

# South Africa



The Republic of South Africa is the southernmost country in Africa. It is slightly larger than twice the size of the state of Texas, making it the 25th largest country by area in the world. With a population of close to 53 million, it is our world's 24th most populous country. There is no designated capital city; each branch of the government is headquartered in a different city.



The beautiful countryside of South Africa

There are eleven official languages in South Africa—two of them, Afrikaans and English—trace their roots back to the colonial period when Dutch and British settlers ruled the country.

About 80% of South Africans are black African. Though the vast majority, they were not allowed to vote and were discriminated against by the white-rule minority government until 1994 under a system called apartheid. After increasing opposition from not only the majority of South Africans, but also from many countries and world businesses who refused to work with the country, the leader of the African National Congress—Nelson Mandela—was released from 25 years of imprisonment for advocating for rights for all. He went on to become the first black president of South Africa.

The end of apartheid did not end South Africa's problems, however. Unemployment has remained very high, leading to many thousands of protests—some violent. Also, although the government has managed to bring clean water to most citizens, proper sanitation is still not provided for over a third of all South Africans. The country has a large illegal immigration problem—it is estimated that there are over 5 million people in the country without proper papers. Most live in poverty with little income.

## MCA in South Africa

Many problems in South Africa are still divided along racial lines. Healthcare is one of them. Because of lack of access to good medical care, the average life expectancy for a white person is 71 years; for a black person it is 48 years. Only about 16% of people are covered by any kind of health insurance. Most people pay “out of pocket” - meaning they use their own money- or they go without healthcare. According to the 2013 UNAIDS report, South Africa has the highest HIV/AIDS infection rate of any country in the world, with about 5.5 million people living with the disease. Again, the racial divide is seen: over 13% of the black population is infected and only about 0.3% of the white population has the virus. It is estimated that there are over 1.2 million AIDS orphans in the country, causing a crisis in healthcare, education, and family life.

Missionary Childhood is active around the country, most especially in rural areas. Many of the outlying dioceses of the country face problems of incomplete infrastructure—some have access to electricity, some to running water, some to working toilets, but many places do not have all three.



This is a very large problem when, due to the AIDS death rate, the person in charge of a household may be a child themselves and not used to dealing with these basic issues of everyday life.

MCA funds clinics, schools, and nursery care for orphans and vulnerable children across the rural dioceses of South Africa.

Recently Father Gordon Rees, National Director for the Pontifical Mission Societies in South Africa, was able to personally visit these programs in the Diocese of Dundee. After touring the sites with Bishop Graham Rose Father Rees said, “I must express my joy at having been able to visit the diocese and experience the projects first hand at churches, schools, crèches (nurseries), etc. I could not but be impressed with the dedication and hospitality of all concerned. I must thank Bishop Graham, Sister Mary, and all the brothers and sisters in Christ who I was so fortunate to meet.”



Children attending school funded by Missionary Childhood

At last report Missionary Childhood members in South Africa sacrificed \$53,725 for other children in the missions. Their fellow Missionary Childhood brothers and sisters from around the world sent them \$359,400 to build and fund orphanages, schools, nurseries, day care centers, feeding programs, health clinics, vocational workshops, and clean water projects.

**Missionary Childhood Association**

66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184 | Tel: 617.779.3871 | Fax: 617.542.1778

[www.propfaithboston.org](http://www.propfaithboston.org) | [mheil@propfaithboston.org](mailto:mheil@propfaithboston.org)