



## What we do in South Africa

- We're helping 73,000 children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS and poverty get access to food, healthcare, social security and education
- We're working with migrant children and young people to protect their rights
- We provided emergency support to thousands of people to prevent the spread of cholera
- We're launching a campaign to prevent children under five dying



Although South Africa has the strongest economy of any African country, many South Africans live in poverty. One in three people don't always have enough to eat. And one in five children doesn't go to school. The country also has the largest HIV-positive population in the world. Young women (15–24 years) are four times more likely to be infected than young men. There are 2.5 million children who have been orphaned, half of them by AIDS. Many go without food, and have limited or no access to education or healthcare. Some are even left to run their household, looking after younger siblings and sometimes grandparents.

The crisis in neighbouring Zimbabwe means that many children are crossing the border into South Africa to find work or schooling, and many have already come from Mozambique. These children usually lack identity documents or a legal status and are extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

### Save the Children in South Africa

We've been supporting work in South Africa for more than 20 years and have had an office there for 11 years. We help local communities care for and protect children who have been orphaned or affected by HIV and AIDS, and children living in poverty, including migrant children.

We work in three of the country's poorest provinces, Free State (Thabo Mofutsanyana district), Limpopo (Vhembe district) and Eastern Cape. In the last year, nearly 73,000 children have benefited from, for example, food support, registration for child support grants, healthcare and school uniforms. Our Child Care Forums and Caring Schools programmes are both models of good practice and are leading the way in helping communities address the needs of vulnerable children.

We work with government departments at national and provincial level and support local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide practical and emotional support to vulnerable children. We also work with Save the Children offices and other partners in seven African countries to share learning with governments, donors, regional bodies and other NGOs.

## **Key areas of work**

### **We're helping children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS and poverty**

Nearly 6 million South Africans, including 280,000 children under 15, are living with HIV. Prevalence is high, at 20%. Large numbers of South Africans are dying of AIDS and most people (at least 72%) can't get the treatment they need. There are more than 1.4 million children who have been orphaned by AIDS. Without the support of their parents, they are less able to get nutritious food and important services, such as healthcare, and are more vulnerable to exploitation. They face a future of poverty and neglect.

We're giving these children practical and emotional support. We've developed a model of community-based care for vulnerable children called Child Care Forums. These forums are made up of volunteers drawn from the community who visit people in their homes to identify children who need help and the kind of help they need. Over the past year we've expanded the programme and are now supporting 158 forums, benefiting more than 550,000 children. The forums give practical help such as food parcels, clothing and school uniforms, and seeds for vegetable gardens, so that children have a more nutritious diet. Some run after-school clubs and playgroups to give children with sick parents a break from looking after them. They also help children claim their rights and any benefits they're entitled to, such as the child support grant and exemptions from school fees.

Our programmes in the Free State and Limpopo have shown how community-based care can be put into practice. Many other organisations are now using this approach, which means that many more children affected by HIV and AIDS and poverty receive care and protection. We've set up a computerised database so that government and other service providers have better information and are better able to plan for and meet children's needs.

### **We're helping children to claim their rights**

The South African government has excellent child welfare and protection laws and policies. But there are still big gaps in service provision. We focus on influencing government departments to improve children's services. We're reviewing the National Action plan for

orphans and vulnerable children and working with the South African Local Government Association and the Office on the Rights of the Child to improve the coordination of local government services to children.

We've also trained local government officials in Limpopo in children's rights and protection issues. We supported government departments in Limpopo in setting up their provincial Children's Advisory Council. This has helped change officials' attitudes towards particular groups of children, especially migrant children.

One-third of the children we work with don't have identity documents or birth certificates. This means they can't receive child support grants or other state benefits they're entitled to. We're working with the Department of Home Affairs to make sure that all children have birth certificates or identity documents.

### **We're protecting migrant children**

There's been a big increase in the number of children and young people aged 12–17 who come into South Africa from Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries. They come to escape violence, find work, go to school, or even get treatment for HIV, and many of them come without their parents. They are frequently denied their rights and are often detained illegally or deported. With partners such as UNICEF we're

Over the past year we provided food and set up safe places for nearly 11,000 children in Musina, on the border with Zimbabwe. During xenophobic attacks on migrants in 2008, we also set up safe spaces in Gauteng and Western Cape where nearly 600 children could play and get support. We helped trace parents of separated children and trained local organisations in child protection. We've used our report, *Children on the Move* – which documents the plight of migrant children – to persuade other NGOs, national and local governments and regional bodies to ensure that these children receive the care and protection they're entitled to. We're also supporting local partners working for migrant children's rights by providing funding and helping identify and document good practice, which we then share with key organisations in South Africa and the region.

### **We're making schools better places for children**

Although enrolment rates are high, many children drop out before completing their schooling. Some children stop going to school because they have to earn money to support their family and many have to leave to care for a family member with AIDS.

We're working with the Department of Education and other organisations such as the Nelson Mandela Foundation to make schools more caring places for children. Our Caring Schools programme shows how schools can become places where migrant, orphaned and other vulnerable children can get the care and support services they need.

We work with local NGOs across the Free State province to make sure that every school is a Caring School, and have recently started working with 15 schools in Limpopo. This work includes improving the physical environment – for instance, making sure there are separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. It also includes tackling the problems students face at home and among their peers. We're training youth facilitators to help students deal with their problems and promote key skills such as leadership and teamwork. The facilitators can also find out which children are dropping out of school, and work with teachers and the authorities to help get them back into school. There are now 122 schools taking part in the programme.

We also coordinate the national Caring Schools network, which brings together more than 70 local organisations that work with schools to provide care and protection for vulnerable children.

### Emergency response

During the cholera epidemic that spread over the border from Zimbabwe in late 2008, we set up a feeding point in Musina show ground for hundreds of asylum-seekers. We provided food and nutritious drinks for mothers and children and distributed soap and disinfectant. At the cholera treatment centre we set up a children's tent and provided fans, medical supplies and a kitchen for a rehydration tent. We also went to nearby villages and taught thousands of people how to prevent the disease and how to make oral rehydration solutions for anyone showing symptoms.



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