

HOPE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN -- AFRICA

Dedicated to providing hope and healing to the orphans of Zambia

We have three initiatives for 2008-2009

1. Educating adult caregivers of orphans.

Training pastors and leading laypersons to educate and counsel the adults who care for orphans in their homes -- 46% of Families in Zambia care for orphans in their homes

2. Reaching the "Street Children" of Zambia

Providing food, clothing, education, counseling, and placement with families

3. Supporting "Hope for Grieving Children" Non-governmental organization in Zambia

Supporting pastors from 12 Christian traditions as they work together to help solve the many problems faced by orphans and their caregivers

1. EDUCATING

There are 800,000 orphans in Zambia. They are grieving children. They grieve the loss that lasts forever -- the loss of their most important source of security and understanding, their parents.

It's important that these children receive food, clothing, and a place to live. But that's definitely not enough. They need love and understanding. They will never recover from their grief unless the adults in their lives understand them and provide them with the consistent, loving care that can heal them and enable them to grow into healthy and productive adults.

Unfortunately very few adults, whether in the U.S. or Africa, understand grieving children. Typically they are ignorant of what it means for a child to grieve.



A child's grief can be extremely complicated. The death of a parent triggers a stream of confusing and disruptive emotions in a child. These emotions, along with a variety of physical symptoms, are expressed in behaviors that can be very confusing to adults. As a result they misinterpret what they see. The adults see misbehavior, naughtiness, insolence, rebellion, laziness, or sinfulness and they react accordingly.

The reaction of many adults to the behavior of grieving children is disillusionment, disaffection, rejection, punishment, removal of the child from the care-giving family, or abuse.

Given these realities, when I was asked to teach at a small college in Zambia, I decided that my topic would be "How to Love a Grieving Child." In the course I explained the impact of death on children, the symptoms that occur, how children differ according to age level, and the possible long-term effect of losing their parents.

The typical response of the sixty students and fulltime pastors attending was "Now I understand why orphans are so different from other children."

They asked me to find a way to "teach this message throughout Zambia." It took two years for me to develop a board to support this effort, for me to write the materials that were needed, and to organize a plan. We became a non-profit organization called *Hope for Grieving Children -- Africa* and raised the necessary funds. Also, we developed a website.



NOVEMBER, 2007 GRADUATES OF TRAINING IN LUSAKA

The first training was held in Lusaka and Choma in October and November of 2006. The second training was provided in October and November of 2007. A total of one hundred and twenty pastors and leading laypersons participated.



The response to the seminars can be summed up in the words of Pastor Emmanuel Chikoya:

"The seminar has provided us with priceless knowledge and skills to enable us to provide quality and effective ministry to grief stricken children...through this seminar we have been challenged and revolutionized in our approach to ministry in this regard....and [it] will make a great difference in the lives of many grieving children both on the street and in homes." Fr. Emmanuel Chikoya [Anglican]

I assumed at the outset that Zambians could be trained to teach these seminars. Pursuant to this, I developed an advanced seminar to train them for this responsibility. The training was quite demanding. Thirty-eight pastors proudly succeeded in meeting all of the requirements and are now certified to teach "How to Love a Grieving Child" to others leaders in their communities.

GRADUATES OF THE FIRST ADVANCED CLASS
NOVEMBER, 2007



A very important indication of the value of these seminars can be seen in the response the pastors are hearing from the caregivers they teach and counsel:

"We did not know that a child can mourn and grieve. We thought they were too small to understand what had happened."

"We did not know that children go grieving for a long period. . . . I never used to understand the behavior of orphans."

"We never knew that anything could be done to help the orphans apart from giving them food and clothes and school fees."

But is the training translating into real help for the orphans? These are among the many stories we are hearing that tell us they are:

Ruthi, a 40 year old caregiver, had been caring for a ten year old orphan, Linda, for over a year. When Linda started wetting the bed, she said, "I didn't do this until I came to live with you." Ruthi was very confused by this, thought she must be doing something wrong, and assumed she must find another home for Linda. But then she discussed the matter with her pastor. He explained that Linda's bedwetting was due to regression, something that is very common among children who are grieving. He told her to be patient, spend more time with Linda, and the condition would pass. Ruthi was encouraged by this advice, is keeping Linda with her, and is patiently waiting for this problem to pass.

Amos, a 45 year-old man, was caring for his orphaned 12 year old nephew, Caleb. Shortly after he came to live with his uncle, Caleb became sullen and rebellious. Amos had never seen behavior like this in Caleb before the boy's parents had died. He was quite confused. He tried punishing the boy but that seemed just to make matters worse. Amos figured it was time for the child to go. Fortunately, he turned first to his pastor, who explained that children who lose parents experience deep-seated anger as part of their grief. They don't know why they are angry and don't understand why they express it the way they do. The only answer is to be loving and patient. In time it will pass. Amos is keeping Caleb and is working at being patient and understanding.

Both of the pastors had attended the "How to Love a Grieving Child" seminars. They saved the children from the very serious consequences of being sent to new surroundings where their problems would just get worse. Grieving children need stable situations with loving caregivers if they are going to recover from the death of their loved ones and go on to mature and effective adulthood. Only informed caregivers are likely to provide what the children need.

We are currently involved in a research effort to determine how the training we provide is impacting caregivers and orphans. One hundred pastors are being interviewed.

The training we provide is very much needed in Africa. We know that we are the only ones who are providing this kind of training in Zambia. We have been approached to provide it in Kenya and Uganda.

2. REACHING

There are tens of thousands of children in their pre-teens to late teens living on the streets of towns and cities in Zambia. They have no sources of support. They stay alive by begging, "scrounging," and stealing. They often go hungry. There are no public programs to take care of them. Many churches have tried to reach the children but the children are extremely reluctant to trust anyone.

Fortunately, one young pastor, John Chilufya, who has completed one phase of our training, has had amazing success in reaching these children. His church is in Choma, a community of 40,000. He started his program inadvertently.



He caught a 13 year old boy stealing. But, instead of following the usual practice of turning him over to the police, he bought him a meal and talked with him.

He was so moved by the boy's story that he decided to meet with him for a meal a second time. This time the boy brought two friends with him. In four years John had a program for 350 or more children.

Pastor John's outreach to children has become a program in which each child receives one meal of nshema (the traditional staple in Zambia) daily, basic education classes, worship, recreation, and counseling. The children say that it is also a place where they can make friends and be safe.



EACH CHILD RECEIVES ONE MEAL



EDUCATON IS PROVIDED IN A PRIMITIVE SETTING

This program succeeds because Pastor John sincerely loves these children and they know it. It is now known as **ARISE!**

HOPE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN is committed to supporting and replicating this ministry. The next location will be the Motea Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lusaka, where there are an estimated 175,000 street children. .

3. SUPPORTING

Pastors from at least 15 Christian traditions have attended the training seminars in the last two years. In order to work together as effectively as possible, they decided to create a new organization which would allow them to unite in their mission to bring hope and healing to the grieving children (orphans) of Zambia.

As of May of 2008, this organization has been officially recognized in Zambia as a nongovernmental organization. The purposes of the organization include: sharing ideas, launching cooperative efforts, identifying and sharing resources, mutual support and encouragement, and addressing public and private institutions on issues related to the care of orphans.

HOPE FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN is committed to developing financial support for upholding the vital mission of this organization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONSULT OUR WEBSITE:

hopeforgrievingchildren.org

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Hope for Grieving Children – Africa
c/o Heritage Companies, Tony Stephens
1011 Lake Street, Suite 404
Oak Park, Illinois, 60301
Phone: 708-445-8678



Dr. Richard E. Matteson, Director
U.S. Clinical Psychologist,
United Methodist Minister
Can be reached at 312-403-8325



Lameck Sialambo, Director, Zambia
Administrator of Hope for Grieving
Children initiatives in Africa
Can be reached in Zambia at
(011) 260-977-352962.