

ORPHANS AND CLOWNS WITHOUT BORDERS



The incidence of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho is estimated between 20 and 25 percent. In the Malealea valley, as throughout Lesotho, this disease poses a serious threat on many levels to the livelihoods and on-going development of rural communities. One of the most devastating effects is that many parents die of AIDS and/or associated illnesses, and leave young children without a family, many of whom in a context of poverty, are left to fend for themselves as best they can. There is a steadily increasing number of orphans in the villages of the Malealea valley who are vulnerable on many complex levels. The MDT supports a number of orphans, but because there are severe financial constraints, many others are without a stable or regular means of financial, social and support. They are also at risk for problems such as dropping out of school, sexual and emotional abuse, teenage pregnancy, crime, and substance (alcohol) abuse.

The MDT supports orphans in villages in the Malealea valley as part of its work to mitigate the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Orphans are placed as far as possible in extended families, which are often headed by grandmothers, or with local foster families where it is our hope that the orphans can live as normal a family-centred life as possible. We also believe that in this way they are more likely to get the love, care and socialisation that they need than if they were placed in orphanages. The orphans currently in our care programme are either 'single' (having one living parent) or 'double' orphans (having no living parents) and many of the surviving parents and/or other family members are also HIV+. The MDT offers financial support through a monthly food stipend and the covering of school and medical related costs, and also offers psychosocial support through our social care worker.

In addition to this, the MDT offers a unique form of support to orphans and their guardians through a programme initiated and developed by the organisation Clowns Without Borders (CWB).

This project acknowledges the multiple difficulties of either being an orphan in a 'adoptive' household, or of taking in an orphan into a family. In particular, the successful integration of the orphan into the household and the maintenance of on-going positive relationships are of primary importance.

Our CWB project aims specifically to address the relationships between guardians and the orphans in their care by improving communication, fostering a greater spirit of trust and imparting skills and tools for conflict resolution. Life for an orphan is full of stresses and strains, over and above the trauma of losing a parent, more so than those experienced by most children in a context of poverty and deprivation. For guardians, the challenges of

meeting a growing child's physical and emotional needs, particularly if one is sick oneself is enormous. The CWB programme tries to address these difficulties, and through games, activities and a lot of laughter, make life a little easier and smoother for orphans and guardians alike. This programme is carried out by 5 trained facilitators (one of whom is our social care worker) who meet separately with orphans and guardians from identified villages. They work in two teams, and over a period of time work with guardians and orphans to build relationships of trust and transparency and to open channels of communication.



The regular CWB programme is designed to cover a 10-week period, but owing to financial and logistical constraints, in 2010 the CWB team has had to offer a shortened programme.

The facilitators have therefore worked for four, 2-hour sessions with each group of guardians and orphans. The guardians have held their meetings in their home villages, and the team has used the local primary school as a base for work with the children.

The sessions have covered 'Trusting Others and Ourselves', 'The Joy of Play', 'Stretching the Imagination' and 'Generosity and Love' and singing and physical movement form an important part of the programme.

But some serious talking takes place as well, and discussions range over many related topics, from how to manage teenage behaviour to helping children with homework (some of our more elderly guardians are illiterate)

The response to the programme this year has been overwhelmingly positive, by both orphans and guardians alike.

From an initial 'luke-warm' and somewhat suspicious response to the presence of the CWB facilitators in the villages, guardians have now asked the Clowns to return next year#. *'We need you here, there is now peace in our village with the orphans.'* *'We now sit down and talk instead of insulting these children.'* Towards the end of the project the children were insisting that *'these games must not end'* and guardians were waiting eagerly in the rain for the facilitators to begin their session.



'I am 83 year old woman and I walk with my stick, but I can still enjoy dancing!'

In the light of this, in 2011 we would like to extend the CWB programme to working with orphans and guardians in some of the more remote villages in the valley. These



orphans and their guardians are not on our 'formal' support programme, but have been identified as vulnerable children and families, and we feel that they and their guardians would benefit in similar ways from this kind of intervention.



'Now we really understand how you are helping us and our children.'

The following are the costs involved in implementing a shortened CWB programme in 4 villages over a year:

BUDGET

Item	Cost	Notes
Facilitator's wages, 5 facilitators x 2 sessions per month x 10 months @R50 each per session	R5,000.00	Each facilitator works for a day which consists of one 2 ½ hour session, in the morning with the guardians and one 2 ½ hour session in the afternoons with the orphans
Food per session x 20 sessions @ R200 per session	R4,000.00	A light lunch is provided for participants
Materials for each session x 20 sessions @ R25 per session	R500.00	These include stationery, toys, First Aid kit maintenance, recording materials, etc
TOTAL: PER ANNUM	R9,500.00	

Sponsorship options:

It is possible to sponsor the Clowns Without Borders in any of the following ways:

- ✓ To sponsor one or more CWB villages for a year at a cost of **R23750.00 per village**
- ✓ To sponsor facilitators' stipends for a year at a cost of **R5,000.00**
- ✓ To sponsor lunches and materials for a year **R4,500.00**
- ✓ To sponsor our CWB programme for a period of time (a six-month period would be the most useful minimum period **R4,750.00**).

FOR WHATEVER YOU ARE ABLE TO DO TO HELP US ... THANK YOU!