

Baba Lami's Feeding Scheme for Children Extends to All!

By Blessing Ngwenya

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The feeding scheme for children, operating in extension 9, Orange Farm, was founded by Mr Ibrahim Rahaman. The 64-year-old man from Somalia aimed to help as many children as he could all around the township which is in the City of Johannesburg. Rahaman does this with the help of one of the community member, Sibongile Zwane (45), and her friends too. The lady also known as '*Mama ka Mpho*' (Mpho's mother), has worked with Rahaman for the last 3 years and 2 months.

"It all started at school where I work, I met him during lunchtime. And, they were going to deliver food to the school I work at which is Thamsanqa Secondary School. So, I approached him and told him about our situation back home; how kids are starving on [the] streets without any help."

"So, he was pleased and said he will come around and take a look for himself so that he can see what he can do. I didn't believe that he would, until one [day] when he came to my house. My heart was filled with so much joy and happiness. I quickly called out [to the] kids to fetch their lunchboxes, it was like a dream come true for me."

"I really enjoy helping people, especially [the] kids the most, because they are innocents who just need guidance and a little help from their parents," said Mamaka Mpho.

"At first, it was only kids who used to come but as time goes on even their parents started to join, one by one. This breaks my [heart] to see how many people are struggling in our community. The number has gone up [such] that the food they used to bring to us is no longer saving everyone," she added.

Community members are very pleased by what is happening. By helping everyone without asking for anything in return, not only in ext. 9 but also in extensions 7a, and 7b; Drieziek 1, 2, 3, and 5 even up until Roma. Mr. Rahaman makes sure that he reaches all these places everyday of the week.

"Mr Ibrahim, we call him Baba-lami even the kids sang a song when he arrived. From 2 years old they all come running, singing, because they know that they are going to get food and some fruits. As parents, we know that [on] Wednesday afternoon we don't cook because Baba-lami is coming. It really helps us to save money or food for that day. He has been such a blessing in the community of Orange Farm since day one."

"To be honest, if he stops giving to the community, I am ensuring that many are going to starve. What's worse is that even disabled people also come to Baba-Lami, this shows just how many community members are depending on this food which they only see once a week."

"It would be really good if he can come at least twice a week. I am a mother of two boys, I have no income my husband doesn't work. So, things are [a] bit rough when you don't work because even the R350 [grant] can't even cover the food that is going to last a month, only two weeks then the rest of the weeks we have to make a plan on how to feed our kids," said Ayanda Mthimkhulu, a 28-year-old female from Orange farm ext. 9 phase 1.

It has been the most pleasing three years of children in Orange Farm despite that they only see him once a week. But a smile has been put on their faces.

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