

MEDIA RELEASE

R720 000 Donation Saves 60 Abandoned And Orphaned Children in Durban From Displacement

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Sixty abandoned and orphaned children forced into temporary accommodation have been re-united in their Sydenham, Durban, home after a massive restoration project transformed the place they call home.

Infrastructural damage due to a massive storm, reduced buildings comprising the St Thomas Home for Children to a state of disrepair for months on end, until the South African Muslim Charitable Trust (SAMCT) facilitated a massive infrastructural repair and renovation project, enabling the displaced children to return to their home in December 2020.

The St Thomas Home for Children, celebrating its 60th anniversary, had run foul of eThekweni Municipality By-laws, exacerbated by storm flooding rendering buildings unusable, because it was fighting a long-standing battle to finance massively expensive repairs and ensure regulation compliance on a shoe-string budget.

Hearing of the organisation's plight and the uncertain future of the vulnerable children it serves, the SAMCT was quick to intercede, providing some R720 000 to bring the ageing and storm-ravaged home up to specification.

Commenting at the official hand-over of the rehabilitated facility, SAMCT representative, Mr Gaf Osman said he was pleased the organisation had been able to assist with the vital repairs and renovations, ensuring its compliance with city by-laws, as well as the continued health and safety of the children in its daily care.

"This is an organisation whose absolute commitment to providing a 24-hour residential care service to abandoned and orphaned children between the ages of 2 and 10 is clear to all and the management and staff are to be greatly commended for soldiering on in the face of a plethora of financial and other challenges," he added.

Mr Osman said: "They work tirelessly to make the best of a deteriorating situation. Access to finance is becoming increasingly difficult, regulations and red tape impact its ability to continue serving its young charges and even nature has delivered a blow to the continued effective functioning of the home. However and in spite of every obstacle placed in its path, St Thomas Home for Children will not be cowed by its circumstances. Every day - regardless of its difficulties - this facility puts the interests, protection and guidance of those young people it serves first."

Many long-standing charitable organisations around South Africa face seemingly insurmountable and increasingly costly infrastructural maintenance problems, when their income streams - largely from donations and grants - simply will not extend to such costly outlays.

Mr Osman said that the St Thomas Home for Children was just such a facility.

"Time, wear and tear has taken its toll on the infrastructure here and much has been done to keep the facility falling into disrepair. Every last available cent has been pumped into upgrading the home's roof structure. Having committed thousands of Rand to meeting legislative requirements, the home suffered a enormous blow in 2019 when a mammoth storm wreaked havoc at the facility, bursting underground storm pipes, undermining and damaging the foundations and walls and causing flooding throughout the building, resulting in extensive damage to floors, internal dry walls, cupboards and the like," said Mr Osman.

As a result, the home was informed of the need to bring the buildings up to required standards as regards eThekweni Municipality By-laws and National Norms and Standards for Child and Youth Care Centres, as defined in the Children's Act of 2005, a financial survival battle it has been waging ever since.

He stressed: "The fate of the 60 abandoned and orphaned children, all under the age of 10, should it have proven impossible to bring about the required renovations and repairs simply does not bear thinking about and it was against this background that the SAMCT saw the need to intervene."

"Vulnerable young children, already dealt a cruel blow in their young lives by having to be placed in care by the justice system and through no fault of their own, deserve much better than life in an unsafe and decaying institution, or being pushed from pillar to post."

"We, of the South African Muslim Charitable Trust, were accordingly only too pleased to be able to give effect to the massive upgrade of this home, funding vital repairs and renovations to the value of R720 000, so bringing the home up to and beyond compliance standards."

The SAMCT's intervention has ensured the long-term survival of the facility and provided the youngsters who call this home a crucial sense of security and dignity. It has also removed one of the home's major financial burdens, enabling management and staff to continue their service of care.

The SAMCT, which was created in 2008, was established to provide funding, services and other resources for the improvement of the lives of vulnerable, deprived and disadvantaged. It has successfully delivered sizeable assistance solutions throughout the country, irrespective of race or religion and works to support needy organisations in the fields of health, social development, poverty alleviation and education.

Mr Osman added: "It is our hope that the infrastructural work undertaken at St Thomas Home for Children will enable this important child-care facility to set-out confidently on the next 60 years of care and service to our abandoned and orphaned young people and that they will feel safe and secure in this upgraded place; a place they may be proud to call home."

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For more information about SAMCT and its St Thomas Home for Children renovations donation, please contact:

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