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IMPACT

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Family Care Project

Progress Report

June 2024





Project Summary

The Family Care Project at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital supports vulnerable children and families in crisis. By offering nutritional support, emergency clothing, care packs, and transport assistance, the project ensures that families facing financial hardship can focus on their child's medical needs without additional stress. Many of these families live in poverty and rely on conditional grants, facing challenges like inadequate housing and food insecurity. The project, now in its third year, provides crucial resources that help families navigate the difficulties of having a hospitalised child, aiming to alleviate financial and emotional burdens.



A Mother's Love

Petina's eyes are cast down, as she fills in a form on a clipboard. Anenyasha, her two-year old son, confidently marches up to her and holds out his little hand for the pen she's using. She's not done yet, and little Anenyasha, takes a big gulp of breath, preparing to unleash a world-weary wail. A friendly social worker hands him another pen and his tears dry up instantly, and once again he's the smiling, beaming little boy he was a moment ago.

Despite the brief threat of a tantrum, Anenyasha is a carefree and smiley little baby. You wouldn't know by just looking at him, but underneath Anenyasha's little fleece onesie and dinosaur slippers are severe burn wounds running up and down his legs. They were no accident.

"I had to leave my husband," says Petina. "He does nothing for me, doesn't provide anything, and he beats me. He's the one who burned Anenyasha. So I had to leave him." Petina drops her gaze into her hands, folded into her lap. She and Anenyasha have been at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital for just over two months while Anenyasha's burns healed. Having traveled – or rather, fled – from Kraaifontein, Petina had nowhere else to stay. Nor did she want to leave her son's side. She's a mother fiercely determined to keep him safe and give him the best life she can.

"It is difficult. I don't have a job, and I need to care for my child. I have to find work; I have to protect him. I won't be like my husband."

The pen now uncapped and forgotten, Anenyasha leans back to fall onto his bottom and sit by his mother's feet, a picture of carefree, unclouded nonchalance. He seems to know no fear – a wonderful testimony of his mother's loving work.

Anenyasha is finally well enough to be discharged from the Burns Ward, but Petina doesn't have any money to get back to Kraaifontein, where she will stay with a friend while she looks for work to support herself and her son. The Social Workers step in and connect Petina with the Family Care Project, which pays for her transportation and supplies her and Anenyasha with some new warm clothes and food vouchers.

While Petina sighs quietly, Anenyasha stands up by himself and starts to bounce up and down to a song only he seems to hear. He and his mother don't have much as they start a new life, but he has a bottomless supply of love from his mother. And they both have a little bit of a start from the Family Care Project.



Project Goal

In partnership with the RCWMCH Social Work Department, this project aims to fulfil the urgent material needs of vulnerable children, crucial for aiding their recovery.

Objectives:

#1

Nutritional Support for malnourished children and children with complex health conditions that require specialised diets to support their recovery

#2

Emergency care items: including clothing and hygiene products for children and caregivers who are victims of abuse, neglect, burn injuries and other traumatic events.

#3

Transport support for children and their families facing a wide range of challenges that require frequent and essential travel to and from the Hospital



Impact

How your donation has made a difference to children and families in 2024 so far

Objective 1 Nutritional Support

Nutritional support plays a critical role in promoting recovery, reducing complications, and improving outcomes for sick and injured children. Since January, **758** children have received food vouchers (at an average value of R300) to supplement their nutritional needs.

Examples of when nutritional support is recommended by the Social Workers include:

Paediatric Trauma: Children who have experienced traumatic injuries, such as fractures or burns, require increased energy and nutrient intake to support tissue repair and recovery. Nutritional supplementation, including high-protein diets or specialised formulas, can accelerate healing and reduce the risk of complications.

Chronic Illness: Children with chronic conditions such as cystic fibrosis, cancer, or gastrointestinal disorders often have increased nutrient requirements and may struggle to meet their nutritional needs due to factors like poor appetite, malabsorption, or treatment side effects. Tailored nutritional interventions, such as enteral or parenteral nutrition support, can help optimise growth, maintain strength, and improve overall quality of life.

Acute Infections: During acute illness, such as pneumonia or sepsis, children may experience increased metabolic demands and nutrient losses due to fever, vomiting, or diarrhoea. Providing adequate fluid and electrolyte replacement, along with nutrient-rich foods or oral nutritional supplements can help replenish losses and support recovery.

In addition, **1 364** snack packs have been provided for children and their caregivers who are waiting in the hospital for their appointment or at the pharmacy.



Objective 2

Emergency Care Packs

Most children admitted to the hospital do so under urgent and stressful circumstances. Access to essential resources is designed to alleviate the immediate burdens on families, allowing them to focus on their child's health and recovery.

Examples of when emergency care packs are provided include:

Child Protection Placement Packs

When children are removed from their caretakers due to suspected abuse, neglect, abandonment, or other safety concerns, they may need to be placed in alternative care. This care can range from a place of safety to an emergency caretaker or a relative. The Family Care Project provides 'Placement Care Packs' that ensure these children have their immediate needs met during the transition. To date, **11 children** have required alternative care placements this year. This support has been positively received by community social workers, places of safety, and emergency caretakers, ensuring the child's well-being while awaiting further assistance from Social Development or the court.

Unplanned Admissions and Long Stay Patients

In situations where families face unplanned long stays in the hospital, such as when they are from out of town and unable to travel back and forth for follow-up appointments, or due to complications related to treatment and trauma, the provision of emergency care items becomes crucial. These items include essential supplies like clothing, toiletries, blankets, and underwear, which help families manage their extended stays without additional stress. Furthermore, for unavoidable accidents such as a child wetting themselves, having a change of underwear and clothing readily available ensures the child's comfort and dignity.

Fire Emergency Pack for Survivors of Fires

Families who have lost their homes and all their belongings in fires are supported with Emergency Family Packs. These packs contain essential items such as food, bedding, toiletries, and clothing for the entire family.

Since January, **270** emergency care packs have been distributed to children and their families in need.





Objective 3

Transport Support

Most children require ongoing and frequent appointments, sometimes weekly for up to 6 weeks or more. This places an additional financial burden on families and increases the risk of children missing critical treatment visits.

Since January this year, **243** children and their families have benefitted from transport funding assistance. This contributes to a total of **1 947** children who have had help attending their hospital appointments since the project's inception.

Transport assistance provided by the Family Care Project is crucial for families facing a wide range of challenges that require frequent and essential travel.

This assistance is vital for:

- Parents of children whose surgeries have been cancelled.
- Parents needing to visit child protection organisations or see a social worker.
- Parents referred for gender-based violence assessments or interventions.
- Parents traveling to collect maternity certificates for birth registration.
- Children and caretakers who are removed and placed in new environments.
- Parents referred to Home Affairs for essential documentation.
- Children needing ongoing counselling when the family has no income for travel.
- Bereaved families needing transportation for pathology services or to return home.
- Parents referred for drug or alcohol rehabilitation services.
- Families who have lost their homes to fires.
- Repeat occupational therapy and burn-injured patient appointments.



Financial Report

	Budget	Expenditure			
	Total 2022-2024	Year 1 (Jan-Dec 2022)	Year 2 (Jan- Dec 2023)	Year 3 (Jan- May 2024)	Total
Food and Care Items	R2 820 851	R888 558	R1 160 997	R305 271	R2 354 826
Transport	R385 610	R78 043	R31 969	R27 001	R137 013
Operational Costs	R645 048	R165 535	R193 362	R74 275	R433 172
Total	R3 851 510	R1 132 136	R1 386 327	R406 547	R2 925 010



Our heartfelt appreciation for your commitment to supporting the well-being of vulnerable children and their families