



Changing the destiny of children

January – Walking with God into a new year

31 January 2009

Dear friends and family,

As we enter anything new, such as the beginning of a new year, we tend to look back in order to remind ourselves of the blessings, guidance and provision from God we had experienced and those will give us hope for year and challenges ahead. But life always carries difficult and unpleasant experiences as well and we also tend to carry that as a burden with us. God clearly spoke to us as a group from Philipians 3;13 to: "Forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before "

We need to forget the difficult and negative things that have happened but learn from them and strive to walk in closer understanding, wisdom and grace with each other. The same is even applicable to the blessings and provisions from God, not to think alone about what we have received, but to remember that there is always more with God. We are focused not to dwell on what God has done for us yesterday but to focus on a new year and walk closely with Him everyday and expect to experience new and bigger provision, guidance and miracles. Walk with us and enlarge your vision while walking with God into a new year. We are all motivated to reach that quiet secret place where we will find the wisdom and the grace we need for the tasks for the year ahead.

We believe that 2009 will be the year to experience the fullness of joy as we practise the reality of walking with Jesus every day.

At the end of 2008, we still had some very interesting things happening before we all went on holiday and to get you motivated and also to thank those who worked until the end to finish 2008's tasks here are some of those interesting news received in December, that you cant miss out on....

**From Marlize:
Mmakaunyane**

**RETSHOGOFADITSWE
(We are blessed)
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE**

We opened the doors of Retshogofaditswe Early Learning Centre on 13 October 2008 - the newest addition to Lesedi la Batho projects. Many uncertain little faces stared at us while we spoke to parents and completed the necessary paperwork. At the end of the first week, fifteen children were registered to attend the ELC for the last term of this year.



Even though this is not the ideal time to open an ELC we decided to do it anyway and become familiar with the parents and children in the area. Mmakaunyane is an area located quite a distance from Pretoria and its people have suffered a great deal in terms of access to basic necessities. The people receive no health Care and food is scarce. At the start of the new year we will be well on our way and settled into the new classrooms.

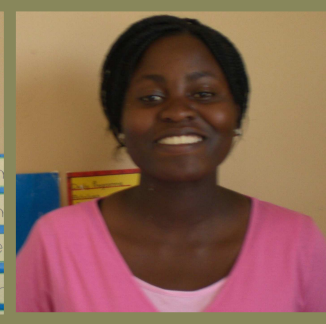


*Mercia Melamu
Head Teacher*

We have four staff members who started on the 13th of October and they form a great team!



*Dipuo Shabalala
Teacher*



*Ntabiseng Mlambo
Cleaner*



*Helen Maphoso
Cook*



We have a brick building with two classrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. Mini toilets have been put up in cubicles, which make them ideal for the young children. The kitchen is spacious, but still awaiting some equipment. A brand new refrigerator (able to work with both gas and electricity) and a gas stove have been bought. We have also ordered special little tables and chairs which will be delivered within a week.

The children attending have already crept into our hearts with their willing



smiles and open appreciation. They love every new meal and enjoy the various activities as they learn about the world around them. In January 2009 we plan to register sixty children. They will be divided into two classrooms, each with their prospective teacher. Special attention will be paid to the grade R class who will be prepared for formal schooling the following year.

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We have a great team and many plans for the year to come! Join us on this exciting journey as we invest in the lives of our little ones.

From Chrisna:***Invitation to participate in the Norway Cup – The STRIKERS soccer team from SA Cares for Life and Norsa***

SA Cares for Life and Norsa is in the middle of one of the most exciting projects for this coming year. **Children of the World Norway** (Welfare organization in Norway) has generously offered to sponsor a team of soccer players from our projects to participate in the annual Norway Cup. We have two teams made up by children registered in our Cluster Care program in Mabopane, in the Gauteng & North West Province, the **Lesedi Strikers** and in Carterville in the Western Cape, the **Norsa Strikers**. We are now busy with selecting the best players to form one “Strikers” team to go to Norway in July.

Looking at the faces of the children during practices and games, one can hardly believe the heartbreaking stories behind their smiles. Many of them are orphans and most of them have been directly or indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS. They live in dire poverty, getting by with the least means. Their enthusiasm for life is truly inspirational. The soccer team gives them a place to belong and a place to forget about their daily struggles and have some fun. The soccer practices teach them soccer skills but they also build self-esteem and learn about teamwork.



This is the largest tournament in the World for youths from around the world. The great event takes place in Oslo during July 2009. For more information visit their website www.norwaycup.no There will be 30, 000 players and team leaders from 45 nations form 1 500 teams and an estimate of 3 400 games will be played. The colorful unity is one of the causes closest to the heart of the Norway Cup. It started in 1979 with a Brazilian team consisting of street children from the slums and has grown into a world-known event.

Children of the World Norway will carry all the expenses of all the children once they arrive in Norway during the week of the tournament. Accommodation, meals, transport, visas, registration, sightseeing and even some pocket money are all sponsored. They will also provide the children with a complete soccer kit. This will be a life changing experience for the children and words cannot explain what participation will mean to them, as you can very well imagine.

**We just need to get the children there!**

We need team clothing and 19 return air tickets to Norway for the 16 players, 2 coaches and a team co-coordinator.

Our budget is to raise R15 000 per person to cover their travelling costs and team kit from SA (± R4000) and air tickets (±R11000). If you feel led to help us invest in the lives of these children please contact Chrisna immediately at 012-343 4050 or write to chrisna@sacares.co.za

From Tanya, A summary of 2008 in Cluster Care:

What a year I don't actually know where to start, it has been a special year for me becoming more involved in Cluster Care, the honor of getting to know each Childcare worker on a more personal level and seeing things from a different perspective. It was great to see the difference that we are able to make in the families under our care.



We started the year off with 9 Childcare workers and we end the year off with 13, the increase of 4 new staff members means that we are able to help a further 60 families. We started off 2008 with 135 families and we end it with an amazing number of 198 families that we are caring for. The 198 families consist of 811 children and 639 adults making it a total of 1450 that we have in our Mabopane, Garankuwa, Winterveldt and Mmakaunyane program. If it think back to when I started here in 2004 we had 6 families and we now have 198 it is great to see

the growth that has taken place. Growth is an important phase in everybody's lives and is something that takes place constantly. I have seen amazing growth take place in the lives of each Childcare worker this year, it and makes me extremely proud. One thing that I did notice this year is that many of the families that we are working with lack HOPE in their lives and I felt led by the Lord to make 2009 the Year of HOPE in Cluster Care. Our verse for the year is *"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" Isaiah 40:31*



Hope is an essential ingredient of life. If we have hope we can face anything that life can throw at us. If we have hope we can take on the challenges and overcome. Hope is what gets you up in the morning. Life with hope can be a life of expectation, anticipation and 'looking forward' to a good future, regardless of the circumstances right now. On the other hand life without hope is completely different. Life without hope is hopeless. When we lose hope we lose the strength for life. We no longer have the strength to get up in the morning. We do not have the strength to face tomorrow. Everything becomes a challenge and even small tasks call for a great degree of effort.

My goal for **2009** is to fill every adult and child within cluster care with HOPE, as God wants each of us to live with hope in our hearts. God makes fresh hope available to each of us. As this divine hope becomes a reality to us, we can in turn become a source of hope to others. Those who are battling with a loss of hope need to be helped by those who are full of hope. If we are



connected to the source of hope, God, then we can become a source of hope to those around us. We can play a role in restoring the hope of others.

I made each Childcare worker and each staff member working in cluster care a HOPE chart and my HOPE is that it fills each and every one of them with HOPE that they can pass onto the families that they are working with. I will share success and miracle stories about families within Cluster Care in the February newsletter

A few of us attending an Aids conference arranged by the City Council of Tshwane which was held on the 1st of December, World Aids day, the picture to the left were the candles that we lit, which were symbolic of the day, the light that shines from this candle is the light that each and every one of you are to and for the families within Cluster Care

Thank you to each and every one of you that have contributed towards Cluster Care you are a blessing and making a huge difference

From Miriam about baby life at Abba House:

Writing about our babies is always a challenge as their rights are protected by legislation and we want to honour that and protect their identity, privacy and dignity. At the same time, our babies are very cute and we would love to share with you the every-day joys and struggles that we face. Showing photos of them is even worse as we cannot show photos of them where they are recognisable and yet a photo says a thousand words and the details are the most interesting!



I'm just delighted with the progress of one of our babies, he came in during the last months of 2008 – tiny, tense, distressed. He was 45% of his expected weight for his age, with eyes that looked too big for his head. We didn't know how long we would have him, but our doctor recommended very special milk and we found a kind sponsor so for the past eight weeks he's been growing in leaps and bounds! In another two or three weeks, he will have doubled his admission weight. His eyes look much more in size with his head and he's now got dimples! He's delightful. Laughing often but also well able to express his needs.

Every milestone is celebrated, every tooth is an achievement and there's nothing that warms a volunteer's heart like walking into the Nursery and receiving a baby's first smile!

Many of the babies do come from difficult situations, but there is hope once they reach us. Through our networking with social workers, we are able to make a permanent, positive change in their lives. Often they come in fearful, anxious, and insecure and we can see a



daily difference as they are loved, cuddled and fed. It's amazing to watch them grow and develop personalities. Sometimes they are older when they come in and it's heart breaking to watch them cry for a mother who doesn't come. And how rewarding then, when they start to smile for you and later what a joy to be able to place them in the arms of a Dad and Mom who will love them and care for them – not for a season, but for a lifetime. One of the special things about ABBA House is our focus on adoption. It's a transitional home where we can bring babies and parents together to form lasting families.

You are welcome to come and visit ABBA House and cuddle a baby for a while. Come and see for yourself that ABBA House is not a place of sadness, but a place of hope, baby smiles and laughter (at least most of the time) and a place where babies know that their needs are met and they are loved. We firmly believe that God sends each little one to us that He has a purpose for their lives and that as we seek His face that He will direct us to the right family for each baby.

ABBA House has a brand-new website! It's designed by three second-year students and I think they did an amazing job. For the first time, you can download volunteer application forms, access our current wish list and see a range of photos. Please explore our new site and feel free to make suggestions on what you would like to have on this site. Its www.abbahouse.co.za



Three other students decided to design a baby bin for us where a mother can safely leave her baby. There's a few finishing touches left to do but it is operational! We trust that it will be used to save baby's lives. We would rather mothers came to us for counselling and signed consent for adoption, but if that's not possible, then a safe place to leave her baby is a good alternative. Our prayer is, that as the '**Baby Safe**' gets known, mothers will place their babies in our box, instead of in the veld or on the garbage heap. Please help us spread the news about our '**Baby Safe**'!

Thank you for praying for us, and please continue to do so. It's the invisible prayer that makes the visible difference in our babies' lives!

Thank you for being partners with SA Cares for Life. Take our hands as we start walking this year closely to God to dream bigger, work harder and accomplish more in changing people's lives to the glory of God.

**With blessings,
Riekie**