

Polokong Children's Village South Africa

Report for St Thomas More and SS Francis & Therese Parishes – February 2020

Background

Polokong (which means "We Are Free") is a children's village, near Johannesburg. It was founded in 1991 by the SSV in South Africa to provide a home for some of the children living on the streets of Johannesburg and notorious surrounding areas. The children, age 18 months to 18 years, have been abandoned, abused, neglected or orphaned and are committed by the courts to Polokong.

St Thomas More Parish has been supporting Polokong for just over 20 years. SS Francis and Therèse joined in 2012 to make Polokong a two-parish project.

Operations

The Children's Village consists of 5 houses of 10 children, each with its own house mother. Children go to local schools and are encouraged to excel academically and in sport. There is a strong Christian / Catholic ethos. These and up to 300 other children from the surrounding area are given a nutritious meal each day; there is an HIV/AIDS programme and 30 children with HIV are receiving counselling; a few promising children are entered into a special Emancipation Programme to go through further education. The children's village recently expanded their services to include two established children's homes in the Vanderbijlpark area. The board of management of the two children's homes requested Polokong to take over the 2 homes due to Polokong's expertise and capacity to run children's homes. The one home houses 10 boys and the other home 6 girls.

Recent activity included a visit from a local insurance broker, who are going to build a soccer field and netball court in Polokong, as well as arranging coaches for the children. They also plan to donate computers and install wi-fi for the children.

Funding

Nearly 80% of Polokong's funding, some 4.7M Rand (£250k) comes from the SA Government, which conducts its own annual audit of the Village as well as a quarterly monitoring inspection (the accounts are also audited independently). The next largest donor is the SVP (SA and UK): in 2019 Towcester and Hunsbury alone collected £8,920.

The Vice-Chairman of the Polokong board, who is one of two SVP (SA) representatives on the board, recently said to us: *"Polokong really needs ongoing support. Our chapter alone donates R400 000 [£21k] every year, excluding food, clothes, furniture, paint etc. Momentum Ltd, a company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, has done its due diligence of Polokong and donated R194 000 [£103k]. They are again visiting Polokong tomorrow to determine how the company can further assist Polokong and also to provide all the kids with a warm meal for Christmas."*

Reports

The SVP (Towcester) will be producing an annual report for both parishes, as well as updates from time to time. There is a folder in each parish containing much more information, and there is also a Facebook page 'Polokong Children's Village'.

