



Helping children in the time of HIV and AIDS

WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

Organisations, companies and individuals
who want to help children in need.





Who should we be helping?

There are many children in need and it can be difficult to know who to start helping. This is one of the reasons people focus on helping children who *have been* orphaned by AIDS. But HIV and AIDS combined with poverty makes children vulnerable in lots of different ways. For example, there are children who have to care for sick adults, children who are infected with HIV, and children who experience discrimination. By focusing only on orphaned children we neglect many others who also need our help.

For more on “AIDS orphans” see page 10.

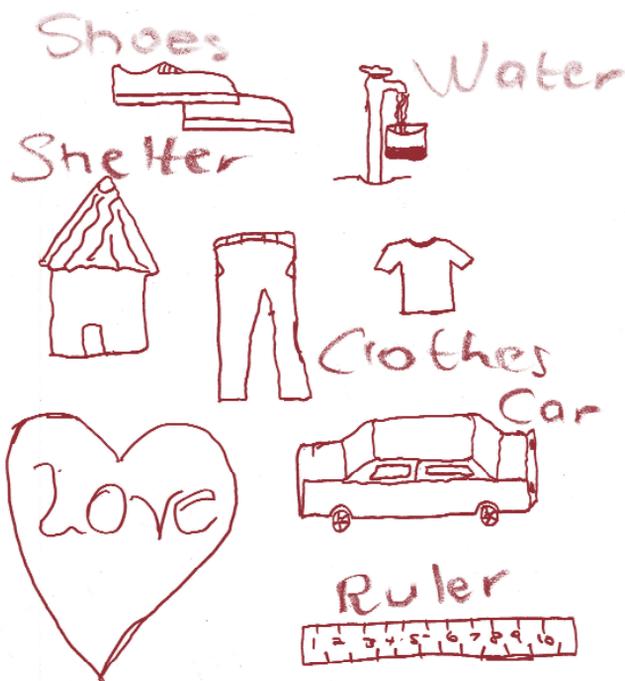


“ Sometimes you can find an orphan who is living better than a child who has parents. Orphan or no orphan, it's just the same. They are needy, all of them... ”

SBONGILE, SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

You can help by first finding out what is needed

- Focus on a community or a place badly affected by HIV and AIDS rather than giving resources to a category of child like “orphan”.
- Find out what children in the area need.
- Offer support to local non-profit organisations or ask them how you can help.
- Talk to locals about how to help – be clear about what you can do and what you can’t. Do not set up unrealistic expectations.





Who is best placed to help?

Locally-based people are often in the best position to help children in need and their families. This is called a “community-based response”. There are thousands of unsung heroes across South Africa supporting those affected by HIV and AIDS. Some of the heroes who need your help are:

- Women who care for many children in their back yards.
- Teenagers who miss school to care for sick and dying relatives and friends.
- Teachers who feed and clothe children out of their own pockets.
- Community volunteers who get food and medical supplies to dozens of homes every day.

Most of these people are unpaid, unacknowledged and poor themselves.



“ Women are not coming (to volunteer) as they used to and there are now very few left. They complain that they, and their children at home, are hungry. ”

TEBOGO, NGO CO-ORDINATOR

You can help strengthen a community-based response

These are just a few of many ways you can help:

- Find and support local initiatives such as home-based care organisations which care for sick and dying people in their homes.
- Pay local volunteers such as home-based care workers.
- Provide food and needed equipment such as gloves, disinfectant or play things for children.
- Support local groups in their work with poor families, for example, women's or youth groups.





How can we make better use of what we have?

Many adults – such as teachers and nurses – come into regular contact with children through their work. We need to make better use of these “contact opportunities” to identify and refer children who are needy. But many of these service providers feel overwhelmed and can’t possibly help all the children they come across. You could help these people to help children.

“ It is easy to get to the social workers because at school they gave us the number of the social workers so that if there is anything that we need from them, we can phone them. ”

BUSI, 14-YEARS OLD



You can help strengthen services

- Visit a school or clinic and offer to provide support to children identified as needing help. For example donate clothes or food.
- Help link services to schools and clinics.



Where is the greatest need?

Two of the biggest problems that children face are not having enough food and not being able to go to school. They often struggle to pay school fees and to get a school uniform and books and stationery. Others have to stay at home to care for sick relatives or small children.

You can help limit hunger and keep children in school

These are just a few of many ways you can help:

- Fund, subsidise or help out at a school feeding scheme.
- Help children get school fee exemptions.
- Fund a sewing group making school uniforms.
- Support daycare and aftercare centres for young children so that the older children caring for them can go to school.



“ Sometimes I just miss school, and when teachers ask why I was absent I just say I was sick. I can't tell them that we didn't have food at home in front of the whole class. **”**

ZWELETHINI, 13-YEARS OLD



What about government grants?

The government has grants to help poor families care for their children. Many families struggle to access these grants because they don't know about them, they lack the necessary documents, or they can't get to the welfare offices.

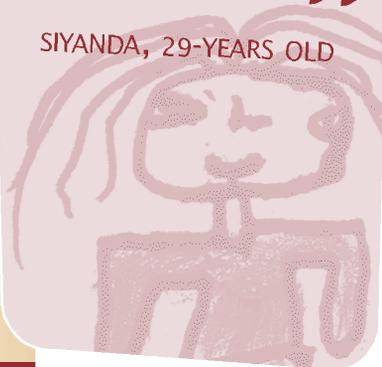
You can help people to get grants

These are just a few of many ways you can help:

- Provide or fund transport to the local home affairs or welfare offices.
- Help people get identity and other documents that they need.
- Inform services on the ground about the grants available. The Red Ribbon Resource Centre has booklets with information on the different grants and tips on how to get them. Phone (011) 880 0405 to order copies.

“ We buy food with the grant. Although it is not enough, but it is better because it is regular income. **”**

SIYANDA, 29-YEARS OLD



How can people support each other?

When different organisations and services in a community work together, so much more can be achieved to help children in need and the people caring for them. People also experience working together as inspiring and motivating.



“ Collaboration motivates us well. We look after each other, pick one another up. I was drowning before we started working together. ”

SMANGELE, SOCIAL WORKER

You can help strengthen collaboration

Some ideas for getting started:

- Encourage groups, services and organisations to work together.
- Help community volunteers network and develop referral lists.

What about “AIDS orphans”?

A lot of funds and resources are set aside to help so-called “AIDS orphans”. This focus on orphans can be seen in international funding plans, government strategies and in the media. The targeting of “AIDS orphans” is often based on beliefs or myths about orphans that are not true.



“ I get so many calls from people who want to help children but 99% of these callers insist that they want to focus on so-called “AIDS orphans”. This is a major problem and it is undermining our response to the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in South Africa. ”

JANET, DEVELOPMENT WORKER

Myths about “AIDS orphans”

MYTH 1

THE NUMBER OF ORPHANAGES SHOULD BE INCREASED TO ACCOMMODATE THE INCREASING NUMBER OF ORPHANS

Over 90% of children who have been orphaned live with and are cared for by extended family networks. Many of these families are very poor and there needs to be work against poverty rather than more orphanages.

MYTH 2

ORPHANS ARE LIKELY TO FIND THEMSELVES ON THE STREETS

The majority of children who have been orphaned in South Africa *do* have adult care and support and they *do not* live on the streets. Extended family and neighbourhood networks which care for these children are becoming increasingly stretched and need funds and support.

MYTH 3

ORPHANED CHILDREN USUALLY FIND THEMSELVES IN HOUSEHOLDS HEADED BY CHILDREN WITH NO ADULT PRESENT

Very few children in South Africa (orphaned or otherwise) live in so-called “child-headed” households. While there are some child-headed households, these are frequently temporary care arrangements. For those children who *do* live in child-headed households, support is essential.

MYTH 4

MOST ORPHANS ARE ALSO INFECTED WITH HIV

The majority of children orphaned by AIDS are not HIV-positive. The term “AIDS orphans” confuses many people into believing that orphans have AIDS.

MYTH 5

ALL BABIES BORN TO HIV-POSITIVE MOTHERS HAVE HIV

About one out of every three babies born to HIV-positive mothers will also have HIV. If mothers and babies are given the necessary medication and support, the proportion of babies who become infected is even less.

About the research

The information and recommendations in this pamphlet come from an in-depth multi-site qualitative research study conducted by the Children's Institute between 2001 and 2003.*

The research explored the life experiences of children in communities heavily affected by AIDS. It also looked at the experiences of their caregivers and service providers. For further information please contact Sonja Giese or Helen Meintjes on (021) 689 5404.

The Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, aims to contribute to policies, laws and interventions that promote equity and realise the rights and improve the conditions of all children in South Africa, through research, advocacy, education and technical support.

* Health and Social Services to Address the Needs of Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in the context of HIV/AIDS – research report and recommendations. Giese S, Meintjes H, Croke R, Chamberlain R, 2003. CI and National Department of Health

For advice on where to start helping

The contact organisations on this page will be able to direct you to locally-based services.

AIDS CONSORTIUM

For information on different organisations working with children in the context of HIV and AIDS in the Gauteng Province.
(011) 403 0265

CHaIn

For information on different organisations working with children in the context of HIV and AIDS in the Western Cape Province.
(021) 418 4929

CHILDREN IN DISTRESS NETWORK (CINDI)

For information on different organisations working with children in the context of HIV and AIDS in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.
(033) 345 7994

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS CENTRE

For information, services and organisations working for child rights.
(031) 307 6075

CIRCLES OF SUPPORT INFORMATION HOTLINE

For information on how people and organisations can help children, and what help is available. Helps you find local organisations in your area that help care for children.
0860 222 777

CHILDLINE TOLL FREE

(24 hours, 7 days a week)

For telephone counselling and help around physical and sexual abuse of children, neglect and behavioural problems.
0800 055 555

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

For information about getting different government grants.
(012) 312 7500

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For information on getting school fees exempted and contact details for your provincial or local education offices.
(012) 312 5911

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

For information on basic health care services and contact details for your provincial or local health department.
(012) 312 0000

RED RIBBON RESOURCE CENTRE

To order and find out about books and booklets on grants, HIV, AIDS, healthy eating and lots more.
(011) 880 0405