

When *Hope* Finds a Way

In a small township outside Durban, thirteen-year-old Siyasamkela begins most mornings wondering how he'll find food that day. He lives in a crowded home of thirteen people – siblings, cousins, and a grandmother to whom he is not directly related.

Originally from the Eastern Cape, the family moved to Molweni (about a 10 hour drive up the coast) and soon formed a close bond with their kind neighbors, the Ndlovu family. For a while, life felt stable. Whenever his mother needed to run errands, she would leave the children in the Ndlovus' care – people she trusted. One morning, she said she was heading into town to run errands. She never came home. When the Ndlovu grandmother called to check on her, she answered and said she was in another town – with another man. When the children's father learned what had happened, he moved them in with their paternal grandmother, **but that only deepened their pain. She physically abused them, fed them little, and treated them like servants. They became painfully thin and weak.**

Eventually, the Ndlovu grandmother reached out to one of the children's older sisters, who returned to help. Together they rescued the children and brought them back into the Ndlovu home, where they were safe at last.

Months later, the children's mother called the Ndlovu family. She said she regretted her choices and wanted to make things right. She came back – this time with a new baby. For a few weeks, she stayed, helping with the children and apologizing for the past. But the change didn't last. Soon she left again, this time taking one of the older sisters with her and leaving her new baby behind. That sister later became pregnant and gave birth, but the baby didn't survive.

Not long after, tragedy struck again: the same sister went missing while collecting firewood. Rumors spread that she was still alive – someone even claimed to see her on Facebook – but she blocked all her siblings and the Ndlovu family. To this day, no one knows where she is.

Now, five of the children remain with the Ndlovus. Their father never calls, never visits. Some of the children receive small social grants, others nothing at all. To survive, Siyasamkela and his siblings collect and sell discarded bottles and plastics. Sometimes they go days without food; sometimes they ask teachers for maize meal just to make porridge.

When our local team met him, Siyasamkela spoke softly about his life. He said there are times he wonders what he did to deserve so much pain – times when the weight of it all makes him want to give up, he ideates about taking his own life.

But through Focus on the Family South Africa's Tales of Hope program, something began to change. Siyasamkela has been enrolled in a new group that meets weekly, where trained staff listen, encourage, and walk with him through the healing process. Our team also arranged counseling, helped apply for grants for eligible family members, provided a food parcel, and purchased a new school uniform to replace his torn one (students are required to purchase and wear a uniform to attend school).

For the first time in years, Siyasamkela has started to smile again. He's learning that his story isn't over – that God sees him, and there is still a future waiting to be written.

A few miles away, another young soul is learning the same truth – and her pain runs just as deep...

Minenhle, age fifteen, lives with her grandmother and two cousins. Her parents are alive, but neither is involved in her life. Her grandmother works at a nearby school, and to help out, she spends weekends selling goods at a local shop to afford personal items and school supplies. **But the hardest part of her story isn't what can be seen. It's what she's carried since she was eight years old.**

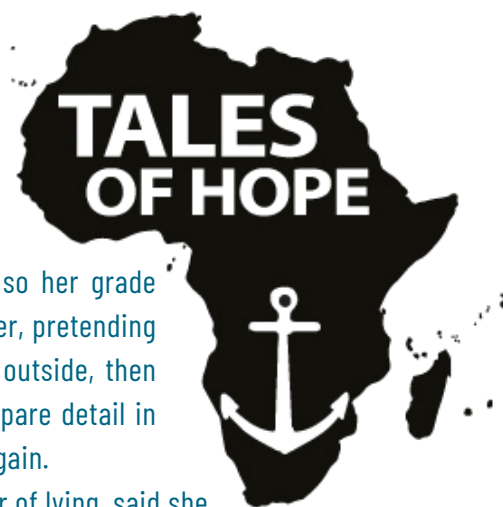
That year, while living in Hammarsdale (about 40 minutes west of Durban), Minenhle was raped – not once, but repeatedly – by her uncle.

On the day it first happened, her school had run out of classroom space, so her grade wasn't scheduled to attend. She was home alone when her uncle called her over, pretending he would teach her how to exercise. But he quickly sent the other children outside, then assaulted her. The Focus on the Family South Africa social workers did not spare detail in their report. But we will say, situations like these happened to her again and again.

When Minenhle tried to tell her family, they didn't believe her. They accused her of lying, said she was trying to cause trouble in the family, and sent her back. She carried that secret for years until 2023, when she finally found the courage to tell the truth. Her uncle was arrested but later released on bail.

By then, the damage was deep. In Grade 7, Minenhle confided in her friends about everything that had happened to her. However, some of those friends began spreading the story to other learners. Now in Grade 8, she is constantly asked whether she is still pure, even though they know what she went through. She has suicidal thoughts, and she can't concentrate in school.

Focus on the Family South Africa stepped in to make sure Minenhle was not left to face this pain alone. She has been referred for trauma counseling and additional external social work services, as well as enrolled in *Tales of Hope*, where she's surrounded by mentors and peers who remind her that her worth is not defined by what was done to her – and that God still has a purpose for her life.



For Siyasamkela, for Minenhle, and for many others like them, Tales of Hope is more than a program – it's a rescue line. It brings food where there's hunger, safety where there's fear, and a message of love where shame once ruled.

This is the cultural moment that God has placed Focus on the Family in, to reach these children in the depths of their pain and offer hope that crosses oceans. Hope that reaches the townships of Molweni and Hammarsdale, where two young lives are learning – perhaps for the very first time – that they are seen, they are loved, and God's hope still finds a way.