



Dream Sponsors, Inc.

***Making Dreams Come True...
for African Orphans and At-Risk Youth***

In Kenya, an orphan is defined as child under the age of 18, who has lost one or both parents as a result of death. It is estimated that 11% of all children under 15 are orphans (2003), compared with 9% in 1998. Up to 6 million Kenyan children require special care and protection — 40% of the country's total child population.

The Devastating Impact of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a major contributor to the plight of children in Kenya. The number of orphans is expected to rise to more than 2 million by 2010, with HIV/AIDS contributing up to 60% of the total number of orphans. These children have limited access to psychosocial and economic support, making them the most vulnerable of Kenyan society. In Kenya, it is rare to find anyone whose life has not been touched by HIV/AIDS in some way. It is a matter of whether one is “infected” or “affected” by this disease.

“Infected”

Children who are born to HIV-infected mothers risk infection during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding. Approximately 13,300 children were born with HIV in 2002. Older children are also vulnerable to HIV infection. A staggering 18% of young women are infected with HIV within two years of becoming sexually active. Of the 900,000 children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, 78,000 between the ages of birth to 14 are HIV infected .

“Affected”

Of the estimated 1.78 million orphans, about half are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. This is expected to increase to 2.3 million by 2010. Children who lose their parents to HIV/AIDS suffer psychological stress, profound grief and trauma. In addition, parental illness and death often rob children of economic resources to survive, as well as parental love, care and protection.

Children are vulnerable long before their parents die. Girls, in particular, assume caring responsibilities for ailing parents and parenting responsibilities for their siblings. Agricultural productivity is also negatively affected by HIV/AIDS because of the high death rate of the adult workers. Therefore the food supply is increasingly threatened, which adversely affects the nutritional status of children.

Poverty and loss of the family unit expose children to exploitation and abuse. Children from affected families are more likely to drop out of school. Escalating survival crime and social disorganization are also a result of the increased number of orphans.