



To the right of Liz is Mary, who had no matric when she started working at the children's home. She has now completed her high school education and is studying social work. Ruth is on Liz's left side.

LIZ WHITTLE

Elizabeth A Whittle grew up in Matatiele – a small town near Kokstad, on the Eastern Border of Lesotho. At the age of 9, she saw a destitute child on the streets and brought her home. During her years at boarding school in Pietermaritzberg, Liz was involved in leading an outreach to orphanages and the elderly.

After high school, she spent a year with 60 students from 40 different countries, nursed for a time and was involved in youth work for 15 years. Liz went on to be involved in School Governing bodies while her children were at school and has been in business with her mother for 30 odd years. Although she didn't complete her studies, she believes that the Lord equips us for the work he has prepared and planned for us, and this oftentimes through seemingly insignificant paths that he leads us in.

Before opening the Children's Home in Matatiele, Colin (her husband) and Liz fostered 13 children over a period of 10 years. It was during this time that an Indian lady from Port Shepstone (who had heard of her involvement with children in the town) approached Liz to revive the Matatiele Child and Family Welfare Society which had collapsed during the years of apartheid. There were no Social Services in the town at the time, so Liz worked through the Christelike Maadskapy Raad in Kokstad to cover the legal aspects of fostering. Her first step was to employ a Social Worker. The Kwa-Zulu Natal Department of Welfare was approached to approve the appointment of a Social Worker, if they agreed to this they would fund 75% of the salary. In the first of many miracles, the funds were granted within 3 months.

Thus Crossroads Care Center was started.

Crossroads Children's Home needed to show sustainability for 2 years before government would consider registering it. The only time Liz ever asked for money was when she approached 7 friends to support her with a pledge of R100 per month each for 2 years so that she could prove sustainability. They were registered in 2000 with 45 children already in care.

The property now has 8 houses in the village, and provides shelter, food and love to 70 orphaned and vulnerable babies and toddlers. What is really striking about the homes, is the sense of calm and loving care provided by each house mother. Mothers who have not had opportunity to improve their own living circumstances are considered for employment as caregivers. Many are taught skills and supported in improving their own situation, thus care is provided not only for children, but opportunity for disadvantaged women as well.

The Siyakhula Boy's Shelter was opened 2 years later. It provides accommodation and care to boys ages 10 to 18. When necessary, bridging classes are provided so that the boys can be re-integrated into the local schools. Today the shelter has a 99% success rate of children being integrated back into society and living responsibly. They are encouraged to be part of the local Youth ministry and soccer leagues. They manage their own vegetable garden, give produce to people less fortunate than themselves, using some for their own meals, and selling the excess for pocket money.

In 2008 the organization launched a project called "Asibavikele" – meaning "let's protect them". It is a door-to-door ministry which operates in Matatiele, Cedarville and 6 outlying villages. 36 volunteers who are trained in social welfare related matters, listen to the needs of underprivileged and disadvantaged villagers, giving assistance and advice. The most needy clients are terminally ill adults, members of child-headed households and grandmothers caring for their orphaned grandchildren. The volunteers were alarmed at the desperate need to provide food to families while assisting individuals to access various grants made available by Government. Within 2 months of the inception of the project, a Christian organization from Durban called Container Ministries started to provide food necessary to sustain the desperately poor. This was miraculous provision.

The volunteers and staff trust the Lord to meet their needs so that they can, in turn, meet the needs of others – the Lord undertakes – seldom by supplying finances, but rather by touching the heart of a wide variety of people who offer their time, skills, gifts in kind and abilities.

In February 2011, the volunteers will begin training in simple health care, which will include blood pressure, blood sugar and HIV testing, as well as education regarding behaviour and lifestyle change. They are hoping that by working more closely with many of the villagers, parents will be encouraged take responsibility for their well being, and thus live to raise their own children. This has proved positive with a number of mothers that Liz has been "buddy" to over the past few years. Where they had asked to leave children to her in their will, they are now seeing their own children into senior school.

The Community have been drawn to work together, with the local HIV/AIDS clinic, local hospital, the municipal clinic and police providing much needed support.

In the face of opposition and doubt from many sectors, Liz has remained obedient to the Lord's calling. She has, together with her volunteers and staff, changed her community, been an example of God's supernatural provision and power, and, like Christ, she fiercely loves the vulnerable members of our society – the widows and the orphans.