

HUIS MAERUA NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 12 | AUGUST 2026



HIKING FOR HOPE 2026

MORE THAN A HIKE—A JOURNEY OF COURAGE, CHARACTER AND HOPE

There are some journeys that change you long after your feet have healed, the blisters have disappeared and the dust has been washed from your clothes.

Our 2026 Hiking for Hope journey with the teenagers of Huis Maerua Children's Home were exactly that kind of journey.

What started as an opportunity to take our children out of their familiar environment and into the wilderness became something much deeper. It became a journey of perseverance, courage, friendship, responsibility and personal growth. It challenged them physically, emotionally and mentally – and reminded all of us why initiatives like this matter so deeply.

This year, our girls took on the mighty Fish River Canyon, while our boys experienced the demanding terrain of Naukluft. Neither journey was easy. In fact, there were moments when the mountains and canyon seemed almost determined to test every ounce of strength they had. The terrain was rough, unforgiving and unpredictable.

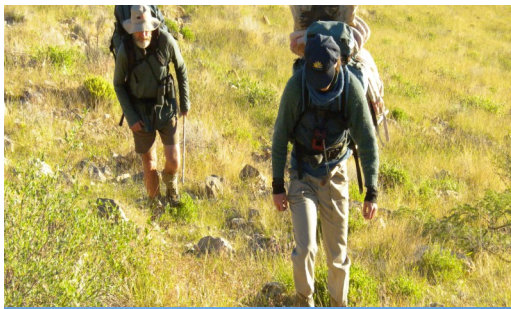
There were long distances to cover, steep climbs and descents, loose rocks, uneven ground, scorching conditions, heavy backpacks and tired bodies. Every step required concentration. Every kilometre demanded determination.

But the greatest challenge was not always the terrain beneath their feet. Sometimes, the greatest challenge was the voice in their own minds.

The girls showed an incredible perseverance throughout the Fish River Canyon. There were tired feet, aching muscles, tears, moments of frustration and times when the distance ahead seemed overwhelming. Yet they continued.

When one girl struggled, another walked beside her. When someone became discouraged, the others encouraged her. When a backpack became too heavy, they helped carry the load. When someone needed a little extra motivation, the group provided it.

There were laughter when things got difficult.



There were jokes when everyone was exhausted. There were moments of silence when words were no longer necessary. They learned that they did not have to face the difficult moments alone. They learned to look beyond themselves.

The same lessons were experienced by our boys in Naukluft. The rugged mountains and harsh terrain demanded resilience and teamwork. The boys were challenged to push through physical exhaustion and moments of uncertainty, while learning to rely on one another.

The wilderness has a remarkable way of stripping life down to what really matters. There are no comfortable couches, screens, familiar routines or easy distractions. There is simply the road ahead, the person walking beside you and the decision to take the next step.

And sometimes, that is exactly what a young person needs. Character is built in the difficult moments.

At Huis Maerua, we know that our children have already walked through difficult chapters in their lives. Many of them have experienced circumstances no child should have to experience. Their journeys have required courage long before they ever put on a hiking backpack. Hiking does not erase their past, it does however create a safe space where they can discover something new about themselves.

It allows them to experience the satisfaction of overcoming something difficult. It gives them an opportunity to realise, "*I thought I couldn't do this – but I did.*" That realisation is powerful.

When a young person learns that they can climb one more mountain, walk one more kilometre, carry a little more weight or encourage a friend when they themselves are tired, they begin to understand that they are capable of more than they thought.

The canyon and mountains became a therapy room without walls. They taught lessons that cannot always be taught by a therapist. They taught perseverance, discipline and responsibility. They taught compassion, teamwork and leadership.

Hiking for Hope taught our children that asking for help is not weakness, and helping someone else is not a burden. Most importantly, that difficult seasons do not last forever. You just have to keep walking.

One of the most beautiful aspects of these journeys was watching relationships develop and strengthen. Our children came into the wilderness as individuals, each carrying their own personality, experiences, strengths and challenges. They returned as a stronger team.

There is something incredibly humbling about seeing a teenager who is exhausted, stop and turn around to help someone else. It says something about character. It says that despite everything they have been through, there is compassion growing inside them. And perhaps that is one of the greatest victories of Hiking for Hope.

We are not simply taking children hiking. We are helping shape young people who understand that their circumstances do not have to define their future. The true impact of these hikes will not be measured by kilometres walked or mountains climbed. It will be seen months and years from now when a teenager faces disappointment and remembers that difficult moments can be overcome. It will be seen when they encounter challenges in relationships, education, employment and adulthood – and choose perseverance instead of giving up.

The wilderness gives them a memory to return to. A memory that says: “I have overcome hard things before.”

The gift of Hiking for Hope is building resilience that can travel home with them. It strengthens confidence. It develops independence. It encourages healthy relationships. It teaches young people to set goals and work towards them and it reminds them that they are capable.

This initiative is far more than an annual hiking trip. It is an investment in the future of our children. At Huis Maerua, our goal is not simply to provide children with a safe place to live. We want to equip them for life. We want to help them heal, grow, discover their strengths and become confident young adults who can build meaningful futures, but initiatives like this require support. For our children, however, the return on that investment is immeasurable. Every step they take is a step towards greater confidence. Every mountain they climb is a reminder that they are capable of overcoming obstacles. Every time they help a friend is an opportunity to develop empathy and leadership. Every difficult kilometre becomes part of a story they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

As we look back on the Fish River Canyon and Naukluft journeys, we are reminded that sometimes the greatest growth happens when we deliberately place ourselves outside our comfort zones. But our children discovered something greater than the difficulty. They discovered themselves. They discovered courage they did not know they had. They discovered strength in one another. They discovered that perseverance is not about never feeling tired, afraid or discouraged. Perseverance is feeling all those things – and taking the next step anyway.

We are incredibly proud of every one of our kids who took on these challenges. Their journey reminds us that hope is not simply something we give to a child. Sometimes, hope is something we help them discover within themselves.

