

SPRINGFONTEIN'S ELDERLY, ORPHANS SUFFER THE MOST

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Countless women in Springfontein in the western Free State are forced to look after their grandchildren after their own children die or leave home to look for jobs in cities.

Elderly men and women have the challenge of looking after orphans and are left to handle the responsibility of acquiring social grants and raising these children.

An example is Ntombizodwa Booi, 69, who lost her son in a car accident in 2010. She inherited his daughter who was five at the time. She lives with five other people in the house who also rely on her grant to survive.

"I was living in Welkom when I received the news that my child had died and I moved to Springfontein. I left my job as a domestic worker to look after my son's child," said Booi.

She said that her son was able to support himself and the child but things had become difficult since he died. This has been made worse by the fact that her son's pension money has not been released yet.

"I do receive a social grant for the child but the R1200 I receive from social development is able to help support us both. I live with the little one and have to use the money for electricity, school clothes, food and we have to make sure it sustains us for the whole month," she said.

Booi lives in a fully furnished house which her son helped to pay off. "I have stopped paying off some of the furniture because the money just won't pull us through," she said.

MEC for social development Sisi Ntombela recently said that the means test is what prevented many households from receiving pension grant money.

The means test calculates all the assets the elderly woman has, including housing, furniture and income to determine whether someone deserves to receive the social grant but does not take into account the number of dependents the elderly person may have to look after out of the grant.

"The means test does not take into account the number of dependants who have to be fed off the social grant and the number of unemployed people in that family who rely on the money to survive," said Ntombela.

Booi says Springfontein has a high rate of unemployment and there is a limited amount of domestic work on offer.

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]