

Dear friends of the Foundation House of Encouragement

We are always amazed to see how well the children get along with each other in our center. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that as orphans they are not outsiders with us and that they all share the same situation. The harmony and the friendship lived are very good at all times. Certainly, all caregivers also help to ensure that this is the case. But it probably also has to do with the fact that the children, even after many years, are very grateful for the care, help and love they can experience at the center.

### Our twins

It is interesting that we currently have four pairs of twins at the center. There are the sisters Vanessa and Vivian, 14 years old and the brothers Bongani and Siyabonga 12 years old. We already reported on the 13-year-old siblings Sphiwe and Simphiwe in the September 2022 newsletter. Also, just one year at our center are the two brothers Gontse and Tshiamo, 12 years old. The search over years for their father, who left when they were very small, was unsuccessful. They live with their granny and are already very popular and liked in the center.



Like with other siblings, there are sometimes quite noticeable differences in the personalities of the twins. Of the four pairs, three are in different grades at school, which somewhat reflects the different character types. But what they all have in common is that they have a very close relationship with each other.

Vivian and Vanessa are in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. They live with their aunt, who is a twin sister to their late mother. They have seven other siblings who all live in the same place now. Of these, Tshiamo (13) and Bridgett (9) are also with us at the center. The aunt is married and has six children of her own. She also often looks after her three grandchildren. This makes a very large family that has to share space. Fortunately, some of her adult children have already left home, which made accommodating the sister's children more manageable. Still, it is a challenge to put a roof over the heads of fourteen people. During several years, the husband has been building on a stone house. It is not yet finished, but part of the family can now live there, and the rest continue to stay at the Shack. Unfortunately, the husband has no steady job anymore which has slowed down the completion of the house and pushed them to the limit financially. We don't know how these people do it, but somehow they seem to manage every month.



Vanessa and Vivian love their aunt, who is always there for them and gives them everything she can. "The two of them stick together in every situation and fight for each other, just like my sister and I did," recalls their aunt. At the same time, we see how well they both develop with us in their interactions with other children. Vanessa is the quiet, rather shy girl, while Vivian is very lively and communicative. Both love dancing with their siblings at home. However, they are also quickly enthusiastic about all the activities and programs with us and make a valuable contribution as part of the center family.



Bongani and Siyabonga have a complicated history. Their grandmother let one of her children, the girl Busisiwe, grow up with her sister, because she could not have children. Busisiwe had the twins, who then without a father grew up in this caring family. Unfortunately, their mother died early, so Bongani and Siyabonga were raised by their great-aunt from the age of eight. But in 2020 she also died, after which the boys moved to their grandmother for the first time. When the two of them came to us three years ago, both were a little overwhelmed by

the big family. Today, they stand alone in front of all the children and talk freely about everything, whether it's something from school or something personal. Their self-confidence has increased, but they still need close support from the team. Especially Bongani, who has learning difficulties and needs medication because of his psychological problems. His doctor and the school have now decided that he should go to a special school. It will be a separation like they have never experienced before and makes them sad already today.

This is just a small glimpse into the world our children come from. The work at the center, is strongly influenced by the diverse stories and backgrounds of each child. This makes the task for our team every day challenging, but also meaningful and fulfilling. We would like to be able to provide even more direct and targeted support in special cases.

Kind regards,

Walter und Estelle Bosshard

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