

Family Unable to Access Grants Owing

By Faith Brown

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The lack of documentation is not a problem limited to migrants from other countries, but it also affects South African nationals. In the informal settlement of Kliptown, in Soweto near Eldorado Park, a woman named Emily Mathebula struggles with this challenge.

Mathebula, who lives on the fourth street near the river that passes through the area, is a grandmother to five children. The little ones were left by Gogo Mathebula' with the responsibility to care for her grandchildren by her daughter, California Mathebula. The elderly woman is struggling and burdened by California who dumps and neglects her children, leaving them with Emily. The elder Mathebula is unemployed and struggles to provide for the children who have been left at home by California. The children do not yet have birth certificates, leaving the grandmother unable to even apply for Child Support Grants for the young trio.

California, who is 29 years old, lives with her boyfriend in an area called 'dumping site' in Lapland. Over the past two years, Grandma Emily has had to bury two of California's children. Some community members suspect that the children passed away due to neglect, while others think that living in an unsafe, unclean area may have contributed to their deaths. Alcohol syndrome could also be a cause of the children's deaths due to California being an alcoholic and drinking heavily.

Mathebula is unemployed and only receives a Child Support Grant for her grandchildren. California's children do not have birth certificates and are unable to receive the Child Support Grant. This has made things difficult for Mathebula who is a single parent and must take care of 10 children in the household. Some of the needs include providing food for the children to eat, keeping them clean, and buying school uniforms for them to be able to go to school. Other expenses are exercise books and other stationery.

To make ends meet, Mathebula, in her old age, does recycling when she can to support her household. The elderly lady has an older son who hopes to start his own security company.

The Mathebula family has sought help from organisations within and around her community. Legal Aid, SASSA, and Joburg Child Welfare have been able to assist Emily with the company of a caregiver who lives in her area and works for an Orphaned and Vulnerable Centre.

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