves and the world in which we live?

Dear Friends of The Sophia Foundation

In The Sophia Foundation end of the year letter 2021, I wrote of the recognition by the United Nations that “we need to shift our attention to what is going on inside of us” to meet the complexity of our current challenges. According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022, the challenges have grown in severity and magnitude and have placed the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in jeopardy. Can we find some comfort and direction by placing the crisis of our times in the higher context of world evolution and the complex interrelationships between ourselves and the world in which we live?

In seeking answers to this question, I have drawn on inspiration from my understanding of indications from the works of Rudolf Steiner.

The whole of creation, which includes the earth, the human being, the kingdoms of nature and our planetary system has evolved over long periods of time with each new cycle adding something new to the world's evolution and to the stage of development of the human being. The purpose of our current evolutionary stage is to gradually develop an independent, conscious sense of self.

Rudolf Steiner describes mankind's unique relationship to nature and our place in the world. In the most ancient stages of earthly civilization the relationship between macrocosm and the microcosm, the world

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“ We are now at the Turning Point of time where we carry mutual responsibility for what the human being and the world will eventually become. The old must die away for something new to come into being. But it cannot simply be replaced by something already known. ”

Website: www.thesophiafoundation.org.za

Trustees: Lorraine Forbes (Founder) · Koos Rossouw · Johan van Zyl · Jessica Chaplin ·

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without and its reflection within the human being, was instinctively understood. People lived in a dreamy consciousness where the boundaries between these two different worlds were less distinct. With the rise of the Modern Age, and a descent more deeply into matter, a powerful cleft was driven between human beings, nature and the divine.

But this dismemberment, where religion, culture and the state were separated, also impacted on our social life - in our relationship with one another being instinctively expressed in the chaos of the French Revolution with the words Brotherhood, Equality and Freedom. Recognising this split, Rudolf Steiner clarified the confusion of these terms with 'Brotherhood' affirming economic dependence on one another; 'Equality' representing our acknowledgement for equal civil rights in the judicial and political domain; and above all with 'Freedom' being in the realms of science, art, and the religions/spiritual life. It is only this journey to the point of human freedom that awakens individual responsibility for the conscious evolution of humankind and the world in which we live.

We are now at the Turning Point of time where we carry mutual responsibility for what the human being and the world will eventually become. The old must die away for something new to come into being. But it cannot simply be replaced by something already known. Something new must be created where there is a renewal of culture, a bringing together of science, religion, and art in a sacred unity. Such a new revelation cannot be received passively as was the case in previous epochs, it must now be created by, in and through human beings out of their own individual freedom.

For the first time in our evolutionary journey, the future task of evolution is therefore dependent on human beings. As we participate in the destiny of our times, our responsibility as human beings is to choose out of our own individual freedom to become co-creators in the world process and to be in service to that which is greater than we are - the evolution of humanity in love.

“ *Something new must be created where there is a renewal of culture, a bringing together of science, religion, and art in a sacred unity. Such a new revelation cannot be received passively as was the case in previous epochs, it must now be created by, in and through human beings out of their own individual freedom.* ”



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OUR FOUR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS DURING 2022

- STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
Bursaries and Inner Leadership Course
- WATERSHED
Animal Rescue, Rehabilitation and Outreach
- PEACE PARKS
The Sophia Foundation Rangers Support Programme
- EARTHCHILD PROJECT
Alumni Programme

The focus of The Sophia Foundation in 2022 has continued to be on Inner Development and deepening our relationships and collaborations. With Stellenbosch University this was done through an Inner Leadership Course with our bursary students. With Peace Parks by introducing a Resilience and Inner Leadership Module into The Sophia Foundation Ranger Support and Incentive Programme.

We have sponsored the Earthchild Alumni for the 8th year and continue to be both deeply touched but also heartbroken by the incredible outreach work that Stephne Jackson from Watershed Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation does on behalf of the Animal Kingdom. Our initial exploration into the environmental needs of the Magingqi Community has catalysed the development of the proposed Community Based Natural Resource Management Plan which will serve as a planning instrument to guide the economic development and environment management within the community going forwards.

A short summary follows of The Sophia Foundation partnerships this year.



STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

BURSARIES AND INNER LEADERSHIP COURSE



“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives” Rudolf Steiner

Ilze Ockers, Course Facilitator, writes:

During 2022 The Sophia Foundation partnered with Stellenbosch University (SU) for the second year and awarded another 17 bursaries to a second cohort of students from the “missing middle”. The professionalism, full backing and logistical support offered by Pieter Swart, Director of Principal and Transformational Gifts at SU has been invaluable. As he stated in last year’s newsletter ‘While students are on campus, they continue to weave the tapestry of their lives and prepare for an uncertain future. A condition of receiving the bursary was that students take the opportunity to broaden their horizons, grow and develop their consciousness to face the future, and explore and grow as individuals by attending an Inner Leadership Course.’ He went on to remind us that at the heart of Stellenbosch University’s coat of arms lies the very apt Latin phrase, *Pectora roborant cultus recti*, which means, “A sound education strengthens the spirit”. It is this particular aspect, the strengthening of the spirit, inner development and self-knowledge that is so central to the heartbeat of the vision



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.... STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

BURSARIES AND INNER LEADERSHIP COURSE



of The Sophia Foundation and which is so often neglected in the mainstream tertiary curriculum.

The course this year again took the form of four workshop sessions spread throughout the year, with a fifth and final session at the end of the academic year in October, during which participants shared their reflections and learnings and did presentations to the rest of the group.

This year the architecture of the Inner Leadership course was intentionally designed around a new global initiative referred to as the Inner Development Goals (IDG's). The motivation for the IDG's is stated on their website as follows:

“The starting point for this initiative was a belief that there is a blind spot in our efforts to create a sustainable global society. We have accumulated much knowledge about environmental problems, climate change, poverty, public health, various social ills. We know a lot about conditions and causes, and there is also a lot of knowledge and ideas about what could and ought to be done. We have a vision of what needs to happen, but progress along this vision has been disappointing. The initiators of the IDG project were motivated by a belief that what has been largely missing is a keen insight into what abilities, qualities, or skills we need to foster among those individuals, groups and organizations that play crucial roles in working to fulfil the visions of the Sustainable Development Goals. When facing challenging tasks, there is a need for a range of cognitive and emotional skills and other qualities that go beyond what most people normally learn

in schools and higher education. The purpose of the Inner Development Goals project is to draw attention to the need to support development of abilities, skills and other inner qualities for people and organizations involved in efforts to contribute to a more sustainable global society.”

The IDG project identified 23 Inner Leadership skills and qualities which they organised under five main themes, namely: Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating, and Acting. During the 2022 course we covered 18 out of the 23 Inner Leadership skills with inputs, readings and other material supported by experiential learning and group process.

Not only was there a robust and elegant alignment between the vision and goals of The Sophia Foundation and the IDG project; but as the course progressed, from session to session, we experienced the most blessed synchronicities between the chosen skills and materials of each session, and what the students were meeting in their worlds. This ranged from the highly publicized racialised incidents on campus, to the troubling themes of gender-based violence, and the ever-growing theme of mental health and depression, including the devastating incidents of suicide which touched some of our group directly. In addition, our conversations seemed to harmonise with the rhythm of the academic year and the seasons, from care-free party time, to protest time, to the calling of student leadership, to exam stress, to facing the challenges of completing their academic journeys and preparing for the world of work. Each session seemed to

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BURSARIES AND INNER LEADERSHIP COURSE

Speak directly to their own experiences with a divine timing and unfolding.

As the designer and facilitator of the group I was both energised and humbled by the beautiful soulful presence and sincere participation and commitment of such a diverse group of students to their own inner learning journeys. But what was even more important, and inspiring was their commitment to be a circle of support to one another and to witness each other's journeys throughout the year. Every session felt like a healing of sorts across all the different aspects of diversity represented by different participants – race, gender, culture, religion, language as well as disciplines – markers which often have the potential to divide and separate us from one another. How can we bring more of this sensibility, the essence of the vision of The Sophia Foundation to our tertiary education, to our young leaders who face such a broken world?

As many of the students commented, throughout the year Lorraine was far more than the benefactor of the process. She stepped fully into the role of wise elder and shared generously of herself and her own life experiences throughout the process which contributed immeasurably to the very positive feedback and evaluations of the course.

“Lorraine was such an amazing sponsor, but much more than just that, she was an inspiration”

The sad fact remains that without the bursaries some of these students would have been in financial trouble and might not have been able to complete their studies. But the beautiful gift and opportunity for inner development which lay hidden within that crisis was not lost on a single one of the students. May we all continue to find the gifts hidden in our adversity. And may we, in the words of one of our participants, always tread mindfully around each other and in this beautiful world of ours.

We look forward to meeting the third cohort of the young Stellenbosch leaders early in 2023.



“ *May we learn to be existentially creative when we build that new world. When we are grateful, we can begin to think, live, and love beyond ourselves. We'll want to build things that last beyond our time not for our own legacy like in the past, but for the benefit of humans that exist beyond ourselves. We love the saying that says “great men plant trees, underneath the shade of which they will never be able to sit”. Before this journey I would not have been able to see the significance in that statement, but now it really pushes me to think and believe beyond myself.* ”



WATERSHED

ANIMAL RESCUE & REHABILITATION FUND

WATERSHED

“Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of Nature and its beauty” Albert Einstein

Stephanie Jackson, Founder, writes:

When I first became involved in animal rescue 22 years ago, I imagined it as rescuing an animal on the highway and taking it to a shelter. I didn't envisage how tough, emotional, and consuming it would be and see it now as a journey of enlightenment where the footprints I have travelled from educating myself by assisting at different shelters to my journey after founding Watershed in 2010, have enabled me to guide others towards a more humane way of treating domestic animals.

Shelters are overflowing with unwanted dogs and cats exacerbated by the domino effect of Covid. A high percentage of these animals have little chance of being adopted and euthanasia of healthy animals has become a strategy by many shelters to overcome the surplus. In addition, many domestic animals have simply been abandoned. Over population arises out of uncontrolled breeding and unconscious ownership and we are desperately in need of stringent laws to regulate the breeding of domestic animals.

I have come to believe that sterilization is currently the only humane way to curb the overpopulation and trauma that domestic animals are experiencing and since our inception Watershed has sterilized over 5000 animals in the most compromised areas of the Western Cape.

We are very mobile and if we have the funds, can go virtually anywhere to help animals in need – and we do. With the generous support of The Sophia Foundation over the past few years, we have been able to upscale our work and plan regular sterilization outreaches into areas where there is significant animal neglect and cruelty, working where possible in collaboration with existing animal welfare organizations or supportive communities. These areas include the West Coast – St Helena Bay, Laingville and The Cove; Napier – and surrounds; Tesselaarsdal outside



A dog brought for treatment



Left: Langrug firedog



Right: A new life



WATERSHED

ANIMAL RESCUE & REHABILITATION FUND

WATERSHED

Helping those without a voice, one animal at the time....



A dog brought for treatment



Sutherland Outreach, rescued, treated



Sutherland Outreach.... and rehomed

Caledon; Franschhoek – Groendal, Langrug and Tsotsombeni; and Stellenbosch – Bottelary Road. The work is intense – on a 2-day outreach to the Napier and Bredasdorp settlements, we sterilized 107 dogs and cats, vaccinated against rabies, nexgarded and fiproteced all against ticks and fleas, and handed out food bags, treats and blankets. We work closely with a team of outreach vets and are hoping that by returning to areas on a more consistent basis we will be able to gauge statistically the impact of regular sterilizations on animal populations.

We have expanded to assist more rescue centres and communities with specific needs and have been able to plan ahead and to regularize our feeding programs and family visits offering support for animal care and veterinary treatment and check-ups. In the process we have witnessed how building a good relationship between rescue worker, owner and animal has led to a general improvement in the health of the animal and the well-being and respect between owner and pet. In extreme cases we do rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome.

Sterilization, education and supporting other welfare organizations with specific needs are key to our outreach and whilst our work is heart breaking at times, we are witnessing changes in people's mindsets. To observe the attitude changes in initially depressed and sad environments where dogs are chained with no shelter, water, or food and where owners are hostile and to return to be welcomed back by friendly owners and healthy and happy cats and dogs free of chains is hugely encouraging and makes our work worthwhile.

But all this takes funding, and we would not be able to do the work that we do without the support of The Sophia Foundation. Together we are helping those without a voice, one animal at a time.



PEACE PARKS™
FOUNDATION

PEACE PARKS
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THE SOPHIA FOUNDATION RANGERS
SUPPORT PROGRAMME

*“Those who protect and save other animals lead the way in protecting
and saving humanity and the earth”* Unknown

Ken Maggs, Counter Poaching Unit Manager, writes:

In 2021, The Sophia Foundation generously committed to support field rangers in Peace Parks landscapes through an annual donation for three years - firstly to expand Peace Parks' existing success-based incentive scheme across three countries; secondly, to provide rangers with training in personal development and leadership; and thirdly, to establish an annual award for the best performing ranger in each of the participating parks.

The incentive scheme programme whereby rangers are paid and incentivised for the apprehension of suspected poachers and the recovery of poaching related wildlife products and equipment was successfully rolled out this year. It served to motivate rangers and improve operational efficiencies leading to the successful arrest of many suspected poachers and the recovery of a number of illegal firearms, snares, and other poaching related equipment in each of the parks. In the Limpopo National Park alone, 127 Field Rangers undertook 1 046 foot-patrol and 262 vehicle patrols. In addition, 30 aerial and 2 boat patrols were conducted, bringing the total man hours on patrol to more than 11 000. The Field Rangers' efforts resulted in the recovery of 207 snares, 3 gin trap and a fire-arm. Although 31 groups of poachers were detected, only 3 poachers could be arrested during the patrols. However, a sting operation led to the arrest of 3 elephant poachers selling ivory to undercover agents and there were 5 successful prosecutions.





PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION

THE SOPHIA FOUNDATION

RANGERS SUPPORT PROGRAMME



The Resilience & Leadership Training Course for rangers took place over two weeks in late September at the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) in Hoedspruit. Based on leadership qualities they had shown; seven students, with different backgrounds, personalities, qualifications, experience, and skills were selected for the training from Simalaha Community Conservancy in Zambia; Nyika National Park and Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve in Malawi; and Maputo, Zinave, Banhine and Limpopo National Parks in Mozambique. This course, the first of its kind for the SAWC, was specifically designed in collaboration with The Sophia Foundation and Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) to enhance the inner development and leadership skills of rangers. From all accounts of both students and facilitators the pilot training course was a huge success. So much so that it was recommended that it be further developed to become a fixture of the ranger development courses offered by the SAWC and that a student support programme be developed by the SAWC with support from The Sophia Foundation and PPF and implemented to ensure ongoing interaction with and support to the student's further development and progress into 2023 and beyond.

Plans are underway, with the involvement of each of the park management authorities, Peace Parks and The Sophia Foundation, to confirm and make the necessary arrangements to hold an Awards function within each of the eight parks before the end of the year



earth
child
PROJECT

EARTHCHILD

ALUMNI PROGRAMME



“As a principle, all that men will discover in the course of the Earth’s evolution is already present in Nature. But what the human being will really give to the Earth is love, a love which will evolve from the most sensuous to the most spiritualised form of love. This is the mission of the Earth-evolution. The Earth is the cosmos of love.” Rudolf Steiner

Janna Kretzmar, Founder and Director, writes

2022 has been a year of contrasts, both for the Alumni Programme and for the Organisation as a whole, a year of inspiring highlights, and profound challenges. For the first time since 2019, our Alumni Programme had both the 8 Day Leadership Camp in addition to our 4 full day workshops. Our team repeatedly shared how impressed they were with the Alumni - with who they are as individuals and how they are navigating the challenges they face as teenagers living in their communities.

As Caitlin, one of our Grade 12 Alumni from Lavender Hill shared, “Where you come from doesn’t always define where you are going to be one day. I live in a community where most people either do drugs or fall pregnant. Earthchild Project (ECP) really gave me

something to do instead of falling into that bad stuff like everybody else. For me, ECP teaches you all about being kind, helping others, keeping the environment safe. Instead of adding what’s wrong to the world, why don’t you try and better it for the next generation?”

The Alumni youth have walked the journey with ECP since they were in primary school, and so the true impact is in the subtle long-term shifts that take place. Like Lithemba, who is in Grade 10 in Khayelitsha shared, “Where I live in the township there is very little nature. That’s why I joined the Hiking Club and then the Young Leaders and then the Alumni. I like to connect to people and connect to nature at the same time. These connections have made a big impact.

It built my confidence and courage and now when I speak to people, I am more open. Especially because I come from a township where this is difficult. Many young people are dying with the challenges in my

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EARTHCHILD

ALUMNI PROGRAMME

community. ECP taught me bravery, how to have courage and speak out. Not to hold my voice. To be grateful for anything that happens to me. Grateful to just be alive. With ECP every moment is a highlight. We open up to our fears. We push our limits.

ECP also helped me with anger issues at home. I had a short temper, but now I use breathing skills and meditation I learned to calm me down when I'm stressed or have anxiety.

Being an Earthchild means I have many people to come to. People that I know that care about me. It has taught me to connect with nature and care for the planet. It inspired me to be a better person because after everything I've been through, I still can reach my fun side, my courage, and my bravery. Reach for my stars. The sky is the limit."

We remain deeply grateful to The Sophia Foundation for the ongoing support of our Alumni Programme. In addition, we are very grateful for Lorraine's incredible wisdom and support which has played a big role in helping us navigate the organisational challenges of this year.

Together we are playing our role in creating a new generation of conscious, confident, and inspired young leaders!



CONNECT

We teach children to connect to themselves and each other through yoga and life-skills



CULTIVATE

We nurture a love and respect for nature through worm farming, gardening and eco clubs



INSPIRE

We're inspiring a new generation of young leaders through our holiday programmes and hiking clubs

earthchildproject.org

The Sophia FOUNDATION

Raising consciousness for the good of the whole

Once again, I would like to thank my co-trustee Koos Rossouw for his great support and friendship. To all who are working to further the evolution of humanity – including my colleagues at Stellenbosch University, Watershed, Peace Parks, The South African Wildlife College, Earthchild Project, and the Trustees and Friends of The Sophia Foundation, I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation. The world is in crisis but because of you I remain full of hope.

Hope is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart. It transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons.....

Hope, in this deep and peaceful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather the ability to work for something, not because it stands a chance to succeed, but because it is good.

Vaclav Havel – Czech playwright, dissident and president

As we approach 2023 may we awaken and grow a sense of responsibility and love out of our individual freedom and use this freedom wisely and consciously in the interests of the good of the whole.

With my warmest wishes

Lorraine

Lorraine Forbes

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