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NEW HOPE: Akhona Nogogo looks at her son, Zingce, who received heart surgery last week, made possible by the Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa. Zingce had a hole between his heart chambers which interfered with the flow of blood to his lungs.
Picture: CINDY WAXA

Lifesavers of children open pilot project in Cape Town

MARY-ANNE GONTSANA

THEY HAVE saved 330 lives from their hospital in Joburg. Now the Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa (WSPCCA) has opened a pilot project in Cape Town and hope to save scores of city children.

The project is at the Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital where they had already operated on three children.

One of the three children who had been helped by WSPCCA was seven-month-old Zingce Nogogo from Eastern Cape, who was operated on last Thursday.

Zingce had a hole between his heart chambers and the narrowing of the valve to the lungs which interfered with the flow of the blood to the lungs, keeping the oxygen levels in the blood low.

His mother, Akhona Nogogo, said Zingce did not show any symptoms of illness but when he reached two months she noticed that his lips and mouth turned a greyish-blue colour.

She said she was scared during the surgery because it was between life and death, but was happy that it worked out.

Cardiothoracic surgeon Susan Vosloo, who operated on

Zingce, said he was doing very well and would be discharged today.

One in every 100 children is born with a cardiac defect. This is one of the factors that have played a major role in the work the charity organisation does.

Started in 2004, the Walter Sisulu Paediatric Cardiac Centre for Africa is a non-profit organisation which raises funds to pay for "lifesaving" surgery for children with congenital heart disorders.

Chief executive of WSPCCA Lynda Bleazard said they had started the project here to assist the long waiting lists in the public sector which in real-

ity meant "death lists".

She said they helped about 50 children a year up to the age of 18 and were hoping to help just as many in Cape Town if the project proved to be successful. Last year they helped 109 children.

The charity survived on corporate sponsors with their major sponsor being Netcare.

To reach places in Africa, they used a referral network, where doctors stationed in the African countries could send patient applications. They were also running an SMS campaign where the public could donate R10. To donate, SMS the word "heart" to 38208.