

FOUNDER/DIRECTOR'S REPORT

YEAR UNDER REVIEW:

1st March, 2010 – 28th February, 2011.

The year under review, it has to be said, was without a doubt the most difficult year TLC has experienced, to date.



Being the hosts of the 2010 World Cup, promised all South Africans a boom-year; a flourishing year of prosperity for all. Sadly, it didn't happen for TLC. For us, it was a year of major setbacks, disappointments and unprecedented challenges. For the children's sake, we made a good show of enjoying the soccer festivities. But everything to do with our work was becoming incredibly burdensome, depressing and above all, terrifying.



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Little by little our financial situation began to strangle any hope of improvement. Every appeal for support from the Government was either met with empty promises, or long, drawn out and unsympathetic responses. Although indirectly, the Global Financial Crisis hit us hard, too. Many of our overseas donors were financially crippled by this disaster and some were rendered completely bankrupt. Understandably, they all withdrew their support in order to survive themselves. Even local donors were affected by the crisis with the same consequence.

We decided that the time had come for us to look to more innovative ways of raising funds. Our family began making our ministry known on the "Blogosphere" thinking that this would bring in some much needed money on a monthly basis. We did enjoy a small amount of success by fundraising in this way, but it was nowhere near the kind of money we needed to pay our bills.

Pippa and I attended a course which taught us how to apply to the Lotto for funding with sure success. As soon as the next invitation for Lotto Applications was opened, our application went in and we were confident that we had fulfilled all criteria. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, our expectations were dashed along with thousands of other hopefuls. Their reason for our rejection was really petty, but truly financially devastating.

Financial strain might be manageable for a small family. But when there are so many lives depending on your successful fundraising, it becomes a lonely battle. Particularly so, without some basic or fundamental ongoing support that one can rely on, on a monthly basis. When there is no backup plan, the constant pressure to provide for the lives in your care will finally crack even the strongest person. If you consider that since 1993 I was the sole provider ... the person bringing in the money every month. Besides all the improvements you see on this farm, 800 little souls had come through our doors. It could not have been an easy job, even for the toughest of the tough. So in August of 2010, I found myself broken down by such constant pressure. This situation made me realise that, in order to recover fully, it was necessary to start handing over some of my responsibilities, and save myself from total destruction. Pippa became our Managing Director and I was forced to take a back seat for many months.

But now I look at Pippa and I see the same strain of exhaustion on her face. I see her shoulders drooping and her head bowed under that same pressure that I know so well. It doesn't sit well, in a mother's heart. I feel for her pain, more than I did for my own, because she is also my child. I cannot allow her to endure what I endured. I know very well that it is a labour of love. But the cost is too great. If we cannot afford to employ the people that we need to keep doing the job and maintain our quality ethic that we have always been accustomed to; then we really need to consider a drastic change.

A life where every song in your heart has been stilled by stress, is not a life worth living.

The work we do on a daily basis is incredibly fulfilling. If it were not for the fact that we love each and every child so passionately and wish to see each one safely settled into a loving, nurturing and enabling family; there would be little reason to endure along such an emotionally debilitating path. Babies, especially our babies, are expensive. They generally arrive at TLC in a dreadful physical condition. They need all kinds of interventions to raise them up to a place where others will find them attractive enough to make a long-term investment into their lives, by offering them a family. Apart from food and shelter, and loving care-givers; they need medicines, therapies and specialist interventions. That's where the bulk of the money goes. To the neediest ones. Our babies.

But there are many others, living at TLC. And when I see my boys in last year's trousers, 6 inches above the ankle with no hope of buying new ones ... I wonder if I haven't lost my way somewhat. When I look at my little girls who haven't had their hair braided for the past 6 months because of lack of money ... I wonder if there isn't another way out of this mess. I feel a creeping anger against the people whose duty it is to support our children, but who give us lame answers such as ... "We lost the file." Or "You don't fit into any of our criteria." or worst of all ... "We're nearly there. Just wait another month." And if you call after another month that person has left and you have to start all over again with a new person.

The frustrations of the year under review have been vast and overwhelming. We are already halfway into the year that follows the year under review and there seems to be no change on the horizon. The same empty promises still exist. Personally, the only way I see a possibility of moving forward and surviving, is by drastically scaling down our operations. And I chose the word **DRASTICALLY** with purpose. I mean taking it to the point where the money that is raised through our private fundraising is sufficient for all the children living at TLC to have a good quality of life; which has always been our dream for every child in our home.

I never wanted to be forced into a position where we have to turn babies away. My faith kept us going and I thought this would never come to pass. That every baby that found its way to TLC would never be rejected. But now I have to change my focus away from that needy little life; and I do it with tears. I have to consider the ones that we are committed to first. So I envision that the drastic change would probably be cutting our admissions by half.

God has a time for pruning. Perhaps this is his time. We have enjoyed so much success and growth over the years. Perhaps this is God's time for rest and for pruning.

Naturally, this matter will be discussed thoroughly with our Board at a later meeting. But that is my personal plan for the future, at this moment.

Thank you.

THEA JARVIS
Founder/Director