



# FIVE YEARS + FORWARD

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SETSHABELO FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES AND  
RCA GLOBAL MISSION

2016-2021



# OVERVIEW

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Setshabelo Family and Child Services (SFCS) is a registered non-profit South African tax-exempt organization and the first black Child Protection Organization (CPO) to be designated in South Africa. Founded in 2014 following an in-depth three-year community needs assessment, SFCS serves children and families in the Free State province of South Africa with headquarters in Botshabelo. It is driven by its vision for a community where every child belongs in a loving and caring family.

In 2016, RCA Global Mission entered into a partnership with SFCS and other North America partners to help 30,000 orphaned and 15,500 vulnerable children find loving families in their communities in South Africa as an alternative to institutions or international adoptions. We believed our primary vehicle for change would require training, equipping, and mobilizing the local churches to work with SFCS for the sake of orphaned and vulnerable children in Botshabelo. Local church engagement continues to be the bedrock of our partnership and success.

## The Setshabelo Orphan Project



# CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

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Since the beginning, RCA Global Mission has sought to leverage SFCS' relationships with local churches in South Africa to help church leaders and their congregations work with the community to bring measurable change for the benefit of orphaned and vulnerable children and their families. To this end, RCA Global Mission has completed seven trips to Botshabelo to acclimate to history and culture, help equip and train, and also establish deep-rooted relationships with SFCS, local pastors, and churches. Lead by Christ- and community-centered mission principles, we take our cues from our mission partners and mobilize at their request. We were pleased to offer three important trainings in addition to other celebrations, workshops, and gatherings we were both able to lead and learn from.

**2017:**

110 pastors and spouses attended a 4-day conference on God's design for marriage..

**2018:**

RCA Women's Transformation and Leadership, together with South African women pastors and high-level leaders, hosted a brunch to celebrate Women's history month and offered a parenting workshop. 85 households were represented.

**2019:**

49 pastors, youth leaders, and community youth workers attended a Keeping It Real: A Faith-Based Model for Teen Dialogue on Sex and Sexuality Train the Trainers event.

**“If we strengthen marriages, we also strengthen communities. We as the church should not compete about knowledge on marriage, but share in the knowledge.”**

- Marriage According to God's Design participant

# FOSTER CARE

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He was the live-in partner to the child's mother when she became pregnant. She watched the child grow but soon realized she was unable to continue the relationship with him or the baby girl, so she left them both to be seen no more.

He cares for the child in all the ways that matter, while he searches high and low for the mother. He even reports the missing person to social service professionals to no avail. Low on resources and money, he came to SFCS for advice and help to acquire a birth certificate, which is necessary to get aid for the child. Our staff advises him to get a DNA test, the primary document needed for a parent to get a birth certificate for their child. In a few days, the results of the paternity test revealed that he is not the biological father to the child he has been caring for. He wants to keep the child in his custody, who otherwise would have no place to go.

For three years now, SFCS has put in countless hours helping this father become a "safe family" (part of a program that places children in temporary homes instead of orphanages until a foster or adoptive family can be identified.) This child will remain in this father's home while the staff at SFCS works tirelessly to get her a birth certificate and all the documents needed to help this "safe family" arrangement to become a forever family placement.



## 768 children

have been placed in a loving foster care home in the last five years, keeping them out of institutional or out-of-country placements.

In 2019, SFCS discovered that the subsidy for providing foster care incentivises some lower-income families to remain foster parents rather than lose the stream of income after the adoption is finalized. SFCS continues to raise this concern nationally and rally for stable funding to accompany every adopted child as it does in America.



# ADOPTIONS

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The temporary place of safety organization for baby Hope contacted SFCS to find her a forever family. And the Mxhaka's had also come to SFCS for help with building their family. When they met Hope, they fell in love! They bonded instantly with their new baby; baby girl Hope took to her father as we know all little girls do. It was a true match made in heaven. The parents say: "Hope's first words were mama and papa." We won't focus on the order in which these words came, but we are very happy, as is SFCS, that we were able to match this beautiful baby girl with her loving parents.



## 284 adoptions

took place in the last 5 years.

SFCS' relationship with local churches revealed that many congregations had families who longed for a child but, due to infertility, age, or other circumstances, could not bear a child of their own. SFCS receives referrals from the local church pastors to begin recruiting eligible families to become adopted parents. After approved home study and background checks, the staff at SFCS matches the family with a child waiting in foster care, an institutional facility, or preparing to be born.

Initially, adoptions were primarily completed with more upwardly mobile families in one of the more affluent sections in Bloemfontein. Now, since the staff at SFCS has exposure through a national radio program every Sunday, potential adoptive parents are traveling from outside of the province to pursue adoption with them.

# FAMILY PRESERVATION

2,500 participants

are currently in the family preservation program. This jumped from 200 in 2016 to 1,300 in 2019.

“This particular husband and wife have been married for 26 years, have three children, and the wife only recalls two years of happiness and peace. This case came to our office because the wife had tried to commit suicide. Once the health care workers at the hospital found out, they called the police, who tried to get her to open a case against her husband. But she refused and asked the officers to reprimand her husband instead. So they sent her to my office.

The wife retells how violent her husband was and that it led her into depression. In our counseling sessions, she opened up and told me the abuse had also affected her children. They had become bitter and angry. The 21-year-old son beat up his father for abusing them and his mother so much that the father (her husband) was in the process of opening a case against his son. This is when I called the children in and counseled them individually. In my sessions, I found that the father would beat up the children as well. They grew up in violence and had hate towards their father. Their 25-year-old daughter dreamed of finding poison and killing her father.

Counseling sessions helped the wife reconstruct her self-identity and life. I then helped the children, too. Then, I tackled the father. As the perpetrator, he felt he was in the right and I realized it was because he grew up with an abusive father himself. For him, this was “love.” We discussed his upbringing and he realized that he did not like what was happening to him and how his violence affected his family. I like telling my clients to share their imagined and ideal families with me. When he looked at his ideal family and his current family, he was sad. He realized he was living his father’s life. Then we had a family conference where he asked for forgiveness; his wife had already forgiven him, and his son and 23-year-old daughter were able to forgive him, too.”

- Shared by SFCS Social Worker

SFCS Family Preservation Services works to strengthen the family unit by getting institutionalized children into families and providing services to parents. These services include parenting classes, fatherhood training, pastor's workshops, psychosocial counseling, and life skills training.



# VICTIM EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

“As a social worker who works with gender-based violence and domestic violence cases, I picked up that the police try, by all means, to give good service, but they didn’t realize the necessity to give service with dignity and respect, especially for victims. The victims would be interviewed in the charge office where there was no privacy and other people would listen in to their issues—this would often lead to cases not being opened or ending up unsolved.

Once I joined their team, as a representative of SFCS, the officers knew to bring them straight to me so they could get counseling in the VEP (Victim Empowerment Program) office. The client/victim would leave understanding how they can get help with their situation. This also gave me a chance to assess whether the client needed a place of safety or if they would be fine going back home. Their counseling session also helps them have an idea of whether they want to open a case against the perpetrator or not. This was not the norm. Before SFCS came into the picture, the officer only focused on if [victims] wanted to open a case (i.e. make a formal charge) or not. No one prioritized the victim’s safety and mental and psychosocial needs.”

- Shared by SFCS Social Worker

## 1,500 victims

have received psychosocial support  
and training in the last 5 years.



In 2018, SFCS discovered gender-based violence to be a major threat to the family and key contributing factors in the prevalence of orphaned and vulnerable children. The COVID pandemic resulted in a surge in types and cases of violence against girls and women in South Africa. Sad data from the Gauteng Department of Health shows that 23,000 girls under age 18 gave birth between April 2020 and March 2021, of which 934 were under age 14. This compares to 14,577 girls under 19 in the same period the previous year.

SFCS’ work in the Free State province has resulted in a decline of violence against the national average. In 2019, SFCS addressed gender-based violence as a key initiative, helping 204 people. In 2020, SFCS social workers extended their work to local police stations, offering compassion and counseling to victims who present to report abuse. Additionally, they joined the national campaign to end GBV in the whole of South Africa.

# COMMUNITY IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY



**233 families**

have been reunified



**358 children**

were placed in temporary safety homes.



**263 churches**

were engaged with SFCS



**6,261 youth**

were served by the family preservation programs



**1170 adults**

were serviced by gender-based violence programs



**6,078 adults**

were served by the family preservation programs



**278 families**

received COVID-19 food security packs.



In 2017, SFCS contributed 3.93 percent of their annual budget for Operating and CYCC, with North American partners providing the rest.

From 2018 to 2020, SFCS gained momentum with in-country funding and ended 2020 contributing 10.23 percent of giving to the Operating and CYCC annual budget.

At the end of November 2021, they are now providing 34 percent of their own annual operating and CYCC funding from in-country sources in South Africa.



# THE WAY FORWARD

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On Sunday mornings, SFCS has access to a national radio station, which allows them to share adoptions stories and appeal to adoptive families all over South Africa. Currently, they provide services in the Manguang District [the Bloemfontein Area where Botshabelo is] all the way northeast to the Thabo Mofutsanyana District [near ladybrand].

In the next two years, they intend to expand services to Xhariep, a more secluded area to the south. There, a population of 400,000 live in eight towns with 12 farms and villages. SFCS' family preservation services will best serve this community while they work with churches there to locate loving families for orphans and vulnerable children in all three districts.

Meanwhile, the RCA, along with the staff at SFCS, will continue to work with local churches in South Africa and North American partners to make sure orphaned and vulnerable children in Botshabelo thrive in loving families.



Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom Grier  
Missionary Liason to South Africa  
RCA Global Mission

## Thank you!

Your generosity makes all of this possible. We praise God for you!