



Thabte's Story* (Collected by Laureen Obbayi, August 2007)

My name is Thabte and I'm eleven years old and I have a little brother and sister. When I was small, my family used to live closer to Free State and my father worked in the mines and my mother worked on an asparagus farm. My father died when I was six. I don't remember very much but I think he was sick for a while.

We stayed with my uncle for a while but he didn't have a good job so we couldn't stay there anymore. My mother thought she might get a job in a store but it was very hard for her because she didn't have any high school and she didn't have time to go back. My grandmother had a place in Soweto so we decided to move there.

Living in Soweto is very different. My grandmother's place is very crowded because my aunt lives there to and she has five children. Part of our house has good walls now but the half where we sleep still has tin sheets. We didn't have a bathroom until my aunt got the council to help put one outside. But then they put a meter on the water and sometimes we can't pay.

My mother got married again but when she got pregnant the clinic told her that she had HIV and then my step-dad left. She was lucky because the clinic gave her drugs so that my sister would not get HIV also.

I walk to school every day. I like school because the building is nice and we get lunch every day. I also want to do well because if I don't get up to at least high school I won't get a good job. If I get good grades I could become a teacher. I would really like to become a nurse because the nurse at the clinic helped my mother. Also, if you are a nurse you can go anywhere to get a job.

I am very glad that you came and gave us more books so that we do better in school. I got one that I took home so that my brother and sister and my aunt's children could read it also.

** Story edited for narrative clarity.*

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U.S. Department of State Profile of South Africa
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2898.htm>

One World Africa
The African arm of the One World independent media network.
<http://africa.oneworld.net/article/frontpage/151/509>

UNDP Human Development Reports
Human development indicators, searchable by country or indicators.
<http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/>

World Bank Resources on South Africa
www.worldbank.org/southafrica