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CONSIDERING THOSE WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE

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By Terrance M. Booysen

South Africa is a nation of many contrasts, and this is especially true for those who have plenty compared to the millions who are far less fortunate. The gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa is widening at an exponential rate, and statistics show that the most affected people happen to be women and children. With South Africa's Gini Co-efficient placed at around 65%, it is the second worst index of poverty levels in the world and our country trails far behind our BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) counterparts in this sector.

It is discouraging to know that about a quarter of our population are unemployed and according to UNAIDS, about a third of South Africa's fifty three million people live on less than \$2 a day. Despite this gloomy picture, in an effort to assist in our own small way, the Wot-If? Trust and CGF, together with the Wild Cats Young Talented Students Charity Fund went in search of registered non-profit organisations with an intention to cheer a group of less fortunate small children who are affected by the country's dire circumstances. Our mission was to donate a few hundred Teddy Bears to these children just before Christmas last year. The Teddy Bears were a donation from Big Five Duty Free, who encourage travellers at all major South African Airports to buy the Teddies and leave them behind in large bins, for donating to those less fortunate.

Sechaba Community Care: Etwatwa (Daveyton)

Our first visit was to Sechaba Community Care, which is a community based welfare organisation based in Etwatwa in Daveyton taking care of circa 370 people. Sechaba has three community programmes that focus on Advocacy, Prevention, Care and Support services through the following key programmes, namely;

1. Drop in After Care Centre for orphans and vulnerable children
2. Victim Empowerment Programme (Fathers and Sons Men's Voices)
3. Sukuma Protective Workshop for people with disability



Besides the fact that the children were clearly very pleased with their new Teddy Bears as gifts which was celebrated through their melodic song of appreciation, one could not help noticing the desperate need for better facilities which in its current state was appalling and not fit for habitation. Whilst proper sanitation and fresh running water was not in existence, food for the children was scarce. The majority of these children's parents are unemployed, or at best they are employed as unskilled farm labourers. Some make meagre money by selling waste material, but the majority survive on handouts and they collect expired food from the nearest dumping site.

The children's day at Sechaba starts from five in the morning and ends at 18h30. Yet despite these wretched conditions, their Programme Director -- Mr. Mzwakhe Khumalo -- remained hopeful for assistance from the government and donors. When asked about his wish list for Sechaba, Mr.

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Khumalo's list was not extravagant. Indeed whilst funding is always a critical resource which is required, Mr. Khumalo listed toys, groceries, 3 x containers for the day care classes, 1 x container for a kitchen, carpets, office furniture, paint, blankets, building of 4 toilets, a gas stove, dining hall with 20 tables and 45 chairs, jungle gym for kids to play, unused items such as clothes, plates and spoons.

If you are able to assist Sechaba with any of these items, please contact Mr. Khumalo on 083 976 0710 or email: mzwakhe.khum@gmail.com

Môrester: Rustenburg

Our next stop was in Rustenburg, where we visited a temporary place of safety called Môrester, which presently cares for 55 children who are dependent on the community for their continued support. As a place of safety, this facility is entitled to receive a government grant for each child, however this has reportedly not been forthcoming. When asked about their immediate wish list, their Housemother -- Antonette Christian -- also had a simple list for her children. Her list included groceries, nappies (S,M,L,XL), formula milk (Nan Pelargon, Infacare Soy No.1), vegetables, fruit and meat, baby creams, soaps, Vaseline, bum cream, wet wipes, ear buds, dummies and bottles and clothes for the children aged from new born to sixteen years for boys and girls.

Once again, it was distressing to learn that most of the children at Môrester had been abandoned in dustbins, left in the veld or had been abused and neglected. Each child has a special need for love and attention as well as medical needs. Whilst Môrester rely heavily on the community's support and fundraising, these efforts hardly meet their R100 000 per month running costs, which includes the salaries of their 12 staff members.



If you are able to assist Môrester with any of these items, please contact Helen Lotz on 082 460 8418 or email: moresterkinderhuis@gmail.com

Good Hope Community Organisation: Shoshanguve (Pretoria)

Our last stop was at the Good Hope Community Organisation which is based in Shoshanguve and has been operating since January 1994. As is the case with so many non-profit organisations, Good Hope struggles each month to make ends meet and in spite of seriously restricted resources, somehow their Programme Director -- Mary Lwate -- pulls off a miracle. Whilst their mission is centered around removing children from the streets, their work is often marred by tragic events such when these children lose hope for any possibility of a bright future.

Good Hope work tirelessly with each child, hoping that through the food, shelter, education and a few life comforts they provide these children, that they will be able to show these children a new path and brighter future. In many cases Good Hope succeeds in their



mission, but there are also occasions when saving the child from a certain doomed fate become impossible.

Sadly, just before our team arrived at Good Hope, one of their children committed suicide and his funeral was on the day we handed out the Teddies. Ironically, the sadness of the passing of this young child, somewhat lifted the spirits of the remaining children. Somehow they may have sensed that people -- strangers -- still cared and hopefully their young hearts may have sensed a spirit of 'Ubuntu'.

Experiencing this sort of anguish for just a short while is something quite extraordinary, especially when considering these small children live this type of life on a daily basis. We who are employed, or who have the means to generating income and who live in warm, safe residences; we have so much to be grateful for. And it is easy to forget our privileges which we so often take for granted.

If you are able to assist the Good Hope Community Organisation in any manner, please contact Mary Lwate on 012 701 3199 or Fax: 012 702 2247

Conclusion

After having visited these remarkable projects across Gauteng, there was an undeniable realisation that these project leaders were clearly very passionate about their cause. Through their relentless belief in humanity, their continuous community drive epitomises so much of the 'Ubuntu' spirit one only hears about. These projects were literally eye openers, and their selfless dedication to the hundreds of less fortunate children put Ubuntu in perfect context and action.

That being said, one remembers the lyrics of the late Michael Jackson and his song, Heal the World. Through this song, we are reminded of our responsibility to care for the world and that each day people -- and especially children -- are suffering and dying, with seemingly no one showing much empathy. In this song, we are called to care for the world wherein we all live, and that each one of us can do something to heal the world. It all starts with us, and putting ourselves unselfishly into action. (<https://youtu.be/BWf-eARnf6U>)

It is appropriate to reflect upon the sobering words of the former President Nelson Mandela who said at the launch of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, "there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." [May 08, 1995]

ENDS

Words: 1,699

About The Wot-If? Trust

The Wot-If? Trust operates primarily in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general.

For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (The Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee) 083 625 3929 or email gail@wot-if.co.za

About Wild Cats Young Talented Students Charity Fund

Wildcats Charity (NPC 2013/191489/08) - What started out as 15 university friends getting together annually for some fun has turned into so much more. Besides the great friendships, the Wildcats charity was launched and we're proud to be supporters of people in need!

Wildcats supports individuals or groups from all walks of South African life, as selected by the WCC board, by providing financial, emotional, material and networking support. (<https://www.facebook.com/Wildcats-Charity-429559340561143/?ref=bookmarks>)

About CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd: Services

CGF is a Proudly South African, Level 4 B-BBEE compliant company that specialises in conducting desktop research on Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) topics, amongst other related company secretariat, regulatory and compliance consulting services.

The company has developed numerous products that cover GRC reports designed to create a high-level awareness and understanding of issues impacting a CEO through to all employees of the organisation.

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Further Media Information:

Terrance M. Booyesen (CEO)
CGF Research Institute (Pty) Ltd
Office: (011) 476 82 64 / 1 / 0 Cell: 082 373 2249
Email: tbooyesen@cgf.co.za
Twitter : @CGFResearch