

THE PLIGHT OF ORPHANS IN KENYA

A PERSPECTIVE OF HOPE CHILDREN'S HOME

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Situational analysis

In Kenya, the situation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) is an issue of concern. Currently it is estimated that there are over 3 million Orphans in the country, 47 percent orphaned as a result of HIV and AIDS and many more remain vulnerable due to several other factors. The statistics surrounding the rising population and the immense suffering of these children can be overwhelming. Over 25% of the population live on less than \$1 per day and 12-15% of households in Kenya are headed by an orphan sibling. 700 children are orphaned every day (that is a child every 2 minutes) and 1/3 of these are orphaned due to HIV / AIDS. This means that the number of orphans is set to rise. Traumatized by the death of parents, at times the orphans become antisocial. It has not helped matters that the society seems to have become impervious to their plight. The fact that these children do not have parents predisposes them to exploitation. Orphans are especially a soft target for child traffickers.

HIV and AIDS scourge compounded with high poverty levels have aggravated the situation of OVCs in Kenya. Children affected by HIV/AIDS are vulnerable long before their parents die. Girls, in particular, assume caring responsibilities for their ailing parents besides parenting for their siblings. In some regions of the country, over 25% of orphans are acutely malnourished in a country whose economy is largely driven by agriculture. With an economically weakened and overstretched traditional African extended family system that can no longer work effectively to address the high OVC burden, most children find themselves without proper social support with the incapacitation and death of their parents. The future of these children remains very unpredictable. This will deny the OVCs a chance to access their basic needs such as proper health care, education shelter and nutrition. Orphans suffer stigma, stress and trauma in addition to the loss of parental love, care and protection and more often they are disinherited by their next of kin.

The above situation exposes the OVCs to different forms of abuse and exploitation; physical abuse, defilement, sexual exploitation, child labour, and early marriages while more flock to streets to fend for themselves. This situation diminishes their capacity to participate in matters affecting their lives. Indeed cases of child abuse have become a common feature in this country with only a few of these being reported to the relevant authorities.

Government interventions

The Government and other stakeholders have come up with a number of interventions in an effort to address the situation of OVCs in the country. However, many remain unreached and the situation demands for targeted and more sustainable and concerted synergies focussed on addressing the plight of these OVCs.

While we cannot purport to authoritatively speak for the government, we as an organization know for sure that a number of things have been happening on various fronts in relation to OVCs in this country. The Government on its part recognises that the institution of the family is the best for the proper growth and socialisation of children hence emphasises on interventions for OVCs at the household level. Through the National Plan of Action for OVCs the government has identified the following Priority Strategic Areas as key for OVC interventions:

- Strengthening the capacity of families to protect and care for OVCs.
- Mobilising and supporting community based interventions

- Ensuring access for OVCs to essential services including but not limited to education, health care, birth registration, psychosocial support and legal protection
- Ensuring improved policy and legal framework are in place to protect the most vulnerable children
- Creating a supportive environment for children and families affected by HIV and AIDS
- Strengthening and supporting national coordination and institutional structures for OVCs
- Strengthening national capacity to monitor and evaluate OVC programme effectiveness and quality.

The National Plan of Action for OVCs spells a minimum package for OVCs support that is age oriented. This is in recognition that OVCs are not a homogenous population but like other children, their needs change with their physical, emotional and mental growth. The National policy and Plan of Action also give direction and help facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Kenya is a signatory.

Through the Area Advisory Council (AAC), the government has a responsibility of ensuring that the plight of orphans is not exploited by unscrupulous persons/ institutions that purport to be providing support to OVCs but end up enriching themselves or abusing the orphans.

There are other government ministries that have services that target all children including the OVCs such as in health and education. However there is need for these service/ programmes to take care of the vulnerability and the special needs of the orphans. In this regard a heightened intervention at the school level is highly recommended to ensure increased school enrolment, attendance and retention for the OVCs. This calls for enhanced collaboration and networking among all stakeholders for meaningful impact and proper utilization of the available resources. Towards this, Hope Children's Home is willing to play its part.

Hope Children's Home recognises the community as having a primary role in safeguarding the rights of orphans in their midst and it is our felt duty to continue emphasising on this while continuing to address the plight of those who are considered highly vulnerable.

The World Orphans Day

The World Orphans Day is an international event marked on 7th May every year. In Kenya the day was first commemorated in the year 2006. This was out of a growing concern to the crisis of millions of children who have been Orphaned or made Vulnerable by HIV and AIDS among other factors. The intentions behind the day is to appeal for global solutions to the plight of orphans and vulnerable children by focusing public and media attention on social and economic exclusion of the OVCs ; lobbying governments, development partners and other stakeholders to take urgent measures to reintegrate the orphans and vulnerable children into the care and support systems society. Hope Children' Home has been part of this effort since its inception

HOPE CHILDREN'S HOME - APPROACH

Introduction and background

Hope Children's Home is a child-centered charitable children's institution located in Kimoson village, Kaplamai location, in Trans Nzoia. The facility was established to assist the high number of OVCs in the area.

The Home currently caters for 23 children by providing them with food, medical care, clothing and education and also supports 5 more children staying with their guardians by providing school fees and scholastics.

God makes it clear in Psalm 82:3 that we are to "defend the weak and fatherless". At Hope Children's Home we are passionately concerned about the plight of orphans in Kenya and we believe that as an

organization, we have a divine responsibility to provide appropriate care and protection to all the OVCs by extending a hand of hope to them.

In a nation with a rising burden of orphans in the community due to HIV and AIDS and poverty driven diseases, communities are struggling to care for the orphans among them. Although awareness of the plight of orphans is growing, no country, including Kenya has mounted the kind of response that is needed to match the severity of the crisis. The reasons include insufficient knowledge of the magnitude of the problem and the strength (or weakness) of existing coping strategies, lack of clarity on the advantages and disadvantages of possible interventions, limited capacity to implement interventions and scarce resources.

Our Vision

A society where children are respected and valued; where all children are cherished and supported; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realize their full potential.

Our Mission

Hope Children's Home exists to provide a foundation for the physical, social, emotional and spiritual well being of orphans and disadvantaged children.

We want to be the manifestation of God's caring grace and perfect love to OVCs in Kenya. We will endeavor to protect shelter, clothe, feed, educate, disciple and support them in an environment of family and community.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- To safeguard the rights of orphans and vulnerable children against any form of violation
- To initiate and promote targeted programs that build the capacity of the community to effectively cater for the basic needs of the children
- To provide orphans and vulnerable children with access to the basic human needs including food, shelter, healthcare, clothing and education
- To create linkages focused on eliminating all forms of vulnerability in children thereby enhancing their safety and well being.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Respect for children's rights
- Service and dedication to the well being of children
- Integrity and honesty in the discharge of our mandate
- Professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness
- Non-discrimination
- Equality and fairness
- Transparency and accountability
- Justice
- Partnership, collaboration and networking

OUR PROGRAMS

Hope Children's Home not only feeds, clothes and educates the children in their care, but also have the mission to encourage the orphans to strive to become the next generation of leaders. We seek to do this by instilling identity, faith, creating self-sufficient communities, teaching social justice, and emphasising the importance of an excellent education and leadership training.

Most of the children are orphans who come from poor family backgrounds. They have lost one or both parents from epidemics like HIV (Aids), hunger, ethnic violence, accidents or just common diseases like malaria and typhoid. Due to their poor environment the children often end up in the streets and in search for food. Hope Children's Home rescues the children from such dangerous situations and provide them with care, food, education and accommodation. The orphanage is now home to over 23 orphans. There is 5 staff that looks after the children and there is a primary school

onsite.

Hope Children's Home aims to make the orphanage as sustainable and self-sufficient as possible. One of the ways we want to do that is by helping to start small agri-enterprises to support our programmes

1. Food and nutrition program

In addition to providing shelter, the Home caters for the daily nutritional needs of the OVCs under our care and in the neighborhood.

2. Education program

The OVCs under our care are under a full educational sponsorship program up to secondary school level. Eight of them have also benefitted through post-secondary sponsorship to pursue education in middle level colleges, courtesy of partners. The sponsorship includes school uniforms, stationery and field study tours. There is also a leadership development component under this program that ensures children's leadership capacities are developed while at a young age. The other children from the community benefit from this program.

3. Healthcare program

We take the health of the OVCs seriously because we know and believe that a healthy child is a successful child. The management organizes periodical free medical camps where the children's health is well checked and relevant and appropriate medication administered. Those who fall ill are referred to the local dispensary.

4. Bible Club program

The home is built on a Christian foundation, to help children grow in the fear of God, Bible Club program was initiated. We believe through the program the home will develop future missionaries

5. Mentorship program

Hands o Hope Foundation seeks to deploy and implement evidence-based, sustainable, high quality essential programmes that strengthen the capacity of OVCs to cope with their problems, mobilize resources to help them transition smoothly to the community upon attaining the age of 18.