

Ainembabazi Children's Project

- Meeting the needs of Uganda's Orphans and Vulnerable Children -

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

-- Anne Frank



The extent of the challenge

- UNICEF estimates that in 2007, 2.1 million children under 15 years of age were living with HIV, and 290,000 children died of AIDS and 420,000 children were newly infected.
- Over 15 million children under the age of 18 had been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic by the end of 2003 globally, and millions more have been made vulnerable.
- Eight out of ten AIDS orphans live in sub-Saharan Africa
- Over 18 million African children will have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS by the end of this decade – out of an estimated total of 25 million AIDS orphans worldwide

The situation of children affected by AIDS in Africa is precarious, leaving not only children's lives at stake, but also the future economic and social development of communities and nations. The AIDS epidemic has had deleterious effects on communities, and most particularly, children.

In Uganda, the exact number of AIDS orphans is uncertain. What remains clear is its massive proportions; approximately 20% of the child population. Estimates range from 1.7 to 2.35 million cumulative children orphaned by AIDS. While the estimates may vary, the impact remains the same. Approximately 25% of households in Uganda are housing at least one orphan placing stress on families and communities.

The orphan population in Africa will only continue to rise into the next decade as HIV positive parents become ill and die from AIDS. AIDS orphans are a long wave problem that will last well after the reduction of the HIV prevalence rate and ultimately, the 'orphan epidemic' is still in its infancy and is expected to grow into devastating proportions over the next 10 years.

Understanding the impact of aids on children

The impacts of HIV/AIDS on children are consistently and clearly devastating; children affected by AIDS suffer on a number of fronts:

- Lack of access to material resources results in a difficulty in maintaining nutritional intake, continuing with their education, and accessing shelter, clothing and bedding.
- Educational quality has deteriorated due to AIDS infection among school teachers and administrators.
- Children have suffered lower performance at school, have higher rates of drop out, and suffer from lack of parental guidance and affection. Lack of affection, material support, and inadequate socialization contributes to low self-esteem and performance of children.
- Children still in school tend to miss class more often due to involvement in domestic duties and difficulties buying school necessities due to a lack of money and parental care.
- Young girls are often forced into commercial sex to supplement family income or just to survive. The incidence of child labor and homelessness has increased.
- Children face mounting stigmatization and rejection in their communities and have suffered a deprivation of their basic human rights, including that of inheritance of the possessions of the dying parents.
- Children have become vulnerable to abuse, hostility, ostracism, ridicule, banishment and violence from family and community members.
- Many children have been forced to become heads of households upon the death of parents. Children, usually young girls, are forced to give up their education in order to provide for the needs of their siblings.

The Ainembabazi Children's Project

The purpose of the Ainembabazi Children's Project is to enable the orphans and other vulnerable children affected by the AIDS crisis in Southern Uganda to acquire basic education, attain improved standards of living, and develop a stronger understanding of human rights. We are deeply moved by the needs of these children and feel small steps will make a difference in their lives.

In order to address the challenges that both children AND the community faces in confronting AIDS, the project seeks to meet the following outcomes:

- Increased understanding and awareness within the community and schools of the plight of AIDS affected children, including improved health awareness and understanding of human rights
- Improved local community capacity to manage and support the living conditions of orphans and vulnerable children in the area
- Assist orphans with educational and health needs, particularly psychosocial health
- Enhanced and supportive learning environment for children facilitated through flexible education and support mechanisms and improved teaching environment
- Improved access to resources and support for AIDS affected children

The project will meet these outcomes through a number of activities including, for example:

- **Education:** Support primary and secondary level children in attending school by assisting with school fees, uniforms, books, nutritional and health needs as well as the implementation of extra-curricular activities to facilitate enhanced learning
- **Health:** Implementation of a health programming and education within the community and voluntary counseling and testing for AIDS
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Supporting families through skills development, income generation, micro-lending and livestock support

The proliferation of orphans has become a deluge; it's absolutely overwhelming in country after country. Governments are beside themselves: no one has any firm grip on how to handle these millions of frantic children. Extended families and communities struggle to absorb them; grandmothers bury their own children and then try somehow to cope with hords of grandchildren; child-headed households are an ever-growing phenomenon on the landscape of Africa: it is a nightmare.

- **Stephen Lewis, U.N. Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, July 24, 2005**



For more information or to make a donation, or to provide voluntary support for this initiative, please contact us at:

Email: renee@ihcentre.org Phone: (780) 975-1116

Address: 3A Callingwood Court, Edmonton AB T5T 0H5