



Update from Denise Kingdom Grier June 2021

A Tribute to Lebo: More than a Social Worker

It was Wednesday, April 14, 2021, when Keabetsoe Sekoboto, Executive Director for Setshabelo Family and Child Services (SFCS), issued this announcement through WhatsApp: “Good morning friends. It is with a heavy heart to report that one of our trusted soldiers Lebo Thangane, SFCS social worker placed at Botshabelo Police station to provide social work services to victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and their families, has passed away around 6 p.m. She gave birth on Monday to beautiful twins and died due to complications post-delivery. She is survived by her children and supportive husband. The twins are in ICU because they also have complications. Please pray for the family, the team, and the peoples she was servicing.”



This message hit me like a brick and I didn’t even try to fight back the tears of sorrow and empathy. I sent [words of sympathy](#) to the family on behalf of all North American partners upon hearing this news. (You can read the letter here: www.rca.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Lebo-Condolence-letter-.pdf)

Lebo will always be remembered as an overcomer. Born to a single mom in extremely impoverished conditions, she and her sister made the best of it. Her mother died in 2019 and her only sister disappeared a year ago after receiving a mental health diagnosis. Lebo committed her life as a social worker to promote family preservation and psychosocial support for families to provide loving families for the orphaned and vulnerable children in Botshabelo and the Free State Province. Today, her husband of eight years, her eight-year-old daughters, and newborn twin girls are trusting in the Lord and their community to overcome the tragic loss of Lebo. We are working with SFCS staff to help them heal from their loss and provide for the special needs of this family in this most difficult time.

To give a gift to support the Lebo family, please give in one of the following ways:

Online: Visit www.rca.org/give/sponsor-an-adoptive-foster-family-south-africa/

By phone (U.S. only): Call Terri Boven at 616-541-0835

By mail: Please send your check, made out to “Reformed Church in America,” and designated “SFCS – Lebo Family” to Reformed Church in America, Attn: Finance Dept., 4500 60th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, or, in Canada, to PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8.

Would you like to receive these updates digitally? Please email Kelli at kgilmore@rca.org to be added to the email list. You will receive more timely updates from the missionary you support and help us be good stewards of our resources.

Repurposing the Child Youth Care Center (CYCC)

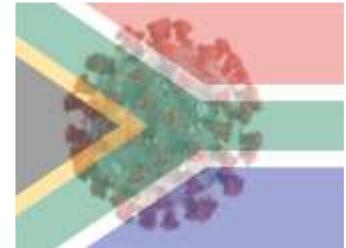
Initially, the CYCC was a holding place for orphaned and displaced children. Pre-COVID set this center on a different course as SFCS' efforts to place children in loving families via temporary housing, foster care, and/or adoptive homes. This shifted the focus of the CYCC to provide a home for children with extreme trauma and who need intensive care before being placed into a family. Soon the numbers of children being placed directly into loving families grew and the need for the CYCC as it had been functioning diminished. During COVID-19 lockdown, the Lord revealed the need for a home environment for children ages 6-18 with developmental delays. There was no such place in the entire Free State province. Now the CYCC is a semi-permanent residence for five special needs children from all over the province with room for more. Families visit on weekends and gain skills to care for their children.



SFCS staff provides quality, trauma-informed care to the entire family of children with special needs at the CYCC. Your support helps make them the only organization in the Free State province to meet this need.

COVID-19 Update

As the U.S. relaxes its COVID-19 guidelines for mask-wearing and social distancing, Botshabelo, South Africa, is experiencing the third surge in COVID-19 related illnesses and deaths. The neighboring city of Bloemfontein was ordered to shut down again on Monday, May 17th. A week before the shutdown, the government made the order for nurses and social workers to be vaccinated. That same day, eight people were found to be infected with the virus and in days the numbers had surged to forty-three and rising. Our staff has applied for the



Johnson and Johnson vaccine, the only one being offered in their country. They now wait for the nod from the government to have it done. In addition to the spread of the virus and its medical complexities, Botshabelo has been crippled economically and plagued by diminishing mental health conditions. Hardworking people who once had the means to buy nice houses, drive decent cars, and provide quality education for their children are now without work and are reduced to begging to survive. Schools are finding it difficult to both prepare students for academic success and keep them in good health. Community gardens have been a source of provision and hope in a community where over 45,500 children are orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV/AIDS, abject poverty, rampant violence, and the residual effects of apartheid. God Bless Botshabelo! God Bless South Africa!

Gender-Based Violence: The Monster in the Midst

South Africa is no stranger to violence against women and girls, but COVID-19's pandemic has witnessed double the incidents of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa. This is a report of two families the Setshabelo staff supported over Easter weekend 2021 because of GBVF:

RCA Global Mission does not receive denominational assessments or covenant shares. We depend on the faithful generosity of churches and individuals.

A mother and her child of 11 months were burned by her boyfriend in the very early morning of Easter Monday. Around 2:05 a.m. on Monday, April 5, 2021, the family of Me A were called by her neighbors who said they heard the voice of a lady calling for help. When they went out they found her shack on fire.

They tried to stop the fire but they did not have enough water as there is no water in the area. The neighbors took both the lady and her baby son from the fire. They had immediately called the police and an ambulance, but both mother and son died at the hospital. Fortunately, her other son age seven-years-old was visiting an Aunty for the long Easter weekend.

A nine-year-old girl was kidnapped by the mom's boyfriend and was found by the Police on Good Friday, dead in a river without a head. The boyfriend confessed that he killed her and threw the body in the river. The community got angry and beat him to death. Now the police cannot find the head of the poor child. Here again, the SFCS staff were called on Easter Sunday to meet with the mother, family, and community to support them through this terrible situation.

In the face of GBVF, the monster in the midst, SFCS continues to work with government and local entities as well as local churches to serve the entire community. Their goal is to ensure that orphaned and vulnerable children in Botshebelo and surrounding communities will be placed in loving, healthy families.



The SFCS staff and the Minister of Social Development meet to Pray, Plead and Strategize to end Gender-Based Violence.

Thank you for faithfully supporting SFCS with your commitment to prayer, purse, and presence over the years. Your support and partnership is truly enabling SFCS to provide loving families for children and enabling them to be the hands and feet of Christ in extremely challenging times.

Serving together,

Denise Kingdom Grier