



Tshepo Ya Bana Hope for Children



Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from a rather damp and cool Dinokeng. South Africa has been suffering from drought for a while now, with Cape Town being in dire straits some months back. That crisis has passed, but many other parts of the country are still desperate for rain. We recently had to endure some extremely high temperatures here, which made the ground harder and drier than ever. Just to add to our problems, the water supply to the whole Hammanskraal area was interrupted for a couple of weeks because of some serious contamination. They have reconnected the supply but no-one considers it safe enough to drink. It doesn't affect us at Tshepo Ya Bana as we get all our water from a borehole, but even that source can come to an end if we don't get enough rain to build up our underground supply.



Tshepo Ya Bana continues, thanks to the generosity of many. Not only do we have friends and family who meet our financial needs, but we also have some wonderful neighbours who make very generous donations. A few months back a local farmer gave us a truckload of small potatoes, which we were able to share with several nearby projects; and then soon

afterwards a local lodge gave us a real spoiling for Mandela Day, with huge gifts of food and other groceries and a lovely lunch for all of us. In addition many of our volunteers and visitors bring many useful items, from over the counter medicines to toothbrushes and clothing, plus some tasty treats from time to time! However the economic situation in this country is far from healthy - severe unemployment, more desperate families, struggling businesses, and this also affects us in that people have less to give. We certainly can see the difference in our functioning over the years. We have had a slight reduction in staff, which helps us a little, but our expenses continue to be a challenge.

The number of babies fluctuates from month to month. We sometimes have our numbers dropping rapidly, but just when we thought we'd get a real break we had 3 newcomers arrive within two weeks just last month. However even a few small children can keep us very busy. Night duty gets pretty hectic when there are several babies waking for feeds at different times, not to mention the odd child who will wake up and then sing for an hour or two while the carer is trying to get some sleep. Small children are a 24/7 job, which means that we need quite a number of people to cover the whole day and night. We have to allow for days off for everyone and breaks for both staff and volunteers during the day so that no-one is overworked. If one of our mamas is on leave it gets even more complicated to arrange a workable shift plan.

Our saddest time this past year was the death of our little Tsholanang. He had been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, but in spite of his physical limitations he was the sweetest, happiest little boy you could imagine. He passed away just a week before his second birthday having succumbed to a virus which our other healthy children brushed off with ease. We had a lovely memorial service for him here at the farm, with our whole Tshepo Ya Bana family attending together with some caring neighbours. Our little ones, of course, did not really understand what had



happened, but loved the slide show of photos which Nhlanhla had arranged for us. (In case it isn't clear - the glasses he is wearing belonged to one of our "aunties")

One of our biggest frustrations is always the "hard to place" children. We are never in a hurry to see them leave, but want a permanent solution for them as soon as possible. One of these cases involves a five year old boy who has been with us since he was a toddler. The only reason he falls into this category is that he happens to have Zimbabwean parents, although he was born in South Africa. With the collapse of infrastructure in Zimbabwe it has been extremely difficult for our social workers to make contact with the authorities there, which is a necessary step before he can be placed with a family.

We also worry about some proposed amendments to our Children's Act, which will make it almost impossible for private NGO's to process adoptions. With the number of adoptions in South Africa having dropped dramatically over the past few years, this is an extremely worrying development.

On the lighter (or heavier!!) side, our elephant problem seems to be over! Thanks to some generous donors and the help of some of our neighbours, we now have an elephant proof fence. This consists of graduated strands of electrified wire, which so far seems to stump the intelligence of even our gentle, but very clever giants. We do miss their visits, however, and consider it a privilege to have had so many close encounters with them.

Our permanent TYB family is doing well. The adoptions of my four boys were finally completed, with some intense nail biting because of the unbelievable delays caused by the inefficient handling of each case. Tshepo, who is the youngest of the four, had his adoption processed by the court a mere twelve and a half hours before he turned 18 (the cut-off age for adoption). He has now just finished writing his final matric exams, which means an end to my days as a school parent (45 non stop years

from when my eldest daughter, Melanie, started school!). Kagiso is still working at a nearby lodge; Tom is working with a neighbour who has a plumbing/construction business, and has decided he would like to do a course in plumbing next year and Nhlanhla is continuing with his photography. Our unemployment situation is worsening all the time, and so we pray for wisdom for our young men when choosing courses of study or potential jobs.

On a personal note I attended the weddings of two granddaughters and of my daughter Juliet during the past 12 months and the next wedding is planned for April next year. I also managed another visit to Australia to visit my son and his family...and I also have a third great grandchild due in March.

So another year is almost at an end. We have no idea what 2020 will bring, either for Tshepo Ya Bana, for South Africa or for you and your country, wherever you may be. But we can say with David "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" Psalm 139 v 16, and from Psalm 31 v 15, "My times are in your hands".

With love from us all,

Chris

