



STRUGGLE

The crumbling support for Gauteng's orphans

MPHO RANTAO
mpho.rantao@inl.co.za

THE rate of orphaned children has grown since the first wave of deaths linked to Covid-19 swept across the country.

In 2020, Statistics SA (Stats SA) reported that there were 2.9 million orphans.

It includes children without a living biological mother, father or both parents.

The latest data released by Stats SA and the General Household Survey (from 2020/2021) found that Gauteng recorded 154 000 orphans aged 0 to 17 years. That is a 1.7% increase from 2019's figure of 78 000.

Additionally, in 2020, Gauteng had the second-highest and quickest-growing numbers, where 13% of children (566 000) were single (lost one biological parent but lived with the other) or double orphans.

An assistant caretaker at an orphanage in Bezuidenhout Valley said their assistance helps child-headed homes or children in foster care, but not so much the children placed in orphanages.

A few of the orphanages visited by the *Sunday Independent* and registered under Gauteng's Department of Social Development (DSD) were in conditions deemed unsafe for children by government framework and regulations.

The four-bedroom Bezuidenhout Valley house with additional dorms in the back looked run-down, using one kitchen to supply food for 40 children aged between 2 and 17.

When asked why they accommodated children in unsafe conditions, the assistant caretaker said as a non-profit organisation, they did not have a consistent flow of money that could pay for the large upkeep needed.

"We use the social grants some of



OUMA Majola (director and founder), Patronella Tsoane, Penelope Pukwane, Bridget Mokgethi, Nhlanhla Majola the team that work at Little Rose Orphanage. | BHEKIKHAYA MABASO African News Agency (ANA)

the orphans get, as well as the donations we get from people, companies and the community.

"There is also our own money that we use if we are short on food, baby supplies or school tools.

"It is how we keep the doors open and look after the children," the assistant caretaker said, requesting to remain anonymous.

Earlier this year in June, the DSD gazetted the proclamation of the Social Assistance Amendment Act as a response to the rise in orphaned children and the country's expenses.

The department said its intervention through the amendment act would help orphanages and social workers to benefit orphans and vulnerable children.

"This policy intervention empowers the minister of social development, in concurrence with the minister of finance, to make provision for a top-up of 50% more on the child support grant for orphans in the care of relatives, who are eligible for the CSG," the department said.

"These children will receive their basic CSG, which is currently R480,

plus an additional amount of R240 (50% of the basic CSG), bringing the total amount to R720."

Another organisation that has turned to the department for help but to no avail as of yet is the Little Rose Centre located in Kliptown, Soweto.

In operation as an NGO since 1997, the staff of Little Rose have survived on donations, private corporate sponsors and volunteers to help the over 130 children on their premises.

They run the NGO using old shipping containers as a shelter for chil-

dren, for afternoon tutor programs, a food kitchen and a pre-primary school.

"We use the donations for our feeding scheme that feeds 200 families, to buy groceries for the children in nursery school, and groceries and toiletries for the children who stay at the shelter," said Penelope Pukwane, Little Rose's marketing and communications administrator.

Questions from the *Sunday Independent* were sent to the DSD but no response had been received at the time of publication.