

Orphans – the forgotten face of AIDS

Over **5 million people are HIV+ in South Africa** alone, with **over 1.1 million children orphaned** by the AIDS death toll. It is estimated that by 2010 this will have blown out to over 18 million children in sub Sahara Africa who will have lost one parent to AIDS.*

These children are often **stigmatized and marginalized through fear and ignorance** of AIDS by those around them. They are the forgotten face of the AIDS tragedy, the **children left behind with no family** or structure to support them.

The current situation in rural South Africa is dire. Shelters and centres for orphans are constantly appearing in villages due to the overwhelming number of children who have lost their parents to AIDS. There is **little or no early childhood learning** occurring in many of these under-resourced orphanages. Something that is taken for granted here in Australia with our government funded and highly successful preschool programs, and something StarBright believes we should share.

The outcome of AIDS for their communities and society as a whole is disturbing. They have lost a generation of adult income earners and the educated to AIDS, compromising economic and cultural stability. **The unfolding social catastrophe needs to be stemmed urgently.**

Research shows that quality early childhood learning and care leads to higher levels of physical, cognitive and emotional well-being and better rates of lifetime learning and earning. Something that is vital for these children who will be leading Africa into the future.

*UNICEF 2003

We are **committed to help these orphans** through our **cultural and learning exchange program**. We will be sponsoring Australian early childhood practitioners to work alongside the African orphanage staff, **to enhance skills and an understanding of each other's work and social cultures**. We will establish relationships between early childhood centres in Australia and South Africa to support and learn from each other, teacher to teacher, child to child, community to community.

We will start one orphanage at a time, one child at a time, and help make a difference to those whose lives we touch.

AIDS orphans need your help

Become a **StarBright member** and join our journey of learning, of partnership, of new friendships, of hope and making a difference to the lives of AIDS orphans.

As a member you will receive:

- ☆ a StarBright badge
- ☆ quarterly project update
- ☆ access to candidate applications
- ☆ annual report

Let's not turn away from them anymore. Become a StarBright member today and give them hope for a brighter future.

It is up to each one of us as individuals to do what we can and face the problem of children being orphaned by AIDS.

We want to tell you the starfish story which is where it all begins ...

One day at the beach there was a young girl picking up a starfish, which was one of thousands that at low tide had been washed ashore. One at a time she was throwing them back into the sea. Some people walking along noticed what she was doing and thought she was wasting her time and said 'Why are you throwing those starfish back? She said 'If I don't do this they'll die from lack of oxygen.' They replied 'But there are thousands of starfish on this beach and thousands on other beaches. You can't possibly make a difference to them all.' Throwing another starfish back into the sea, she smiled and said **'MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THAT ONE!'**

Adapted from the story 'The Star Thrower' by L. Eiseley

