



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRINGING LIFE AND HOPE TO THE CHILDREN OF GA-DIKALE

POLOKWANE (24 October 2008): The Lonely Road Foundation today launched its first registration event for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in the Ga-Dikgale community, northwest of Polokwane. In partnership with Chief Solly Dikgale and his wife Clara, the Limpopo Department of Home Affairs, the Limpopo Department and Health and Social Development and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), The Lonely Road Foundation is assisting children in this very low resource community to acquire birth certificates and identity documents and then to register for available social services, including food parcels and child grants.

The Lonely Road Foundation was established in 2006 by ex-merchant banker, Thabang Skwambane, who first drew national attention to the issue of OVC in South Africa by cycling from Johannesburg to Tanzania and then climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in 2007 to raise awareness and funding support for the efforts of the organization.

"I made a commitment in 2006 to ensure that orphans and vulnerable children in this country would not walk alone or unsupported through life," said Skwambane. "I am excited that The Foundation is taking another small step toward providing these kids with the support they so desperately need."

As one of its initial activities, The Lonely Road Foundation assisted with the establishment of 11 Drop-In Centres in Ga-Dikgale where OVC are fed and receive psychosocial support from 132 locally trained caregivers who manage the centres. Only six centres currently receive funding support however, so each centre is only equipped to provide children with one meal a day from Monday to Friday only, and they all struggle to remain sustainable.

"Coordinating the registration for and collection and delivery of food parcels to every OVC and child-headed household in Ga-Dikgale is another component of The Lonely Road's feeding scheme for this community," said Skwambane. "Ensuring OVC gain access to food parcels and social supports is vital to ensuring these children have food to eat everyday and that their basic needs for survival are met."

The Dikgale clan is an extremely under-resourced community of approximately 80,000 people, 15,000 of which are in school and under the age of 16. A needs analysis revealed this community has a massive challenge of trying to support approximately 1,500 OVC. However, considering that grandmothers are often required to step in as primary caregivers, and little support is available to assist them in this regard, many more children are left vulnerable as a result.



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South Africa's Orphans & Vulnerable Children

The term 'orphans and vulnerable children' (OVC) is not a reference only to children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, but more broadly includes children who have been left vulnerable, often as a result of HIV/AIDS. The term OVC considers children who:

- Have lost one or both parents
- Have a chronically or terminally ill parent or guardian
- Live with a parent or adult who lacks income-generating opportunities
- Have a teenage mother
- Are neglected, destitute or abandoned
- Are abused or ill-treated by their parent or caregiver
- Are disabled
- Are themselves infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

According to Statistics South Africa, there were an estimated 3.36 million orphans in South Africa in 2005, an increase of 100,000 orphans from 2004. This figure continues to grow, resulting in serious consequences for a child's access to basic necessities such as food, care, shelter, education and clothing. Indeed there are an estimated 12 million children living in poverty in South Africa. Limpopo, the province in which The Lonely Road Foundation has first targeted its efforts, has the highest rates of child poverty in the country with 83% of its children living in poverty.

About The Lonely Road Foundation

The Lonely Road Foundation is a Sub-Saharan African development charity, aiming to bring life, hope and opportunity to orphaned and vulnerable children in rural and underprivileged communities in South Africa. TLRF and its partners work to provide legal, financial and operational support to underprivileged communities, and to empower a grassroots, community-based response to critical issues for OVC in high needs, rural communities across South Africa. Through communication with social services and non-government organizations (NGOs) across the region, TLRF strives to gather resources and explore sustainable methods to actively support the growing number of OVC, including those in child-headed households.

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High Resolution images can be made available upon request. Please contact Shannon Boyd on 071 233 4754 to inquire.

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