



Lilitha (1) and Zintle (9) Notswi were saved from the fire. With them are their cousin, Loyiso Mqalekišo, and their uncle Mandlenkosi Dzolodzolo, whose wife and children died in the blaze.

Photos by  
Lulekwa Mbadamane

## Hero mum dies saving kids!

By **LULEKWA MBADAMANE**  
and **NTOMBOXOLO MAKOBA**

THE DESPERATE screams for help from her terrified children pierced the young mum's heart.

Without a thought for her own safety, she plunged straight into the burning shack to save them.

But the evil fire would not be denied... and Thandiswa Notswi (35), from Gatyana Village in the Eastern Cape, and her two little children, Phumlani (8) and one-year-old Sanelisiwe, were eaten alive by the flames.

Their three-roomed shack in the Siyahlala squatter camp near Sheffield Road, Philippi, outside Cape Town, was completely destroyed.

It is believed that the fire started when a paraffin stove exploded in the early hours of Tuesday.

Thandiswa used to sell fish for a living and woke up at 2am every day to bake the fish which she sold to train commuters at Bonteheuwel railway station. She did the same thing on that last morning of her life... but within minutes

of lighting the stove, the shack was a sea of flames.

Neighbours ran to the rescue with buckets of water and sand, but the greedy blaze won the battle and the shack was burnt to ashes.

Thandiswa's sister, Andiswa (26), managed to save her two children but was badly burnt and is now in a serious condition in Tygerberg Hospital. Her two kids escaped the fire without injuries.

Nofosti Siphalo (50), who lives next door, said: "I've never seen anything like this. I saw Thandiswa outside and when she heard her kids crying she decided to save them herself.

"She didn't come out of the burning shack again."

Thandiswa's eldest daughter, Lwando (16), was sleeping at a relative's house when the fire broke out.

"I can't believe my mother is gone!" cried Lwando.

Ward councillor Bongani Mini said: "Many people are dying in these shacks and I want the government to do away with them."



Relatives in front of the burnt ruins of the shack.

