



The global
COVID-19
pandemic and I

Scribed from Personal Notes and Reflections of the
African Scholars' Fund Bursars Class of 2020



THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND I

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Cover Picture: Learners from Zimeleni Senior Secondary School, Eastern Cape

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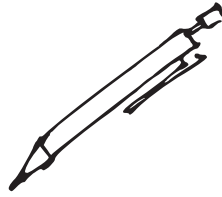
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to every learner that entered their 2020 school year, eager to advance their education in the knowledge that further progress along this path paves the way to a brighter and more secure future. More particularly it is in recognition of our learners that hail from under-resourced township and rural schools and faced the day-to-day challenges, now further amplified.

Suddenly your schools were closed, and you were required to stay at home. Your studies came to a halt, and you had little or no direct contact with your teachers. You had to stay away from your friends and could not help one another with your schoolwork. Suddenly, you were alone with your books, and you had to teach yourself. If you did not understand your work, you had no one to turn to.

May your 2020 journey, your courage, and the very many challenges you faced in dealing with this pandemic serve to not only inspire the learners that come after you but bring about positive change in how those that are tasked with providing your basic education are able to deliver on their mandate.



FOREWORD

The world most certainly was not ready for the advent of this pandemic. We most certainly were not ready to be stopped in our tracks and forced to contemplate how we go about our day. Most times, while being caught up in hardship, we cannot imagine that we would one day step back in wonder and say: “Well now, if it was not for that event, that difficulty, then ...” Least of all, in being so caught up in the chaos and uncertainty, are we able to recognise that this unprecedented global manifestation is in fact a historic episode.

The African Scholar’s Fund (ASF) focuses on the learners we support and guide, and so it is our duty to have them understand that they too have a crucial role to play in the understanding of this historic unfolding of events. And their role is to unashamedly share their stories, to have a learner of some-time-in-the-future realise that there was once a young boy or girl who sat in the very seat they now occupy. And that that young boy or girl lived through a period of much fear, challenge, and uncertainty about what the future held in terms of their continued education. They also faced uncertainty about what would happen to them if their parent or guardian became infected with the Covid-19 virus for which there was no known cure.

The learner of some-time-in-the-future must realise that Covid-19 brought the entire world to a standstill and sent everyone into lockdown. All of humanity was thought to be at risk and that literally millions of lives were lost across the globe. When they read these stories, they will contemplate how they might have responded had they found themselves caught up in the chaos and uncertainty of that time.

The learner of some-time-in-the-future will see that the challenges shared in the stories of these learners of some years ago gave rise to the improvements they now have in their school, or the improvement in how the curriculum is delivered. Not only should they feel a sense of gratitude, but indeed have a strong admiration for their peers of yesteryears. For their courage, resilience, and commitment to successfully completing their studies, despite the uncertainty and the fear that Covid-19 brought to bear in young and old, rich and poor, employer and employee, and to governments the world over.

The Class of 2020 and their families have shared their stories. The powers that be who carry accountability in the educational arena, as well as those who have influence and whose responsibility it is to educate our youth, must now take every measure to identify and meet the glaring challenges presented during that time. It is their responsibility, for which they must be held to account, to ensure that should such a challenge present itself again in the future, they are more ready to respond. Not every challenge has necessarily been met, but not every lesson has been lost.

And you, the learner of some-time-in-the-future are herewith invited to find resonance in the challenges overcome. May it inspire you to make every effort to ensure that your high school career is a journey well-travelled, notwithstanding the challenges you may have faced.

Eliza James

Director, African Scholars' Fund

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The Western Cape Education Department welcomes this publication of extracts, *The Global Covid-19 Pandemic and I*, which reflects on the experiences of adaptation, survival and resilience of Grade 8–12 learners who are on the African Scholars Fund.

The extracts are unedited and are thus graphic and first-hand recounts of the journeys each of the young authors, mainly from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, during the Covid-19 lockdowns of 2020. The writing reflects an interesting and varied range of understandings and experiences of the abrupt and disrupting experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

They tell of the struggle to become self-regulating learners, of appreciating school and teachers, of the importance of peers and friends, and of organising learning groups, among others.

The publication adds to the body of work on capturing a distinct moment in human history experienced in a specific nation, community and age group, and provides lessons on how to survive ongoing incidents like this and other possible pandemics and challenges in the future.

Current and future generations will undoubtedly benefit from the stories of grappling with so much death, illness, stoppage and closure of economic, social, religious, sporting and cultural activities, sudden retrenchments, deepening of poverty, renewed and expanded community collaboration and generosity, recovery and creative re-organisation of all spheres of life.

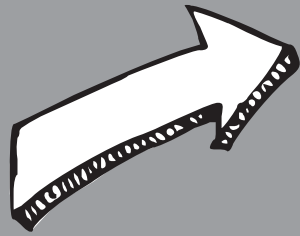
The African Scholars' Fund is congratulated not only for supporting this group in their studies, but also for providing an opportunity to reflect on and capture a significant point in their lives whilst still fresh in their memories.

The authors deserve to be complimented for their efforts, fortitude and willingness to share their thoughts and emotions and the compilers for providing them the platform to do so.

Brent Walters

Superintendent-General

Western Cape Education Department





VALEDICTORY SPEECH

Selela Reikanne

*Head Girl, Masibambane Secondary School, Kraaifontein, Cape Town
ASF Bursar and Class of 2020*

Delivered in the heart of Covid-19, 10 November 2020

As I stand in front of you today, I am filled with so much joy and pride. I am proud to be a part of this class and couldn't be prouder of each and every one of you. But what is more beautiful and precious than the feelings within all of us today, is the people who are with us today. Our teachers and our parents. See, these are our people, the people who have been with us through thick and thin, and who have always rendered their support. So, on behalf of the class of 2020 I would like to take this opportunity and time and say **THANK YOU!**

Class Of 2020:

Four years ago, we got planted as seeds into this garden called Masibambane. Four years ago, we entered the gates of this school with our long skirts, neat trousers, our relaxed hair, and fresh haircuts. We were excited, scared, and anxious, but filled with so many expectations. I know I am one of those people who expected their high school career to be just like *High School Musical*, but instead it took the opposite turn.

Our first week of high school is probably the one we will always remember. That week was flooded with uncertainties and uncomfotability. But just like how seeds navigate through the soil and find a way to grow to the surface stronger as plants, we made a way, and we found our place in this school we now call HOME.

- *We joined debate, broke records, and set new standards that will never be erased.*
- *Some joined chess, made it to the highest ranking and earned the “Dr” title from it.*
- *We took part in rugby, won tournaments, and got crowned as the “2019 Backline Player of the Year”.*
- *And those with angelic voices joined the choir and collected trophies like it was just a piece of cake.*

WE MADE THIS SCHOOL OUR OWN AND IT BECAME OUR HOME.

And over those four years whilst taking part in these and more activities, and doing great academically, we were all looking forward to 2020. We couldn't wait for our matric ball, our camps, getting our classmates to write farewell messages on our shirts, and we looked forward to our valedictory. But most importantly, we were all looking forward to experiencing high school just one last time.



And when the year finally came, I stood in front of you and said: “This is our year! We will make the most of it and it will be the greatest year of our high school career!” But Covid-19 came in as strong as the hurricane winds of a tropical cyclone and it blew up our entire year!

It took away our matric ball, our camps, kicked us out of school and made our future seem so uncertain. And yes, this pandemic did take away a lot, but here we are, still standing strong.

**WE ARE THE CLASS OF 2020
AND THIS IS STILL OUR YEAR!**

We may be shaken, but we will not fall. We may be scared, but we certainly will not back down.

You fought through the obstacles, and you overcame the hardship. While some got tired and quit, you got up and kept going. While some saw a blurry future, you stayed determined and focused on your goals. I salute you for that and you should too, because now you are here, and you have made it. But don't get this wrong: you are not here because you come from far. You are not here because you've been through a lot, and you are certainly not here because of the obstacles you've overcome.



YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING FAR!

Your being here is not defined by the things you've been through or the obstacles you've met along the way, but it is defined by your hard work, the sacrifices you've made and your focus and determination.

I need you to understand this: Grade 12 is just a by-product of the future you are manufacturing; this is a starting line of the journey you are about to undergo.

Just like how the tree that is planted makes glucose to produce fruit, the end goal is not to produce that glucose and store it, but it is to use it to produce an even better product – A FRUIT. Your matric certificate is your glucose, and you are going to use that glucose to produce a fruitful future. And the life you will be living in the next four to five years is all dependent on the glucose you produce. It is all dependent on the quality of your matric certificate.

So, as we are about to start our final examinations, I need you to keep this in mind: The quality of your future is directly proportional to the quality of your matric certificate.

**So, work hard to create a great quality product,
work hard to produce an A-grade quality matric
certificate, so that you will live a life of quality.**

You did not go to school all these years to be mediocre; you did not go to school for 12 years plus to quit now! See, all the things you've been through – the crying after writing a difficult exam, the sleepless nights of endless studying and consumption of coffee just to help keep your eyes open. All those and more were shaping and preparing you for your final examinations, and now it is here.

So, I need you to dig deep inside of you. Find that smart kid and find that hard worker and let them know it is time to wake up! Because it is now or never!

Let us work hard, so the father of this school, Mr Naidoo, can brag about us just like he does with his class of 2010.



We are the seeds of Masibambane.
We have been watered and nurtured from the day
we were planted, and now it is time for us to blossom.
It is time for us to produce those fruits and flowers.
So, let us go out into the real world and be a reflection
of where we come from. Let us bag the success!

IN THEIR
OWN WORDS





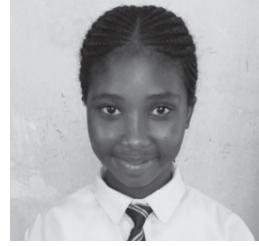
COVID-19 PLAYS HAVOC WITH OUR ACADEMICS

The stories that follow reflect the experiences of the bursars of the African Scholars' Fund. They are often extracts, rather than the bursars' full stories. That aside, they are expressed in their own words, unedited.

These are the stories of school pupils in Grade 8 – 12 (secondary schools) in the Eastern and Western Cape. They are invariably children from extremely poor homes, and in almost all cases attending Quintile 5 schools, those charging the lowest (or zero) fees, during 2020.

Several themes emerge from these stories, and they have been grouped into sections accordingly. Of course, there is a great deal of overlapping, so we start by giving several general responses to give an overall sense of what our bursars have experienced.





Lucia Bantom

Grade 10, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“As a student and a young individual who was born and raised in villages, the impact of the coronavirus came to all shores of living. During the height of Covid-19, I lost my grandmother. Although no one ever thought or heard of such a pandemic, society didn’t take it as seriously when it was introduced to us.

At once my very close friends in my neighbourhood mocked me and called me ridiculous names. My family members were seen as a threat towards society, and this came to it that we had to be chased out of our home village – as I’ve indicated that I am a breed from the villages. In our household we only have one breadwinner who happens to be my mother.

During the lockdown my mother lost her job due to the impact of Covid-19 towards our economy. Back at our household situations got tense as there was no income generated. Although there were individuals who were willing to help, they were held back by thinking these individuals are Covid-19 positive and therefore did not want to associate with us. The situation grew stronger as it started to affect not just my house, but the village. Hunger struck at the stomachs of poor souls. The pandemic wasn’t a threat as a disease only, it was a threat towards all means that generate a living.

As situations are tense back at home it was hard to hold focus on my studies. Sometimes we ran out of electricity, and I couldn’t focus on my studies late at night, as there was no light or any network coverage to do my assignments. As the saying goes “you can’t teach a hungry child”, so the issue of not having a breadwinner affects me very hard. The only time I get to have a decent meal is at school. Although there is another saying by PW Botha, “ADAPT OR DIE,” it became harder and harder as the whole school syllabus has changed.

I am barely getting to adapt in these days of learning.

At our school we were left behind as other students in different schools were commencing with their studies. I feel like we're excluded from the government and their alternative ways of studying. Covid-19 had its negative impacts as well as positive impacts, although it took our people a while to realise that the good thing was that Covid-19 indicated that people should learn to be together with their families. On the other hand, Covid-19 became a major issue that decreased a lot of breadwinners and terminated a lot of people's income."

.....

Nandile Ngazelwa

Grade 9, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

"On Level 5 it wasn't easy for us because no one was working, and we were depending on social grants. Thanks to our President for increasing the social grant during the lockdown – that helped us a lot. Without the social grant it wouldn't be easy for us to live. On the TV there were programmes every Wednesday that would help in maths: with division, and how to solve for x . I also used another channel 317 and every day they would have Grade 9 activities that I would try. It was not easy to learn without a teacher. At home there is no one who has passed Grade 12, so it was not easy to ask for someone to help me. It was challenging to study as well, because my neighbour kept playing his music very loud. The money that the ASF has given me will help me a lot. I am glad that I am now back at school to have something to focus on."

.....

Chenay Smit

Grade 10, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

"Socially things have been a little rough for me and my family. Before the pandemic, my mom and my uncle were the breadwinners in our house, but both of their jobs closed during this pandemic, so my family had a little struggle keeping food on the table. We had to learn how to use what we had a little wiser, so out of all the bad Covid-19 has produced there was a little good we learnt. Things are hard, living in a poor community and the water crises and load shedding didn't make it any easier. We had to use the community tanks for getting water and cook our food on fire. Neither of these things got us under, so what is the use of fussing about it, we just need to learn there's a little good in every bad."

Dear Sir/Madam

2020 has been a difficult year especially as a Grade 12 learner. ~~More~~ The time we have lost due to the lockdown cannot be replaced and during the lockdown, online learning was a nightmare. Coming from a disadvantaged family, buying a IGB data is very expensive because you've to ~~consider~~ ^{choose that} if you will go to bed hungry or lose out in your studies. I've tried to do self study although it was hard especially in subjects like Maths, Physical Sciences and IT to name a few where you need a teacher's guidance. The teachers helped us with the data and I was then able to access some learning material. This data also helped me to apply to tertiary institution.

Yours faithfully.

Kwanele Mabanga (Mr.)

K. Mabanga.

Gr 12 CosAT

Waylene Abrahams

Grade 11, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“As I have said, the lockdown caused many troubles. Not only with school, but my family as well. It was hard times because financially we were not stable; we struggled to make ends meet. Sometimes it was just enough and sometimes it was not always ideal. My parents did not always know where to get money, as the months progressed. We were lucky enough to receive a hamper from the municipality as well as our church. As thankful as I was that we got the hamper, it did not last very long. The struggle was real. But I am grateful for African Scholars’ Fund who grants us the money we study so hard for.”

Lathitha Yeki

Grade 10, Solomon Mahlangu Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Socially it was hard because people have had family members die and now we can’t hug each other. Even worse is that not everyone is allowed to attend the funeral because of social distancing. My family was affected in the same way, and I felt sad because we could not console each other.”

.....

Zeneca Van Wyk

Grade 11, Groot-Brakrivier Secondary (Western Cape)

“This Covid-19 pandemic gave me a lot of thinking. I am a Grade 11 learner and to apply to university you have to use your Grade 11 report first. I was worried about how all of this is going to happen. How do you apply to university with a great report and half the year you were at home?”

.....

Athenkosi Yokoto

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Economically, my mom was retrenched at work leading to financial strain and depending on relatives and social grants, including the social distress relief fund. I also could not afford to buy winter clothes to keep warm during the cold winter months. I was also unable to buy data to study online. The environment that I live in also didn’t allow me to study. The people in our community play loud music all day and night.”

.....



Chwayita Dyantyi

Grade 10, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“For many people I know, including me, Covid-19 started out as a joke. It shares the same name as a beer. But then the Chinese city of Wuhan was quarantined, that was when I realised the situation is much more serious than I had thought.”

Adelene Gertse

*Grade 10, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School
(Western Cape)*



“An alarming matter that has become general knowledge to us all, namely Covid-19, has put great strain on every South African citizen. This pandemic does not discriminate against anyone. People from all walks of life had an encounter with its harsh invasion. Its effect has weakened us in so many ways possible – most of all financially. Many have been affected temporarily, but more felt the impact so intensely that numerous doors had to shut permanently. In our countryside communities the pressure on households has also been unavoidable and unmissable. There has been an enormous amount of strain on parents, especially single parents, who are trying to keep head above water by feeding, clothing, and keeping their children educated.”

.....

Thulisiwe Zenani

Grade 10, Chris Hani Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I am overwhelmed by the fact that no one in my family tested positive for the virus, even though we have been living in fear. It was really hard to study during this lockdown. Being at school is the best way to learn.

Starting new topics online was not easy, really confusing and I battled a lot.”

.....

Inam Nkosimbini

Grade 11, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Going back to school had to be the worst, but also exciting after the whole six months lockdown. My family were affected by the virus and most recovered, but unfortunately not everyone, because my aunt died from the virus.”

The corona virus has a devastating effect on my life and has changed many things. It has affected me academically, economically and socially.

I live with my parents and six siblings in a three rooms house and that made it difficult for me to study. Libraries were also closed and that made the situation even worse. Data was also a problem because my parents were not working. I had to go to the shops and connect to free wifi in order to study online. It was a tough situation especially when it was raining because there would be no connectivity. Standing at the shops was also not safe because there is many violence in my township.

My father used to work as a welder but he lost his job due to the lockdown. That made things hard for us because we depended on the social grant that my mother earned for my three siblings. The money was not enough because we had to buy electricity and also grocery on it. That caused my father to commit himself on alcohol and that caused my mother stress.

We were not able to attend my grandmothers funeral because we were not allowed to go to other provinces and also there were only fifty people who were allowed to attend the funeral. We were also not able to visit our friends and other relatives because of this covid-19 pandemic.

Hopefully I have told you all you needed to know about how I have been coping and the challenges that I faced during the lockdown.

Yours faithfully

Onele Mazwembe

Gr 11 Sphamandile

Courtney Oktober

Grade 10, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The Covid-19 pandemic caught us all off guard. All our lives changed within one heartbeat. We had to start living our lives according to difficult rules and enter an environment that we were not used to. I went through a very difficult time when I was tested positive, which affected my schoolwork and personal life. I am grateful because some people lost their lives in the fight against Covid-19. It was hard studying at home because the house is overcrowded.”

.....

Bukho Bunjwa

Grade 9, Chris Hani Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“It affected me academically because we could not write exams in Term 2. We skipped it and now we are doing everything rush rush.”

.....

Kebone Shete

Grade 11, Slphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“We were forced to learn online. We come from different backgrounds. Not all of us are fortunate to have cell phones and even if you have one it still requires data or airtime. Mind you, our parents/guardians are no longer working, so there’s no income. The disadvantage of online learning is that not all of us learners are coping; some find it difficult because they are used to having a teacher in front of them teaching. Also, there are distractions in our surroundings making things more difficult for us to study e.g. siblings playing in the space where you are studying, noise from the neighbourhood and house chores waiting for you.”

.....

Sivenathi Badu

Grade 12, Kuyasa Combined School (Eastern Cape)

“Closing schools was a total disadvantage to me. I managed to learn a few things and as for WhatsApp group, I sometimes received voice notes with my work, but data was a struggle. Studying from home was not easy, because of the distractions and chores that you have to do. I am trying my best at the moment.”

Nkosinathi Juhu

Grade 10, Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“We are struggling because we are relying on my grandfather. He was the only one who could provide for us. Being away from school for a very long time affected me because at home I could not focus the way I wanted to.”

Alutu Mpayipheli

Grade 11, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“We had to use a lot of money in medication for flu and immune boosters and for my online learning. I needed data every day so that I wouldn’t fall behind in my lessons. Sometimes my family didn’t have enough money to buy data and I had to go to my neighbour to use her phone. I took all the precautions, but it really was a difficult time.”



Amahle Mbeshu

Grade 11, Centre of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“From time to time I would use my sister’s cell phone to log into Facebook and ask which topics my classmates were doing and do those topics on my own. Studying at home alone with no resources, such as studying apps and online assistance, has been such an exhausting experience. I have been struggling to cope.”

Majikela Asipile

Grade 10, Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“My family were struggling because my father, who is my grandfather, was the only one who could provide for us.”

Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs

I'm writing this letter to tell you how I've been coping during this pandemic.

Ever since this Covid started my home became a house of debts because my mom lost her job, and my mother is ~~the~~ a breadwinner at home she worked at some white people's house which means she is a domestic worker.

At that time there was no money. My mother's boss didn't even send a half of my mother's salary after she lost a job. It was difficult, very difficult in a way that I would go and lock myself up in my room and cry, praying wishing that the things/situation at home could end now and also pray for this pandemic to also end.

So my mother had no choice cause ~~the~~ grant income is very little to solve my home problems, so she had to go and borrow some money from our neighbours.

and told us that she got a job, we were so excited cause we know that our thing is going to be fine again, but her salary was less ~~+~~ than what ~~she~~ she was paid in her last job but we were thankful that she got a job.

This year was the worst year of my life and I will never forget this year.

Your faithfully
Siphumile Hlungulwana.

It was very difficult, so early in the morning I would take my two sibling and go to a soup kitchen that is around the ~~to~~ took place in a park, so we get used to it cause there was no other of option. During this pandemic changed everything at home cause my mom in the month ends would buy us some Simba chips, Chocolates, Yoghurts and ice creams. But now my mother come at home empty handed coz all of that grant income will go and pay the debts. It was really though at my home. All am thankful of is that my mom was trying by all means and making sure that we do not sleep empty with empty stomachs.

As time goes my mom realised that the more she borrows money the ~~more~~ ^{loss} our grant income become, because she was paying her debts by using our grant income. She ~~at~~ On level 4 of this lockdown she go out and looking for job while we were eating lunch at the soup kitchen the my little sister asked me a question, why we eating our lunch here in the park and these people are strangers what if they poisond us. I didn't know what to say but I told her that everything will be fine.

dear asf

My name is Liyabona Zeleni I wrote this letter to tell you about how covid 19 has affected me as well as my family.

We were forced to go into lockdown where the closure of schools was implemented and on the other side many people lost their jobs. Unluckily, my uncle who is a sole provider at home was also part of those who lost their jobs and asked to go home astray. it was hard for us back home because we had no source of income. I could see that my uncle was not mentally and emotionally well. he forced himself to do something which he hated, borrowing money from a loan shark so that we could be able to put something to eat on the table and not sleep on an empty stomach.

Academically, I couldn't focus well on my studies. I was frightened by this disease, coronavirus. i was scared that i would also get it ats school and become infected and possibly infect my whole family life when schools in Khayelitsha were closing and opening due to riots and organizations against the opening of schools. i almost lost hope on my matric this year, there was no hope at all and no one was promising that the covid stats would start to decline. **I live in a very compacted small shack, i couldn't really study well because there was a lot of noise coming in from the neighbors.**

In conclusion, the coronavirus has had significant impact on our livelihoods. Thank you for granting me with this opportunity to express what i and my family had been through these past few months.

Yours, Thankfully
Liyabona Zeleni

Ongeziwe Mvelase

Grade 12, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Schools were closed for a long time and that spoiled my academics. As they were closed, I could see that my future was in my hands because there was no teacher in front of me, so I had to study on my own. We were studying on WhatsApp groups and it helped. Being out of school for a long time affected me negatively and currently the teachers are rushing for us to catch up with the syllabus without concern of the students – whether they understand or not the concept. I am under a lot of pressure because I have to study every day.”

.....

Eyam Frans

Grade 9, Kuyakhanya Primary School (Western Cape)

“Coronavirus affected my studies in a way that we have too much schoolwork and we are under pressure because of the short time. We are attending school once or twice a week. We are struggling to afford our needs.”

.....

Mawethu Ndlazi

Grade 9, Smiling Valley Junior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My brother tested positive because he was not in lockdown at work. He always works, even on weekends. He works in hospitals.”

.....

Olwethu Khanzi

Grade 10, Centre for Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“I will be honest, this pandemic has made me to hit rock bottom in all aspects of my life, especially academically, and last year when I was in Grade 9, I had planned everything. But to be brutally honest, it was very hard for me to keep up studying through this lockdown.”



Sinikiwe Mpangalala

Grade 11, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“My community experienced a rapid increase of crime. Women and children were being killed, especially girls in my age group. What I noticed was when the sale of alcohol was banned many communities experienced less violence. People behaved better when there was no alcohol. When there is alcohol, the people will then become violent again.”

A total ban on alcohol sales was introduced at the start of the pandemic. The first ban lasted from 27 March to 1 June. The ban was brought back on 12 July and reversed on 17 August. In mid-December, a third ban was put in place. In a nationwide address, President Ramaphosa said that “reckless behaviour due to alcohol intoxication has contributed to increased transmission. Alcohol-related issues and violence are putting pressure on our hospital emergency units.” Previous total alcohol sales bans saw trauma cases in hospitals drop as much as 60%.

Aphelele Scotch

Grade 9, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

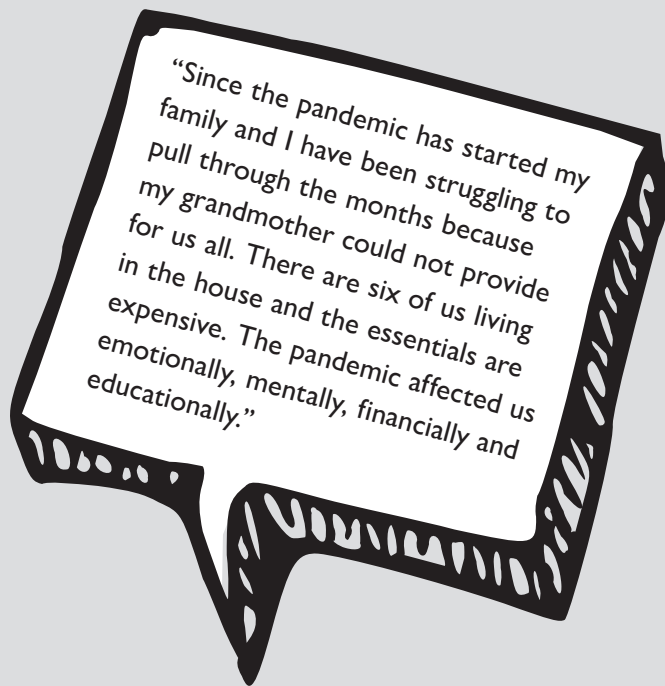
“Over the past three weeks I had a fever; it was bad, and I thought I was infected with Covid-19. I was really scared but I did not want to go to the clinic. Now I am well. We just recently went to my grandmother’s funeral, which was held in Port Elizabeth. She did not die from Covid-19 but from high blood pressure.”

.....

Calana Soyama

Grade 12, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“This pandemic really affected my society, more especially because we are a small community with a lot of people. A lot of people died because of the virus. We had to put our social life aside and stay isolated indoors away from everyone. We couldn’t even go visit our family and friends.”



Siphokazi Dyalvane

Grade 11, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)



The most obvious consequence of the pandemic was seen in deaths within the household, and job losses. In many cases this occurred within the extended rather than the nuclear family, but the impact was still devastating – made worse when the deceased was a breadwinner or recipient of a social grant. As will be seen, the lockdown restrictions limiting funerals to reduce the spread of the virus had their price as well.



Thando Worhasi

Grade 9, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“During the pandemic period I lost my grandmother due to natural causes. She was too old, but in my society, other people thought we lost her due to coronavirus and some community members were discriminating against us. Some of the family members (us children) were forced to stay at home, since its only 50 people who were allowed at the funeral. My mother lost her job as she was a domestic worker in one of the houses at Seymour. Also, my father is self-employed and fixes TVs and electrical appliances, but now there are no people coming to him, since most people lost their jobs. We sometimes sleep with no food since the only income we have is the social child’s grant. Being out of school for this long, actually for five months, has been the biggest challenge to me because I had to learn sitting at home and I was worried that I didn’t have a phone to connect with the teachers and my classmates.”

Aphelele Mancoba

Grade 11, Cowan High School (Eastern Cape)



“With Covid-19 in our lives we have been put in good and bad conditions. First of all, during the national lockdown I lost my wise grandpa who was and will always be my father, on the 10th of May. With him gone, my mother, sister and I struggled really hard because his old-age pension grant used to contribute to our household. For these past three months we have struggled to such a point that my sister had to also contribute using her NSFAS bursary in order to put food on the table. It was and it’s still working hand in hand with the social grant and the support money that we have been receiving from my father.”

.....

Asemahle Jacobs

Grade 10, Nqweba High School (Eastern Cape)

“During this pandemic, my family have been affected very badly because of the lockdown. My mother had to stay at home, she could not work. So, we only had one income which was the social grant. My mother was stressed because she did not know how she will provide for us. But she managed to get a piece job.”

.....

Awethu Simayile

Grade 12, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My well-being is being affected in a way that I do not have enough trust that I will pass, but I will try my best to pass.”

“Sometimes when I have a fever, I feel afraid that I might have coronavirus. I lost weight and have stress because of the pressure of my schoolwork. In my home my sister was retrenched at work because of Covid-19. We have to depend on the social grant for a living. Some family members died because of Covid-19. It was not easy to not have everything we need when my sister was retrenched.”

Siyanda Mahlanz

Grade 12, Mtirara Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My mother had to stop working due to this pandemic. It was hard for my family to live. We were struggling even to buy food because we were only dependant on my grandmother’s grant to pay our debts, funeral cover, and other things.”

.....

Micayla Frieslaar

Grade 9, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 contributed that my mom lost her job, which she only had for three months. It was a big setback for me and an adjustment, from little to no income at all (except our child support grant). But the ‘Father’ then miraculously provided through the R700 from the ASF scholarship which at that time came terribly fitting.”

.....

Andisiwe Zintso

Grade 10, Masiyile Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Covid-19 was very tough; I lost hope in going back to school this year. There is a short time for me to study all my subjects. I missed my teacher, teaching me the work. It was very hard in the lockdown because my mother was not working, because the business that she works for closed down due to Covid-19. She was not getting any income and we relied on social grants.”

.....

Lathi-tha Mbambanis

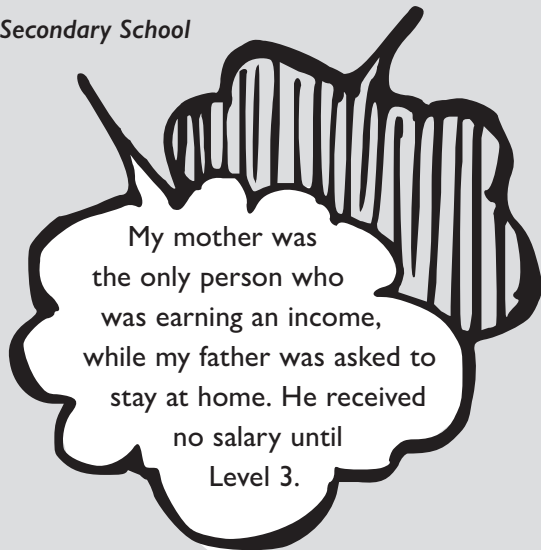
Grade 10, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Both my parents ended up losing their jobs. Since schools were closed for a long time, when we reopened, we were given a lot of schoolwork and we were pressured to finish all our schoolwork through a short time.”

Lithalethu Tsawe

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School

(Western Cape)



Dear Madam/Sir

I am writing this letter so that I can tell you how the Covid 19 Pandemic has affected me and my family.

When this pandemic started I didn't take it seriously until it claimed the lives of two family members of mine. The financial state of my family then started getting very bad because we had lost two incomes or breadwinners. Then out of nowhere my aunt lost her job, now the only income was the social grant. This mentally affected me I could not go out to clear my mind, due to the lockdown restrictions. The worst part of it all was when my grandmother living in Lesotho also died because of this virus. We were all heartbroken when we discovered that we can't attend her funeral due to the lockdown restrictions. The pandemic also affected my schoolwork or the academic year because as Grade 9 we had to write off the Term two learning period. Even now since we are attending school again the learning period is very short.

Hopefully you will understand how the pandemic affected me

Yours faithfully
Mr Ntsika Gcinisa

Seetse Kagiso

Grade 12, Mtirara Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“It has been really a tough year; me and my family really struggled this year. My mother lost her job. We depend on my grandmother. We did not receive any food parcels. My grandmother was infected with this virus, and she needed to self-isolate, and it was quite hard. This pandemic was a disaster in the whole world. I pray this pandemic to come to an end.”

.....

Bongiwe Ntwasa

Grade 12, Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“I would like to express my feelings on how the Covid-19 has affected me. All I can say is that this pandemic has taken away my life provider or let me say the breadwinner at home. Her death was nothing but draining and even now, we are still trying to mend this bleeding wound.”

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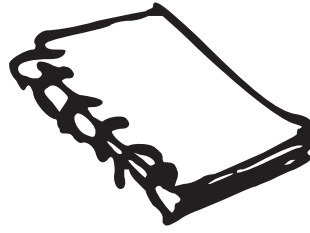
Yamani Sibongiseni

Grade 10, Thobelani High School

“Yes, my family was affected because we lost one of our own members and those were breadwinners. So, it left us with no grandparent. I also was the victim of Covid-19, but my God never gets tired to answer my prayers. It affected my schoolwork a lot because I am not catching up easily and as fast. I live with my grandmother, and she did afford to buy DSTv so I can have that studying channel. I had to look after my grandmother from sunrise till sunset.



I was also getting tired, and the electricity kept being shut down during loadshedding. So that was my challenge and disturbed my studies.”



Eyona Mjojeli

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“The pandemic had a drastic effect or impact on my life. It has resulted in so many issues occurring. Me and my family have had a hard time during Level 5 lockdown and since the start of the lockdown. After everything shut down, as you as you may well know, people lost their jobs, and no income would come at the end of the month. This also happened in my family. My mother no longer works. My dad lost his job and there was no source of income. It was very sad that things turned out for the worst. The worst thing was that we didn’t have the qualification to apply for the social grant.”

.....

Mitchell Nyamukapa

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“At my house I am staying with my aunt and my uncle, grandmother and three siblings. My mother had to go to Port Elizabeth to look for a job after the lockdown level one. My uncle is not working because the company he was working for as a cleaner was closed after someone was infected with the virus. Hopefully, he will find a job very soon. My aunt is the only one responsible for buying food and paying the rent.”

.....

Sinalo Bobo

Grade 11, Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“During the lockdown my family had some serious problems, since we are all staying in one room and there is no work. It was hard because my grandmother used to sell sweets, but no more because of Covid-19. She had to close her small business. Being out of school has had a negative impact on me, because I struggle to teach myself.”

Zatu Onwabisa

Grade 10, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“The pandemic has changed my life completely – especially academically and financially. It was so hard to study as there was no teacher to assist me and I only studied two to three hours per day instead of the usual eight hours at school. But because I really want to pass this grade, I have managed to cover all my schoolwork as I do not want to forfeit my bursary fund. Also, this pandemic has changed my life financially because at home we lost our breadwinner, and we suffered a lot.”

.....

Basit Akeem

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“My parents have not been receiving any income throughout the lockdown because they are not working. My father has been working around at small jobs to feed us even though there was coronavirus outside. While my mom stays at home and make sure we are safe. In April my parents could not afford to feed us, so she sent us to our auntie’s house in Goodwood to take care of us.”

.....

Pumza Mgidini

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“Covid-19 made a huge impact in my life. At home we struggled a lot because my mother became jobless. My grandfather died and it was because of Covid-19. It has been a hard year in my life. In school I am unsettled and confused because I no longer come to school on our regular days. Even the teachers struggle to teach us because they have a fear of the virus and worry that they could catch it.”

.....

Antonio Speelman

Grade 10, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“During this time of Covid-19 my family was affected. My grandmother passed away due to coronavirus. Everything in our house paused for three weeks because we were under quarantine.”

Aphelele Gigaba

Grade 11, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During the pandemic things were not easy at home regarding my school progress. My parents lost their jobs and there was no income coming into our household. We use the social grant to survive, and it does not cover all our needs. The lockdown made us lose a lot of time because we missed a lot from school. Now we are working under pressure, and it is really hectic, but I do believe that I will pull through.

Our teachers are trying their best to cover all the work that we have missed. Life with Covid-19 has not been easy.”



Lilitha Funde

Grade 12, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“At home everyone was told to not go out unless for work and school. My mother was told to not work for two weeks, since she tested positive for Covid-19. At home she had to be alone in her room. It was hard for us because she is the only one working at home. There were a lot of funerals in the family because of Covid-19 and we could not attend them because we did not want to get infected.”

.....

Beja Sinawo

Grade 10, Mtirara Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My parents could no longer go to work, life was tough. It became very hard for them to put food on the table. My mother had to start selling face masks. She risked her life in order to put food on the table for us. But after all we survived through this phase, Covid-19 ruined our lives.”

.....

Lunika Mokoena

Grade 9, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 affected us learners in a serious way. It delayed us from our school term, and it affected me emotionally because my uncle died from the virus, and I couldn’t go to the funeral because there were so many people. This virus affected me and my family – my mother is unemployed and before this pandemic came, she was selling vetkoeks at my school for our family to survive, and this virus stopped her now. We are now dependant only on the social grant, and because of that I was not able to learn because I didn’t have data for online learning.”





Avile Saul

Grade 9, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“I didn’t have money to buy data to learn online – for example, my brother was a garden boy at school, so when school closed, we did not have much money. We depended on the social grant and even I lost my dad who was a pensioner.”

.....

Ngcali Moyeni

Grade 9, Smiling Valley Junior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“My family was affected; my cousin-sister and uncles. My cousin-sister went to the hospital and died after a week.”

.....

Oyama Somtumane

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“This pandemic infected my grandmother and my grandfather and unfortunately one of them passed away – my grandmother. So, in this lockdown there were many learning curves.”



DEBT AND HUNGER

The impact of death and job losses was clearly felt in a deterioration of home circumstances, which for ASF bursars and many others, had been dire enough before the onset of the pandemic. The National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) of hunger revealed that child hunger affected between 12% and 16% of all South African households during the pandemic. Some of this is mirrored in the stories that follow.

Ezimyoli Coka

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“At home we had to cut off some of our financial needs. I was not given pocket money anymore, so I had to make my own lunch for school. Nowadays we can’t live without money, but we have to use the little we have. The pandemic has shown us that money is one of the things we need in life. All sport activities were cancelled. Friendships were intense. Now, at the end of the day at school, I am more exhausted mentally and physically and immediately want to go home. That is how it affected my life.”

Enkosi Kebe

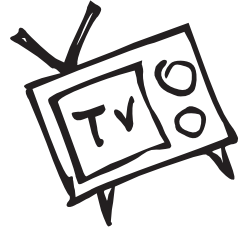
Grade 11, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The social grant that government is giving out only lasts for a short period of time. It is difficult to pay off existing bills. My mother had to make more difficult decisions that she hasn’t been faced with before, such as paying for her bills and other stuff, or to buy groceries and electricity.”

With most of us being raised by single parents, it was hard when our parents lost their jobs. It was hard to function on an empty stomach.

We were forced to withdraw from school and try to learn from home, which halted our education. [It is hard to learn new topics on your own. You do not have a teacher to help you understand difficult topics. [The only way to communicate with your teachers was through Whatsapp.]

It was a struggle for many of us to purchase data as the main priority for our parents was to put food on the table. With as little data as we had for numerous months, we could only



Eileen Sibanda

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I didn’t have sufficient data to download all my school materials and attend sessions. However, I would sometimes benefit from the SABC 2 broadcasted lessons, which helped me to keep on track with the syllabus. My family and I suffered from huge hunger. When schools reopened for the Grade 12 learners, I would walk to school in the mornings and the afternoons, because there was no money for transport. As a result, I came back from school extremely tired because of the long distance I was forced to walk.”

.....

Bamanye Matiyas

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Ever since Covid-19 was introduced in our country it has brought so much pain to our people. My father was forced to be retrenched at work during the pandemic. There was a decrease in income in our home, because there was only one person that was working, which was my mother. It is difficult for her because she had to support five of us. Sometimes I went to sleep hungry because there was no food.”

.....

Aphiwe Sindapi

Grade 9, Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“Since Level 5 was announced it’s been hard for each and every student, including me.

I live in a small house with a lot of people. They tried to assist me to study, but there were chores and shortage of food so everyone could eat. No one can study with an empty stomach. I had to wait for everyone to finish what they were doing so I could have a quiet space to do my schoolwork.”



Reginald Lefleur

Grade 11, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During the first time it was hard for some of us. My older sister lost her temporary job and because of schools being closed we did not get any food from the school feeding scheme anymore. We were depending on our social grant income to put food on our table. We received our schoolwork electronically.”

.....

Masande Keke

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Starvation started when my aunt was required to stay at home due to the Covid-19 regulations. The unemployment dominated at home because there was no one who was allowed to go out to work. When the shutdown of schools was announced, that’s where frustration started for me as a Grade 12 learner. This is when I felt the pressure and started wondering how I will achieve my target of obtaining my distinctions.”

.....

Othandwayo Cithi

Grade 11, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“My family have been affected. My parents couldn’t go out to hustle; we were running out of groceries and we starved till pension day came around again. Being out of school for this long has been really difficult. I was not able to learn while I was at home because I didn’t have money to buy data to study online. Covid-19 affected my academics negatively.”

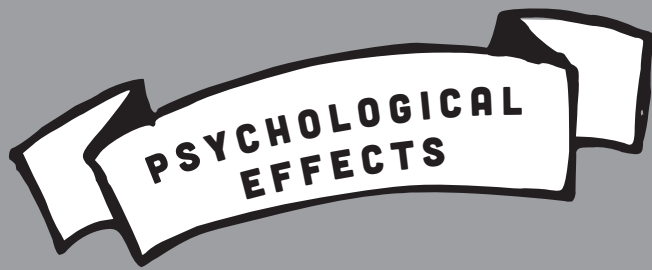




Kwanele Mabanga

Grade 12, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“2020 Has been a difficult year especially as a Grade 12 learner, buying 1GB data is very expensive because you have to choose that you will go to bed hungry, or you lose out in your studies.”



**PSYCHOLOGICAL
EFFECTS**

A corollary to the effects of deaths, job losses, hunger and debt is the loss of confidence and motivation felt by many of our bursars. The pandemic had introduced circumstances completely unknown to our society and those most vulnerable were least able to cope. Feelings of fear and despair undermined bursars’ desire to persevere with their schooling, as the following stories reveal.

Akuphelo Klaas

Grade 12, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Learning from home is a struggle, especially when you are living in an informal settlement where learning is not considered as an important thing. The lockdown led to libraries being closed and I used to depend on libraries for studying. I prefer a quiet space for reading and my community is the loudest. This lockdown caused nothing but trauma in our lives. I had no interest for studying and going back to school. I thought that this was the end of the road. I dropped academically. Before the national lockdown I knew and believed that I will pass with flying colours. I knew that I would obtain a minimum of four distinctions, but now feel hopeless.”

.....

Inathi Flente

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Covid-19 affected me academically in a huge way, because the last time we went to school was in March. We were scared and we stayed home for safety. Teachers scrambled to adopt new content for the online platform and parents are juggling with what we are going to eat. It caused a lot of anxiety. We did not know what was going to happen and the rate of deaths and infections kept rising.”

Jade Lewis

Grade 9, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Since the President of RSA imposed lockdown regulations and with the rapid spread of the coronavirus, my world changed radically. As the months progressed, I found that corona did not only pose a threat to my immediate social existence (by the implementation of the social distancing rule and the wearing of masks), but it also proved to put major strain on my parents financially and it ruined my school year in general. In addition to the economic challenges posed by the Covid-19 virus, it also brought about great psychological problems within me. I found it quite hard to bring myself to study at home whilst schools were closed. For weeks on end, I had great difficulty making a mind-set change as I found it impossible to get myself to study in a three-room, fully-packed house.”

.....

Alunge Matokazi

Grade 12, Percy Mdala High School (Western Cape)

“I was struggling to study on my own for almost three months. Covid-19 killed my spirit of passing Grade 12 with flying colours. During lockdown I used to think of giving up on my matric, but my mother encouraged me not to give up. I was so scared of coronavirus, and I told myself that I’m not going back to school this year, but my mother and my accounting teacher pushed me to go back to school. After the schools again opened on first of June, I tested positive for Covid-19, and I had to isolate myself for two weeks. I was so worried. Covid-19 also affected my family income, my mother had to stay at home without receiving a wage from her employer. I also want to thank the ASF for their support.”

.....

Mawe October

Grade 12, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During this pandemic I became one of the victims of Covid-19 survivors. Being in that position causes a lot of stress and anxiety. I had to try and focus on my exams while in quarantine. Yes, I was very devastated because I thought maybe this was the end of my life. The moment I was feeling depressed I had to motivate myself to do better and to never lose hope. The hurting question that rose was, will I be able to complete my matric year in 2020? Will I ever survive this pandemic? What if I don’t make it to university because of the lack of schoolwork?”

Covid 19 affected me in a very bad way. My mother tested positive for Covid 19. Things started to get worse because she stopped working and my father works as a security, he only goes to work 3 days in a week. My mother quarantined at home, in her bedroom, so we were forced to squeeze each other in one bed, including my father (we're a family of 5). We were not allowed to see her, we only went into her bedroom when we were delivering food for her. She had a special doctor which encouraged her, told her not to give up and her doctor told her what to eat and what she shouldn't eat. We were emotionally scarred because people were afraid of us even though we didn't test positive for Covid 19. By God's mercy, my mother recovered from Covid 19, but people are still scared of her.

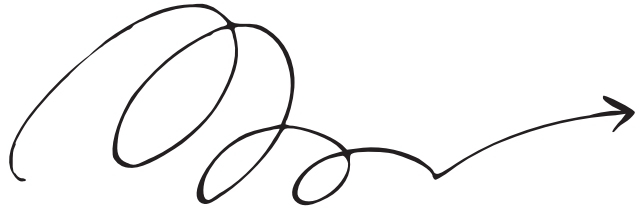
Seeing my mother cry because she thought she would leave us was the most painful part. Covid 19 really affected my life in a bad way, it also affected my family's life in a very bad way.

Yours sincerely
Asemahle Mabuse

Traycee-Lee Kennedy

Grade 12, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During this first month I had to fight against Covid-19 pandemic and my fears. I could never go out, must wear a mask, and sanitize your hands all the time. We had to continuously wash our hands and keep a safe distance of 1.5 metres. It was and is really scary. Nothing is the same anymore; this has become our reality.”



Trish-Lee Wildemans

Grade 11, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The moment the lockdown rules got tighter I began fearing that I would fail Grade 11. Anxiety and depression crept in. I also could not get the work during the time at home as I didn’t have access to internet or WhatsApp. My father also lost his job which made things difficult.”

.....
Siphosihle Magadu

Grade 10, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“I am stressed because I have a lot of work to do, and I lost one of my family members during the lockdown because of Covid-19. We could not bury her normally and because of this virus we had to go into the graveyard only after she was buried. My other aunt who lives in the Western Cape also had the virus and we could not see her because the borders were closed. No traveling to another province was allowed so that this virus could not spread further. This was hard for me because I was scared and afraid that I would lose her. She is my mother’s helper when it came to raising us. My family was a mess during the lockdown because my mother could not find work and my sister was given only one day that she could work. Now that things are back to normal my sister is working full- time and my mother has found a job that will help us buy food and other things that are needed.”

Othandwayo Manggase

Grade 9, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 made me stress and I have lost so many people this year because of this virus. The first week I often cried because my family was suffering. My grandmother was sick very badly and we saw the symptoms of Covid-19 and sent her to the clinic. They tested her and said that we should wait, after 10 days we will get the results. My grandmother tested negative for Covid-19; we were so excited. During this pandemic, my uncle lost his job during lockdown, and he did not get paid.”

.....

Onako Kosile

Grade 11, Leap Science and Maths School (Western Cape)

“Psychologically I have been struggling because I have been stressing about my schoolwork.

I am physically and emotionally exhausted.

This Covid-19 is bringing so many fears in my life. Many of my family members have died from Covid-19. My father has been struggling to send my mother food because of this lockdown. This year has stressed me out so much.”



Siyamthemba Matyhobo

Grade 12, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“That belief tends to change knowing that the life we’re living now, which is impossible to bear, is the new normal. Covid-19 has done a lot of damage to human life, and now we have to live not sure what the future holds for us. We didn’t get to spend enough time with the teachers. It is the worst that some of my teachers tested positive for coronavirus, therefore this added pressure, because I had to rely on myself for everything.”

.....

Unam Fourie

Grade 10, Masiyile Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I am writing this letter by the intentions of telling you how Covid-19 affected my life and even in my studies. It did not affect my life and my studies positively, but negatively and in a very bad way. It nearly took my aunt away that I love. It made my life difficult and changed my feelings. It was a feeling of being stuck in a war. When it comes to my studies, it was six months without going to school. Even though we’re now back it is still difficult for a lesson to stay in my mind because we are still struggling to go to school.”

Anelisa Mali

Grade 9, Smiling Valley Junior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“During this pandemic I have been okay but traumatised because so many people died of this coronavirus, and I was even more traumatised when two members of my family got infected. Sadly, my cousin died, but my uncle recovered. My family have been affected because we were facing many problems in a short time. My cousin was pregnant before she died, and she died pregnant. After we attended her funeral, my uncle tested positive for coronavirus and we had no money because there was only two people who were employed – my mom and my aunt, and their money was not enough for all of us.



It is true when they say it never rains but pours.”

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Azukiwe Tyatya

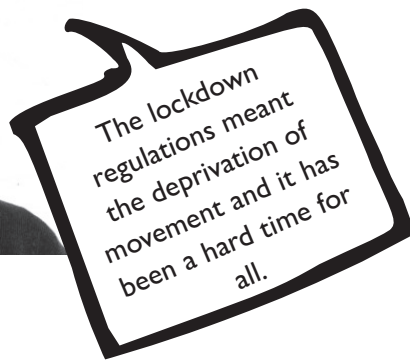
Grade 12, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 really affected me both academically and mentally. It continued being a barrier throughout my last year of school, one I was supposed to enjoy dearly. My academics dropped drastically because of the virus. We had to stay at home first for three months and then longer. That demotivated me a lot. Although I was only indirectly affected by the coronavirus it really did affect my well-being.

My sense of self-worth and confidence dropped by the day. I doubted passing my trial exams, which I passed anyways. My self-confidence with regards to academics was at zero.

Your contribution towards helping me reach my full potential with my studies, without having to worry about how I will pay for my finances at school, is very much appreciated. The fund continued being a financial aid for me for a lot of years and I am grateful for that. No amount of words can describe how thankful and grateful I am to have received such an opportunity.

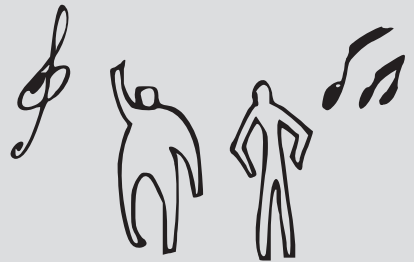
It acted as a driving force that made me work two times harder and reach my highest potential academically.”



Linomtha Magcwekana

*Grade 10, Thobelani High School
(Eastern Cape)*

“It is with such honour that I’ve finally found a way to talk you through such a devastating and overwhelming time we are facing. It has been a really difficult time for all of us this year as we are stuck in the pandemic, which is Covid-19. This year has been nothing but a disaster to everyone: economically, academically, and socially. So many people have lost their source of income as they were forced to stay at home – many got retrenched and are now jobless. Many sacrifices were made during this time and people were left stranded and drained. Many lives were lost. I felt mentally disturbed and devastated and emotionally drained and my mind immediately rusted as I couldn’t cope at home. ”



Banoyolo Manyati

Grade 9, Kuyasa Combined School (Eastern Cape)

“The virus had a huge impact on my academics and after the extension of lockdown we had to create study groups, because the teachers did not give us any work. Now that schools are open, I go every Monday. The lockdown dimmed my passion, hope and eagerness to accomplish and fulfil my goals and dreams. Covid-19, through the power of God, did not infect my family but it definitely affected our way of living.”

Khanyisa Hermans

Grade 10, Solomon Mahlangu Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My aunt made us sign up for Vodacom E-school to study. I started doing maths because that is my weakness, so I was improving it and obviously other subjects. Then my mental health was not stable at all, and I decided to cut social media for a while, and I am still not using it. I started training and dancing because all I did was to lie in bed and read books from my phone. I also called my cousins all the time to check up on them because we lost a few family members, and I am still trying to stay positive in this entire pandemic.”

.....

Ashante Williams

Grade 12, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“The first month of lockdown was nerve-wracking. The increase of infections, the death toll, the uncertainty of schools reopening. It certainly took a toll on my studies; I could not manage to concentrate for quite some time.”

Sinovuyo Mkhohliswa

Grade 12, Phaphani Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“In terms of my studies, Covid-19 affected me mentally and physically. Mentally I could not cope in my studies because in my mind I had that fear of being infected by the virus. Physically I could not go to school because the country was in lockdown and that brought a workload on my shoulders. At home I could not get much time to study because of the noise that was caused by my siblings who were at home during the lockdown. At home, my brother was infected by Covid-19 and the whole family had to be tested for the virus.”

“My aunt is working in a retail store, the store reduced the working hours due to Covid-19. It affected my family financially because she is paid according to the hours she worked.”



Sinoxolo Makepe

Grade 12, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 really drained me both mentally and physically. It kept me anxious as I always worry about being infected and what will happen if I contract it. The masks suffocate me, but I have to endure the effects as I want to be safe from Covid-19.”



**LEARNING
CHALLENGES**

A notable aspect of the pandemic was that better-resourced schools managed to respond more effectively than under-resourced ones. Technology enabled on-line teaching via the internet, and the disruption of not being able to attend classes physically could be reduced significantly – provided both the school and its pupils had access to the necessary resources. In the case of poorer schools and communities this was often not the case, further underlining differences between rich and poor. Frequently the home environment was not conducive to study. Noise and crowded surroundings were major hindrances, as the following stories demonstrate.

Simamkele Ngqangazana

Grade 10, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Coronavirus has affected many lives and our ways of living were not the same. Closing of schools was a bad idea for us learners; our dreams were faded, we thought we are not coming back to school until the coronavirus ends. This taught me not to look down, that I must stand up and do self-studying. It also taught me that in life you must have many options; you must never rely on one option because you never know what tomorrow brings. I could not study online because I had no money to buy data for internet. Online studying was not good for me, and I do not have access to technology i.e., laptop, Wi-Fi or an iPhone.”

Simamkele Tyhaliti

Grade 9, Smiling Valley Junior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My grandfather was affected. He was not living where I live. He has lung diseases. He had to go to the hospital and in hospital is where he died”.

From time to time I would use my sister's cellphone to log into Facebook and ask which topics my classmates were doing and do those topics on my own. Studying at home alone, with no resources such as studying apps and quick online assistance has been such an exhausting experience and I have been struggling to cope.

Juwele Busisiwe

Grade 10, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I am writing this letter to express the negative impact Covid-19 has on me. Since it started in March this year, learners were supposed to find alternative ways to study, which included online learning, watching learning Channels on DStv or schoolwork being sent on WhatsApp. Unfortunately, for some of us who come from underprivileged homes, this kind of learning was impossible for us as public libraries were also closed. Due to the lack of resources, I was unable to study at home. Therefore, I am now behind on schoolwork – especially in maths and accounting as these subjects needs daily practice.”

.....

Awakhe Gubudela

Grade 9, Masibambane Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During the pandemic I have been struggling to do anything that involves schoolwork, because studying online isn’t easy. In order to study online you need data and data is expensive. And you don’t get the same attention you get from class. Teachers will not be able to complete the curriculum and that will leave us children hanging. And we are all different – there are faster and slow learners. We will not be able to catch up in such a short period of time. We still have to choose subjects for Grade 10.”

.....

Lisakhanya Juqu

Grade 10, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Being out of school for a long time has made me struggle when studying. This pandemic made things bad. Even at home I was not able to learn at all even though I tried many times. I live in a two-room dwelling with my family. When I am studying, I am easily disturbed by the noise of my five younger siblings and distracted by the noise of the television or radio.”

Thandiwe Makuleni

Grade 10, Solomon Mahlangu Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My mother has a small business of selling potato chips, but it couldn’t run during lockdown, which was a disadvantage to us because the money helps us a lot here at home. Being out of school has discouraged me, to be honest. I did try my best to study with online learning but sometimes I felt like I needed more. My siblings always disturbed me when I was studying because we shared a room and that was one of the challenges I was facing.”

.....

Zingiswa Gogotya

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Now I had to adjust to online learning. It has not been easy learning online. There were days when I had no data, but through all those challenges I had to learn to adapt and realise that my life and safety is important.”

.....

Sinelizwi Malawu

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I could not study well because of the noise and the distractions caused in the informal settlements that I live in. Due to the lack of technology and the availability of data I could not study well because I did not have access to the information from the internet or online sources.”

.....

Bazi Tokota

Grade 9, Silimela High School (Western Cape)

“Since the pandemic started it has been difficult to cope. We were forced indoors and follow some rules to avoid being infected. At home we kept to warm places, drinking hot things including gingers, lemon, and antibiotics to boost our immune system. My uncle was affected since he is a paramedic in Cecilia Makhiwana Hospital. He was tested positive and then went into isolation camp. We did everything we can to help, including emotional support. Being out of school affected me in many ways. It was difficult to learn at home because the

house was crowded and since I did not have any source of media to assist me it was even more challenging. At the beginning of the pandemic our teachers tried to give us some work, but it did not hold us for long.”

Kudakwashe Mukwasi

Grade 11, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“It was hard to study at home because I had to try and study in a noisy environment caused by my family members. The fact that they were all at home was making it a noisy environment. I also had to deal with data issues for the online study, because my parents weren’t working during the first two months of lockdown. They had to deal with the financial problems like food, rent and my data for schoolwork. I missed some lessons because of not having data.”



Tomose Mizeka

Grade 11, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

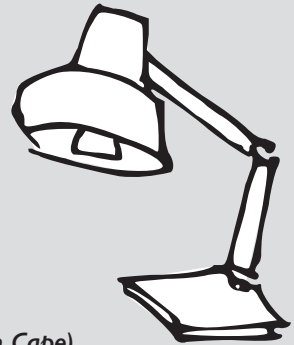
“My mother lost her job and now she stays at home, and we depend on my social grant. Academically we were not allowed to go to school, but at least now we are back at school.

Our school was closed for months, and we could not study online because we don’t have enough data bundles.

At home I used DStv to study and read my favourite books.”

Olwethu Mbala

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)



“During this lockdown life was really hard on me and my family. My mother was staying at home with no income. We were depending entirely on the social grant money. It was so hard to study because I am staying in a two-bedroom house and there are eight of us. Now that school has reopened, I am studying really hard so that I can pass with distinctions and get accepted into Stellenbosch University.”



Liyakhanya Gqirana

Grade 9, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Academically the lockdown meant that we won’t be going to school any time soon. During the lockdown I was not able to study because I did not have money to buy data, so I could not study or learn online. After the lockdown when schools reopened, I was so lost that I did not adjust well to the changes made by the government – to learn as fast as possible. Most of the new work we are studying is still confusing.”

.....

Mbali Nyangwa

Grade 12 Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“When the lockdown was implemented and schools closed, I felt very anxious about my schoolwork. I wasn’t sure that I would be able to study online, because of the environment I live in. It was hard. I struggled to adapt to the change, but eventually I had to learn to accept the situation and learn how to cope.”

.....

Lukhanyo Rotyana

Grade 9 Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“Ever since Covid-19 started, I and my family were staying at home as the President told us to do. We were drinking ginger and lemon, and we also washed our hands every 20 minutes. It was a hard time at Level 5, we were struggling a lot at home because no one was working, but no one got infected with Covid-19. It affected me because I was not attending classes so that I can understand the schoolwork. I didn’t know a lot of things and I was becoming lost because I can’t teach myself, I need someone with experience. I also did not write my June exams.”

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Lisakhanya Lungiso

Grade 12, Mtirara Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“It has been a tough year for me and my family because of Covid-19. I couldn’t attend an autumn school. I was scared that Covid-19 could affect me and my family leading to sorrow and grief.”

.....

Asisipho Singeni

Grade 10, J. A. Calata High School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 has affected me and my family. We had to stay at home and not visit anyone, including family members. We were also not able to go to my grandmother’s funeral because we had no permits, and the funeral was in Queenstown. And being out of school was very tiring because staying at home with nothing to do was exhausting. It was not easy at all. We started a group chat on WhatsApp but eventually I was out of bundles to continue learning, so I was left behind with the topics.”

.....

Ukhanyo Gush

Grade 11, Siphamandla Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

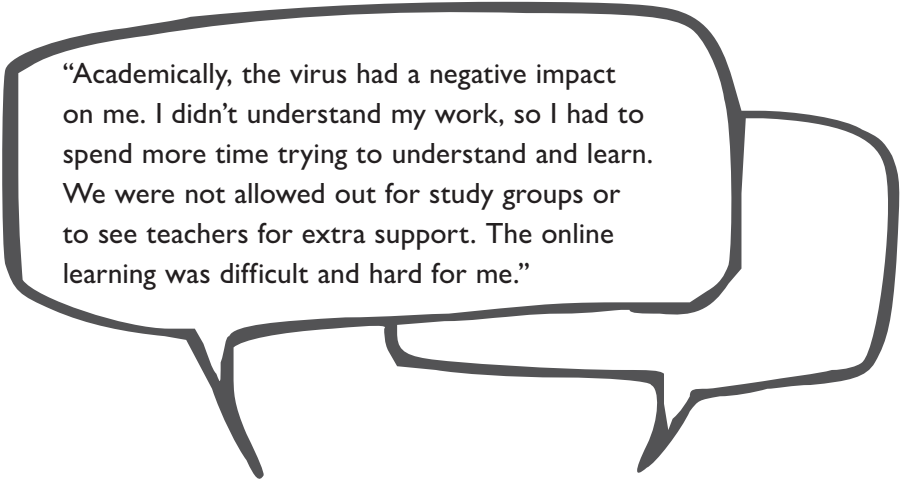
“Covid-19 has changed people’s lives, caused major disruptions all over. It hasn’t been easy for people to live with the virus, and schools were closed for a long period. Businesses and other organisations closed, and people were struggling financially. Covid-19 also exposed me to the fact that I cannot learn beyond my school facilities, as I do not have access to a laptop or smart phone.”

.....

Sanelisiwe Ngqaqu

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“This pandemic has affected my life very negatively. I am still trying to catch up on the schoolwork. I was not able to study very well because there is not enough space at the home for me to study. I have a large family so I cannot study well enough. There is a lot of noise. Everyone was at home. My father is unemployed because of the lockdown, and it has been very challenging finding work now.”

A hand-drawn speech bubble with a thick black outline. The bubble is irregular in shape, with a tail pointing downwards and to the left. Inside the bubble, there is a testimonial in black text.

“Academically, the virus had a negative impact on me. I didn’t understand my work, so I had to spend more time trying to understand and learn. We were not allowed out for study groups or to see teachers for extra support. The online learning was difficult and hard for me.”

Amahle Nyangiwe

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)



Zethu Mzamo

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Covid-19 affected me a lot and also my family. As for me, I was struggling with studying because my home has a small space with no room. It was overcrowded because my mom was not working at the time of the pandemic. The noise of the television affected me, and I was unable to study.”

.....

Zinana Sesethu

Grade 9, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 affected me badly because all through the lockdown I have been stressed because schools were closed.

That is where I got afraid, because I think we are all gonna fail.

This Covid-19 pandemic also affected my family because jobs were not available, and my mom did not have a lot of money to feed us and buy me some data to go and study via online. I missed many online classes because I didn't have money to buy data and neither did my mother. This nearly destroyed my career, because if I fail my career will also go down.”

.....

Azola Boloda

Grade 10, Nqweba High School (Eastern Cape)

“I hope you are well during this hard time. Well, I am fine but stressing at the same time. The year is ending, and we have not covered up work – just Term 1 work. We couldn't learn through using the phone this past five months. The reason being that I don't have a phone. My grandma uses old phones which do not have WhatsApp. I used to go to my friend and ask her for updates, but sometimes she did not have data, so I had to struggle for money to buy data in order to learn.”

Odwa Soci

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“I prepared myself for the UCT competition on the 26th of May 2020, but Covid-19 took that opportunity away. It was difficult for me to study at home. Everyone was at home during the lockdown; there was always noise and I was not able to concentrate. My home was very overcrowded, and we were suffering financially. Jobs were lost. I struggled to get money for data. I missed many of my learning materials that were sent over WhatsApp and since then it has been difficult to catch up.

I studied day and night to catch up with other learners.”

.....

Thembele Mbir

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“It was hard for me to study alone because in some subjects I needed a teacher to explain some of the things to me. In some subjects we created a WhatsApp group so that we could study better. But that came along with more problems – the network was very poor because of the poor environments we live in, and many others did not have cell phones, so it was very hard. Studying on WhatsApp was difficult too, as we did not have money for so much data at a time.”

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Siphe Mgolombane

Grade 9, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“It was hard learning under these circumstances of the virus. Since the announcement of the lockdown there was very little communication between the teachers and the learners. I just kept on revising the work we started in the beginning of the year, as well as last year’s work. At home it was hard because I lost one of my parents on the 16th of July. My father passed away, not from Covid-19 but from TB. He was of course the breadwinner in the family. Now we have to depend fully on my mother.”



Relief from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic came to households in a number of ways, including the top-up of social grants by government, the Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), emergency food aid by government, organisations and individual initiatives. The reliance on social grants generally is evident from the preceding stories. For many of ASF’s bursars, the modest grant (R1 000) came as a meaningful source of relief. To their great credit, in most instances the funds were used as intended – to enable school attendance. In a few cases, part of the grant was used for necessities, as the stories that follow show.

Wendy Ndabeni

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The virus impacted me hugely in terms of finances as no one in my family was able to work. We depend solely on my grandmother’s money from selling *THE BIG ISSUE* magazine on the roads. It has become even harder now that she has passed away due to a car accident. We now depend on my brother’s social grant. I am very grateful to have been accepted as a beneficiary to the African Scholars’ fund, as the funds will make a huge difference.”

Alizwa Faltien

Grade 11, Silimela High School (Western Cape)

“Firstly, I want to thank you for assisting me with my bursary money. It helps me a lot during this pandemic. It helped me buy a smart phone that helped me to study online. I appreciate it a lot.”

Bloccas Bhere Street
SiteC
Khayelitsha
7184

Dear African Scholar's Fund.

I am truly thankful I have received my money and I made sure that I spent it wisely during this difficult time. I spent it on some of the stationery that I was short of, on a school jersey and the rest on transport. This year has been really stressful due to the covid 19. Covid 19 has changed my life for the worst.

When schools were closed I could't even study due to the shortage of textbooks at school. At the start of the Lockdown I was stressed about ~~was~~ what was going to happen regarding school. The pressure at home was also too much. Luckily my dad could work during lockdown as he is a security guard. I don't know what would've happened if he could ~~be~~ not as he is the breadwinner.

The pressure at school right now is too much for me I just hope that I make it to the next grade. I am working very hard even though there is just too much work that has to be done in this short period of time. Finding a tutor is also very hard right now. I am really stressed about my books so much.

From
Onke Sibizwe

Zizipho Saba

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“These past few months life has not been easy. The place where my mother worked was closed down. Having to watch my mother all stressed out, trying to make ends meet was the hardest, and having to eat the same meal for weeks. Thank you for being a loyal fund and checking up on your bursar.”

.....

Onele Hlanganyana

Grade 9, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“My mother, a single mother of four, was told to take unpaid leave from her job. The manager said that the shop was financially unstable and that they cannot pay everyone who was working there. The only income that we had left was me and my little brother’s social grant. As weeks went by my mother was struggling to buy us food, because she was the only breadwinner, and she lost her job. She then opened her own stand nearby the clinic selling sweets and chips so that we can have something to eat. When I received my first payment of R700 from the ASF I was very happy because I could help my mother with buying some food and other things that we needed at home. Weeks went by where we did not have enough food to eat and we ate home baked bread almost every single day. When the grants were increased by the government, we could buy more food, and no one went to bed with an empty stomach. In August, my mother received a call from her old job saying she can come back to work at the shop because it is doing well.”

.....

Likhona Kwaji

Grade 9, Masiyile Secondary School (Western Cape)

“This bursary is very important to me because my mom is unemployed, and my grandmother is the only one who supports us with government grants. This is a situation that nearly destroyed us. It has dictated how we live our lives; that we cannot live without washing our hands, sanitizing, and wearing a mask. It has affected us a lot because we haven’t been going anywhere. I was very stressed about school. I was thinking about my dream that was going to vanish just like that. We couldn’t even visit our friends or family because of this virus but with God’s grace we have survived, and I was able to go back to school.”



Pozisa Ndzuzo

Grade 11, Cowan High School (Eastern Cape)

“I write this letter as a token of appreciation for the money you had sent. I was able to buy some toiletries, groceries at home and I even paid the parents’ fundraising at school. Truth be told things haven’t been easy during this pandemic. The Covid-19 has affected almost all of my short-term goals. At first, I

was depressed and concluded that I have no future ahead. Fortunately, things are slowly but surely getting normal.”



Sinovuyo Dali

Grade 10, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“I want to thank the African Scholars’ Fund for the contribution you have made towards my education this year. Your generous contribution has allowed me to have peace of mind and pay for my fees and other things that would have challenged me financially. It allowed me to focus on my academics with a calm mind. I have more homework from school, more tasks that I have to focus on by myself and at times it was hard because I struggle with things like data or with the network. This year taught me to be responsible for my education and to work hard.”

Kuhle Mqashane

Grade 11, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“I live with my mother and my brother. I come from a low-income household, and I’ve seen the struggle during the nationwide lockdown. My mother was not able to cover all my school needs, but because I receive money from you, I was able to assist my mother and contribute towards the buying of full school uniform and stationery. Academically the coronavirus affected me, because I did not have much of a good WiFi to attend online classes. When the school reopened in August, I attended classes just two days per week. But because I do care about passing and going to the next grade I worked hard and covered all my schoolwork. I managed to stay afloat keeping in mind everyone is doing their best. I just hope this virus ends and next year I can enjoy my senior year and pass with flying colours.”

.....



Anathi Yeko

Grade 9, Thobelani High School (Eastern Cape)

“When schools closed, I thought it was the end of my dreams. Every time I thought about school, I would get emotional because I had no hope of school reopening again. A lot of my family members lost their jobs. It was heart-breaking for me when my mother told me that she is trying her best to find a job even if it was Covid-19, because she wanted me to be successful. Learning at home was nerve-wracking because there were so many things that disturbed me, like cell phones and the television. It was very difficult sitting and doing nothing the whole day. So, I thank the African Scholars’ Fund for asking me to write this letter because now one piece of sadness is lifted, and I am relieved.”



Le-Kecha Januarie

Grade 12, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“For a month it was very different at home because of the finances. Luckily, I received an amount from the African Scholars’ Fund. That money improved my family situation. For that I am very thankful.”

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Lilitha Siko

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“I wrote this letter to thank African Scholars’ Fund for supporting me and giving me an amount every year. As we know this year has been a very difficult year for most of us. My mother lost her job because of the virus. My father already lost his job in 2017 because of his health issues, so there was no income coming in at all.”

Eric Jesurin September

Grade 9, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Our crowded household was filled with unemployment. Poverty was everywhere in this community filled with crime, homelessness, and a lack of education about this virus. I have lost seemingly half of my school year, as teacher try to get the work that we should have done long time ago done in their effort to support and show us to stand firm amidst this pandemic. I know that everyone of us is scared of the thought of a second wave of this virus. The bursary money helps me and my family a lot during the most severe times, that I will never forget and therefore I thank you. You see, it was very difficult, very much so that we thought I lost the bursary due to the effect the virus has.”

Kgatliso Molefe

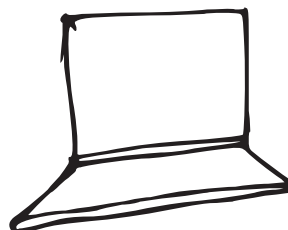
Grade 12, Tetlanyo High School (Northern Cape)

“Thank you to the African Scholars’ Fund, I received the money. I managed to cover most of my essential expenses. I bought matric study guides and saved some money for other academic expenses that I will come across for the next year. The study guides have been very helpful as they helped me to cover most of the content that I needed to know for my final examination.”

Emihle Mqweba

Grade 10, Masiyile Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The money ASF sent helped me a lot during the Covid-19 pandemic. I bought my school shoes and a calculator because my parents could not afford to buy me shoes and a calculator because they stopped working. The Covid-19 affected me badly when it comes to my schoolwork because I couldn’t go to school, and I was behind with my schoolwork. We couldn’t learn well and as a result we wrote exams in a hurry. I promise to pull my socks up and get good marks.”



Nizole Ndudula

Grade 10, Masiyile Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The money that you gave me helped me a lot during the Covid-19 pandemic. It helped me buy myself a school bag and I bought some toiletries. The rest I gave to my mother so that she could buy something to eat during the pandemic. Because she stopped working that money helped us from starving during the lockdown.”

.....



Mtishe Oyama

Grade 10, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Things have not been easy, but I’d like to express my greatest gratitude to the African Scholars’ Fund for contributing towards making my future brighter. The African Scholars’ Fund has a great impact in my life and has relieved my family of some of the financial burden.”

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Luyolo Mrwashu

Grade 11, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

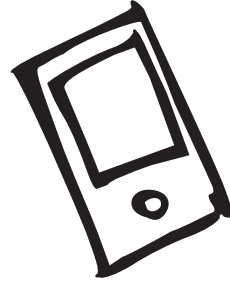
“Covid-19 pandemic caused a gap in my education this year. It made it difficult for me to focus on my education because of my fear of contracting the virus. I fought so hard to fill the academic gap. My family went through financial problems during the Covid-19 period. We faced a hard time when it comes to providing. I am happy that the African Scholars’ Fund assists me.”



Unathi Fota

Grade 12, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I would like to thank you for the financial support you have given me this year. It really helped me. Covid-19 has had a tremendous negative impact in my life. Because of the lockdown that lasted for nearly three months my education was put on hold. The reasons why I’m saying this is because even though teachers at my school would try and do online classes via WhatsApp, I couldn’t keep up with them because most of the time I did not have data due to financial reasons in my family.”



Antonie Noludumo

Grade 12, Solomon Mahlangu Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“The fund was very helpful to me during the process of lockdown. Since the schools were closed, we had to study through cell phones. This affected me negatively because I needed to have money in order to buy data and data is very expensive. The last payment of African Scholars’ Fund helped me to buy some data that will last for a long time. From then I was able to learn at home. I was also able to find some information on the internet.”

.....

Siyakholwa Swaartbooi

Grade 12 Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“Firstly, I would like to say that I am very grateful for the award you have given me. Covid-19 really affected me socially and my mother was infected with Covid-19. It was very bad. I thought that I was going to lose her but thank God that she recovered. After my mother recovered my uncle was also infected, but he unfortunately died. Covid-19 also affected us economically because my brother who is the only breadwinner was retrenched. I don’t know how I would have paid my school fees if it was not for the African Scholars’ Fund. Covid-19 also really affected my academics – I am drained and exhausted by the pressure of the teachers. I do not blame them, but it is very difficult.”

INTERNET!

Alizwa Faltien

Grade 11, Silimela High School (Eastern Cape)

“Firstly, I want to thank you for assisting me with my bursary money. It helps a lot during the pandemic. It helped me buy a smart phone that helped me to study online.”



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Despite all the difficulties reflected in the stories we received, a recurrent theme was that of hope, the value of education, and the commitment of bursars to completing their education. It is both inspiring and humbling to read this. In the face of the huge problems of inequality in South Africa, the added difficulties brought about by the pandemic, and the tiny contribution made by African Scholars' Fund to addressing this, our bursars' stories bring encouragement and determination to continue with our efforts. We hope it will be the same for the many other organisations and individuals seeking to make a difference in building a better future.

Aneesa Nquma

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“School is now very stressful because most of the teachers don’t have time to teach all the things we need to be taught. We also don’t go to school every day and the teachers also give us a lot of homework. Many of the tasks we have to do by ourselves. I am lucky that I have access to the internet which helped me a lot with my schoolwork. I am extremely grateful that no one in my family or friends got infected with Covid-19. Many may disagree, but this pandemic has been a sort of blessing in disguise as it brought me closer to my family than ever before.”

Thabo Juqu

Grade 12, Solomon Mahlangu Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“Learning through social media was hard and costly but I enjoyed every part. I learnt about virtual conferencing and Zoom.”

.....

Dominique Marcus

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“I ended up not watching the news anymore, because all you heard was Covid-19 and how badly it affected our country, but it also proved that united we are stronger and actually love each other.”

.....



Mbali Kanityi

Grade 10, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“This method of online learning is new to us. I had data problems, but I managed to pull through. The teachers were sending us schoolwork, so we can keep busy. I had no data, but I did not just sit around, so I studied on my own.”

.....

Phakama Maqubela

Grade 12, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“The lockdown made me concentrate more on my books and to focus on my studies, because I am the only one who can push myself. As much as this lockdown caused a lot of work to be learnt in a short period of time, it also gave me an opportunity to practise my schoolwork more.”



Okuhle Zozi

Grade 10, Intsebenziswano Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I watched the news every day and listened to the President’s speeches to see if there were any improvements. I listened to Angie Motshekga about the reopening of schools to see when I could go back. I had hope that I would return to school very soon. I am a girl who loves school and books. I started studying new topics and doing activities that were in Term 2. Studying from home was not easy since the teachers’ absence is noticeable. Since I don’t have a phone of my own, I could not be part of the WhatsApp groups but somehow, I managed to do my schoolwork. Besides everything that is happening I am happy to know that I will still be able to fulfil my dream of becoming a general surgeon and make myself, my parents, teachers and The African Scholars’ Fund proud.”





Chirelle Speelman

Grade 12, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“My life was totally in danger by an invisible invasion. The moment the lockdown rules became more tighter applied, my matric farewell was on my brain. I was worried if I will I ever be able to complete my matric year in 2020. What will happen next year? Will I be able to study? Things became a little better; we received our schoolwork electronically through WhatsApp groups. The more classes went on the less the threat became. I have adjusted to the new ‘normal’.”

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Ziersca Witbooi

Grade 12, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“During the vivid Covid-19 pandemic I got infected with the virus. I felt depressed and alone. Will I be able to catch up again? Will I pass? It was the most difficult period in my life. I have a very supportive family, but I realised during that time that this was something I had to deal with all on my own. I was devastated, but I made it and can’t be any more grateful than I am now.”

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Olona Beja

Grade 10, Masibambane Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“In our class we created a group on WhatsApp so that we can communicate with our subject teacher to send us notes and activities to keep us busy at home whilst there’s lockdown. I have been studying very hard because I want to make it to the next grade. I have a time management schedule at home that shows which time, what subject I should be learning. My cousin-sister was doing the same subjects as me when she was still at school. She also assisted me so it’s not really that hard for me.”

Thulani Maxin

Grade 11, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“The outbreak of the coronavirus brought alternative ways of studying while at home. Our teachers engaged with us, always giving feedback and that kept me going. I studied very hard using all the sources provided by the government and teachers. Some topics were very difficult to understand but because there was time, I got to do things at my own pace, approach different studying methods like listening to videos about the topic and using as many textbooks as I can.”

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Simnikiwe Ncamazana

Grade 9, Masibambane Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“My studies practically stopped but lucky for me I had an older sister who was willing to teach me my subjects because she also did them in Grade 9 and now she is doing Grade 12. Our class did not have a WhatsApp group to study from, so my sister would make up notes for me and would give me activities to do and that really helped me. Although my sister didn’t teach like teachers but at least I understood some of the things she would teach me. To cover the whole syllabus over the remaining period is only wishful thinking. It was however extremely difficult for me to catch up with the lesson because of the internet struggles at home.”

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Lutho Mngqibisa

Grade 11, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“I had to find an alternative learning since schools closed. I listened and watched educational documentaries on the radio and television to try and learn.”



Whaldene Reed

Grade 9, Spandau Senior Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“My mother is unemployed, and my father received only 25% of his salary. The entire lockdown he was unable to work. Being the only breadwinner meant as a family we had to adapt. Some days we had to survive on eating whatever my mother could scrape together, but there wasn’t a single night we went to bed hungry. Covid-19 has brought me to my knees so many times during the past few months, not only for myself but for my family, my friends, and our community. It saddened me to see or hear of families who had lost a loved one to the pandemic. The question which haunted me was how would I achieve my goals? Would I be robbed of it? Unfortunately, no teaching and learning would take place for me. There was no communication between the school and myself. I had to rely on myself and the help of my family. I commend my parents for the effort they are constantly putting into my education.”

Afikile Mashologu

Grade 10, College of Science and Technology (Western Cape)

“A lot of times I ran out of data and could not catch up with the schoolwork and many new topics were difficult. My sister would discourage the fact that I am always studying as they feel it may not be as important. Seeing how committed my teachers were, is what motivated me to push harder.”

Paula Johannes

Grade 11, Beaufort West Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“I am very concerned about the state of our country, but mostly our people. Education is so important, while being at home I went through my schoolbooks and practiced every day.”

Lynne Deysel

Grade 9, Groot-Brakrivier Senior Secondary School (Western Cape)

“The hurting question that arose, will I ever be able to complete my Grade 9 school year in 2020? What’s likely to happen next year? Will I be able to choose my subjects for Grade 10? Things began to get better later; we received our schoolwork electronically through WhatsApp groups.”

Sinovuyo Mshume

Grade 10, Cowan High School (Eastern Cape)

“My parents were quarantined because they had the corona; it was very scary for me as I was stressing a lot. They were taken to Nelson Mandela Stadium. When they got back at the end of June, they were negative. My dad didn’t work for two months, and he has just joined work now.”

Thimna Mayola

Grade 10, Leiden High School (Western Cape)

“Covid-19 has changed the way I was living and the things I did on a daily basis. The lockdown has made me appreciate the things that I have and feel for the people who don’t have, and don’t have the same living as I do. It taught me so much in being united as a people and helping those who are unfortunate.”

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Lukhanyo Mamputa

Grade 9, Masiyile Secondary School (Western Cape)

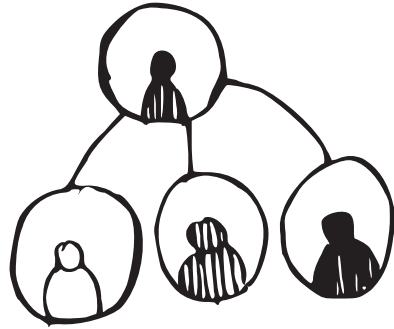
“Now the country is stuck in one place because of corona and that makes us struggle at school, because things are not as usual. The most important thing to me is that even though there were many challenges, I will keep putting passion and a lot of effort to my work. I appreciate to receive the money from the *African Scholars’ Fund*. That money is playing a big role for my school needs.”

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Yanga Cungwa

Grade 10, Silimela High school (Eastern Cape)

“Covid-19 shocked everybody in the world and the numbers of infections are still increasing while others they do not wear masks – a key prevention regarded by the government. At the beginning of lockdown, I was so lazy to study, but eventually I ended up forcing myself. Sometimes, when I encountered some difficulties in certain chapters that I completely did not understand, I would wish that I was at school whereby I would be able to go the teacher and ask for clarity in that particular section, but unfortunately there was no way because I only had myself. But in the end, we got used to living life differently now by wearing masks and sanitising.”



Lulibo Matasimba

Grade 10, Toise Secondary School (Eastern Cape)

“The Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed my life. Interaction with my classmates in school is what I miss the most from before. When I went to school, I had more homework, but the lessons were way more engaging and interesting, which made me concentrate better. Online schooling is something very new. At times I struggle with the online group because of the data and other technical problems. But I did learn to do homework electronically and search information on the internet.”

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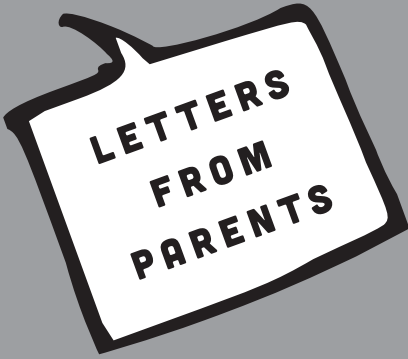
Dear ASF Team

I would like to thank the ASF team for the support you offered me throughout my high school years. No amount of words can express how grateful I am for your financial support. You gave me an opportunity to fulfil my long-term goals and gave me a chance to be the first person in my family to complete matric and go to varsity.

Thank you for always encouraging me to work hard at school and get good marks for admission into the medical school. Thank you for helping me get this far and giving me a chance to achieve my goal of being a doctor.

Have a prosperous New Year. God bless you.

Regards
Siphosethu Sabani



The following letters from the parents of our scholars show how Covid-19 amplified, and continues to amplify, existing life challenges.

CHRIS HANI HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS

Weziwe Khanzi

“The Covid-19 pandemic has had very devastating effects both financially and emotionally. I run an informal business which had to close down due to the lockdown regulations. This has had very negative effects on my children as well, since they know they won’t be getting anything extra for school or over the Christmas holidays.”

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Mrs Nokwayiyo

“The Covid-19 pandemic has not been treating us well at all, because we lost friends and families due to this virus. The virus took away little glimpses of hope that we had of the possibility to live a good life, and it made me lose my job as a chef. The company had to close down as there was no income being generated. My husband is also unemployed. I have four children. How can they survive on the social grant only? We were kicked out at the place we were renting because we could no longer pay it. This resulted in us relocating to these new informal settlements. Life has not been good at all; it’s been a disaster. We could not even buy our children winter clothes. We now live under worries and stress. We hope that things might change as time goes, but as for now, all hope is gone.”



SOLOMON MAHLANGU HIGH SCHOOL

Preety Danster

“My uncle and my eldest brother died of Covid-19. My brother’s wife was also positive, and their kids. They were admitted to hospital and the youngest child was placed in ICU. It was a very sad thing to see a child suffer with pipes all over, helpless, and with no visitors allowed. We, the family, got to see her on WhatsApp only if you ask the nurse to take a photograph. Only one of them survived and it saddens us even today. What I am asking of the people of South Africa: Please wear a mask every time, wash your hands with soap, sanitize and keep social distance at all times, because Covid-19 kills. Covid-19 has left an open wound to our family which is unable to be easily mended; only God knows it is very sad.”

Linde Priscilla Sam

“This pandemic had a negative impact on my family. A few months back I found out that my daughter tested positive for the virus. As a parent I had these questions in my head as to where she got the virus from, is she going to survive or not, and how am I going to take care of her through this difficult time. Through God’s grace she survived and now she is as strong and healthy as an ox.”

.....

Vuyani Herman

“I have lost a father and social mentors; this Covid-19 has left me emotionally bankrupt and has made me to be spiritually heightened. I think we can be prepared for future pandemics, as this was the first worse one which caught not only South Africa, but the entire world off guard.”

.....

Sibahle Kefile

“Due to this pandemic life was not as usual because we couldn’t do our normal things and as a parent, I am not feeling well nor good. This Covid-19 got us all in tears, worried, and it even brought us hunger, because we weren’t going to work since we went into lockdown. As a parent I am so scared that I could lose my children since they are now back at school. But in school they are protected, because they always wear their masks, do social distancing and also sanitize their hands.”





Aretha Ndamase

“My name is Aretha Ndamase. I am Mihlali’s mother. This pandemic has really made our lives very difficult, not only financially but also emotionally. We have lost jobs, family members and also our pride. The reason I say we’ve lost our pride is because we find ourselves unable to provide for our kids. The pain I personally see amongst our people’s faces is beyond me, but for us that are still young, we can still change the fate of our kids by being positive and focussed. At the end of the day, it’s all up to us to still be safe and unharmed through this pandemic.”

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Mr S Magwa

“This virus has changed the way we live our lives, and the way we do things. Covid-19 has a bad effect in our family, it took away my daughter Lutho’s only aunt and it made me sad. Losing a family member has made us more aware about how serious the virus is. Now we are more focussed on sanitizing, social distancing and wearing mask. We have been drinking herbs or medicine to prevent ourselves from getting Covid-19 symptoms, and we take certain safety measures when the children are going to school or to the shops. We teach them how they should behave in public and keep social distancing even when greeting people. The school also played a huge role with our kids, and the government, by providing schools with PPE. We appreciate what you have done.”

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ZJ Manziya

“I was really struggling to take care of my children because there was nothing I could do to put something on the table besides going out and look out for some piece work because of this pandemic. That is how this pandemic affected me and my family.”

Ndileka Lwane

“I have also been affected by the virus myself; it was extremely painful as I wasn’t able to take care of my family and be with them. I thought I was not going to survive, but with God’s grace I am still alive.”

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Miss LD Williams

“I, Lulama Williams, parent of Sivuyile Williams, wish to state how I felt during lockdown due to coronavirus. I was really scared and upset at the time, because I was thinking how the students are going to take this. Especially when they were supposed to be in school, but not attending. I have locked myself in the house because I am on chronic medication. So, it was said that if somebody is chronic it’s so easy to get this virus. I was thinking of how my kids would cope if I died. This virus has caused a lot of tension and anxiety in my family too. The second wave is the most scary one so we must always be careful at all times.”

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Thabo Juqu (Grade 12 learner writing on behalf of his Gogo)

“I write this letter to tell you about my grandmother’s (Gogo’s) reactions, fears and feelings towards the coronavirus pandemic. Because she cannot write it herself, she told me that she hates the coronavirus pandemic, because it led her to lose her part-time jobs that gave her good, although sometimes not enough cash. She further stated that she is so fearful of the coronavirus because most people that die from it are at her age. She also feared that we (me and my cousin) might get infected at school and bring the virus into our home. She finished up by telling me that the future will always be bright, and that the coronavirus will end like all the other viruses. My grandmother is very strong, and I too believe that we will make it to the future.”



Ntombekhaya Maureen Cutshe

“Our government and the President promised that our companies must claim the UIF money, but we never received any – even now. I had to make means to buy food with the little I had, and to buy this coronavirus medication, which is also too expensive. We can’t afford to boost our immune system to fight off this virus and try to prevent it. There were many times when we were missing our family members, where we could give each other financial support and attendance. None of this could happen because we feared being infected. This pandemic has taught me that life is not infinite, and that I must not take anything for granted.”

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Leloxolo Mqikela

“The biggest challenge during this pandemic is unemployment. As a parent I had it difficult financially. I am struggling to pay school fees and other school finances; my child’s education also took a strain because of the national lockdown. But all in all, I am grateful that everything is almost back to normal, and I thank the African Scholars’ Fund for the support they have been giving our children in building a better future for themselves. Coronavirus has affected me badly; one of our relatives died because of this virus. It is hard because we have to wear our mask, sanitize whenever we are going, practise social distancing and stay home. We go out only when we have to buy groceries and collect our pension money.”

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Thandiwe Mqulwana

“This Covid-19 has affected me a lot. I lost some of my family members and that worries me, because I haven’t seen this happening, especially now. Many people lost their jobs, so they can’t provide for their families. This coronavirus left people homeless and they have nothing to eat, because they don’t have money to buy food.”

ZIMELENI HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS



Pear Tyebileyo

“During the lockdown I couldn’t go out and look for the jobs to feed my grandchildren. I was so scared that I was going to die and leave my seven grandchildren and my daughter alone. I also thought that we were all going to die because of hunger.”

.....

B Shinya

“This coronavirus has affected me a lot because we didn’t go to work for many months. We lost our loved ones by this Covid-19. We lost many people we love in this village.”

.....

Neliswa Gqirhana

“Covid-19 affected me badly. I am devastated that I lost my housekeeper job I was doing in my community, helping an old woman. Now I am left with my kids’ grant money for living. This is a very hard time for me. This disease entered our country and shaped our focus. Everything just stopped. It made us forget of who we are and focus only on problems and sickness. It came with poverty, made our money valueless and we are living with fear all the time. The worst part is the deaths happening and seeing people’s dreams vanishing. “

Novuyisile Jaxa

“We had to learn new things like wearing a mask, sanitizing, washing hands for 20 seconds, practising social distance and staying at home. We could not see our families that live in another province because we were scared of Covid-19. We also say thank you very much for giving our children this bursary.”

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Nobom Bido

“As we all know 2020 was a really tough year. It was a very difficult year for people like me to survive. When I say people like me, I mean people who are not educated. Coronavirus affected me in a very bad way where I failed to support my family in their needs, because the social grant is a very small amount of money to see to all the needs and wants. I used to sell traditional beer, but because of Covid-19 I couldn’t anymore. Because we were not allowed to sell alcohol, I had to use my last little amount on data for my kids to do schoolwork.”

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Nonkululeko Maqham

“The year 2020 was just a different year, and a scary year for me. Firstly, I lost my uncle in June. He was everything to me. After his funeral I wondered who will be next – me, or which family member. In August, I lost my father who was very old (97 years). He passed away – not that he was found Covid-19 positive, but he was afraid of it. As a result, by the time he was not well, not sleeping at night, I would wake up and find him wearing a mask in the middle of the night. I asked what about the mask and he told me that they said over the radio coronavirus kills and that is why he wears it all the time.”





EPILOGUE

This book has allowed our bursars to share their stories and have their voices heard – it is both heart wrenching and inspiring at the same time. The initial lockdown was envisaged to last but a mere three weeks, but due to the continued rise in infections, we experienced further extensions and even stricter lockdown regulations.

These letters were written in the midst of the second wave of the pandemic. A “second wave” is defined as a new wave, or a resurgence in infections lasting some days, commencing after the “end of the first wave”. It furthermore refers to an occurrence, after the previous peak, where the caseload returns to at least 30% of the previous peak’s caseload.

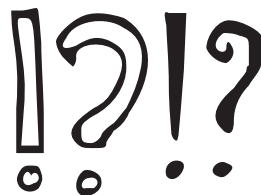
At the time this book went to print, South Africa was in the midst of a devastating third wave. South Africa “technically” entered its third wave of COVID-19 infections around 5 July after recording 9 149 new cases in a 24-hour period, over 13 000 Covid positive cases daily during the week of 5-11 July 2020 and saw close to 30 000 new infections reported by 20 July 2021.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR YOUNG LEARNERS, FOR THEIR CONTINUED EDUCATION?

The long-term impact of Covid-19 on education looks bleak, with government warning that schools will only catch up on the curriculum in 2030. The current system of schools working on a rotational system, where pupils go to school on certain days of the week, is not sustainable in the long term. As seen through the letters of the pupils throughout this book, online learning and learning at home is not sustainable for the vast majority.

A further disturbing reality is that a recent report by South Africa's National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile (NIDS-CRAM) reported that an estimated 750 000 school children in the country may have dropped out of school as a result of the pandemic. Drop-out rates before the pandemic were 230 000 and in November 2020 South Africa's Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, reported that more than 300 000 children had dropped out of primary schools across South Africa in a six-month period.

For the learners who completed their Grade 12 in the year 2020, the uncertainty continues. Those that successfully enrolled at university for the year 2021 have yet to know what university life was like pre-Covid. They have not yet had the experience of attending lectures, meeting their lecturers and fellow students – both local and foreign classmates, or gradually being shaped into taking full responsibility for their futures. Learners who completed their high school tenure in 2020 have been thrown in at the deep end. How they take responsibility to further educating themselves and later entering the world of work is new. The way in which they engage with and go about their day-to-day tasks in the world of work will be new. Indeed, learners who left high school a few months ago are immediately required to be responsible, emotionally mature, demonstrate resilience and the ability to adapt, and become the new kind of human being that Covid-19 has seemingly thrust upon the world.



THE DISRUPTION TO SOCIETY CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As with all controversial situations, the Covid 19 pandemic was not immune to a social media backlash, where many referred to it as a “plandemic”. Despite the rising numbers in cases and Covid-related deaths, there were many people across the globe who believed that the virus was a hoax, thus refusing to wear masks and abide by the regulations put in place to protect us. Some believed the virus to be a worldwide plot created by governments to control their populations. These false messages were quickly spread via various social media platforms, intensifying the uncertainty and fear, and causing division amongst those who understood the dangers of the virus, and those who did not believe it was real.

Governments, the world over, were forced to impose curfews, restrict local and international travel, ban large gatherings which included attendance at weddings, funerals and religious gatherings, declare the wearing of masks mandatory, impose social distancing rules and from time to time tighten restrictions that led to many workplaces having to be temporarily – some even permanently – shut down. For many the consequence was a temporary or permanent loss of employment and income, leading to heightened socio-economic challenges and often resulting in protest action that often culminated in even further destruction.

GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO THOSE MOST IN NEED

Various steps were taken to support those in need of help during this time. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) increased the amount of money distributed through its various social grants, a Social Relief of Distress Grant was made available to unemployed individuals, and the Department of Social Development partnered with various organisations to implement the distribution of food parcels. As is evident from some of the letters published in this book, these measures carried many African Scholars’ Fund families through the worst of times.

PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA CALLS UPON HIS FELLOW SOUTH AFRICANS TO ACT RESPONSIBLY TOWARDS THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

“The reality is that vaccination is a critically important part of trying to control the virus. We have to combine vaccination with some of our public health prevention measures. There is still a lot of misinformation being circulated about the Covid-19 vaccine. False stories are being spread on WhatsApp groups, on social media, and by word of mouth about the Covid-19 vaccine, claiming that

the vaccine is not safe, that it can make you sick, or that it doesn't work," the president said. "I have said it before, and I wish to say it again: Please think long and hard before you press share or send. You are spreading panic, fear and confusion at a time when we can ill-afford it."

THE MAJORITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE VACCINATION PROGRAMME

During an address to the nation, President Ramaphosa announced that the first batch of around 1.2 million vaccines would be intended for health workers. In phase 2, essential workers such as teachers, police, municipal workers, and other frontline personnel would be prioritised. People in institutions such as homes for the aged, shelters and prisons, as well as people older than 60 and adults with comorbidities would also be prioritised. The President said the government planned to reach around 16 million people in this phase.

COVID-19 VACCINES ARE SAFE

Covid-19 vaccinations are not experimental. They were developed using science that has been around for decades. They have been through the required clinical trials where testing and monitoring have proved that they are safe to use.



COVID-19 VACCINES ARE EFFECTIVE

The Covid-19 vaccines produce protection against the disease, as a result of developing an immune response to the SARS-Cov-2 virus. Developing immunity through vaccination means there is a reduced risk of developing the illness and its consequences, and helps you fight the virus if exposed. Getting vaccinated may also protect people around you, because you are less likely to infect someone else. A growing body of data suggests that most vaccines stimulate enough immunity to retain substantial efficacy against most variants, especially for severe disease, hospitalisation, and death.

In drawing this publication to a close, it is apt to quote physicist Marie Curie who said:

**Now is the time for a more scientific and analytical approach:
“Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.
Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”**

Marie Curie, 1867-1934

(Nobel Prize winner in Physics and Chemistry)

A WORD OF THANKS

Thank you to Ambassador Ms Robina Marks and the Western Cape Education Department – gratitude is expressed in your support of this task undertaken; thank you to Hanri Pieterse (MD at Oxford University Press, Africa) and Lindsay Norman (Freelance Editor) – your guidance and support in the overall design and production of the book has ensured that, what will one day be reflected on as a historical event that was the catalyst to many vicissitudes the world over, will not be lost on the young generations to come; thank you to the Staff of the African Scholars’ Fund – for your compassion and care in the undertaking of this task; and thank you to our longstanding Donor, Biketown Africa, for their generous sponsorship toward the printing of the books – an expression of gratitude on behalf of the learners is herewith acknowledged. For many this presented a much-needed opportunity to speak out their concerns, their fears and their uncertainties – know that this small gesture provided a modicum of comfort and hope to our learners.

Thank you and most importantly – to our courageous learners and parents who shared their experiences; thank you for trusting that your stories would be captured accurately and would authentically reflect the rollercoaster of emotions that you and your families endured with the additional hardships Covid-19 brought and continue to bring to your lives. Know that in the sharing of your pain, your fear and your many uncertainties, you have served the greater whole. We know only too well how the long periods of no schooling impacted on our young learners’ emotional well-being. But let not the disruption to your educational journey dim your hopes of a future filled with possibilities. We wish you every success and will continue to offer our guidance and support.



The African Scholars' Fund (ASF) focuses on the learners we support and guide, and so it is our duty to have them understand that they too have a crucial role to play in the understanding of this historic unfolding of events. And their role is to unashamedly share their stories, to have a learner of some-time-in-the-future realise that there was once a young boy or girl who sat in the very seat they now occupy.