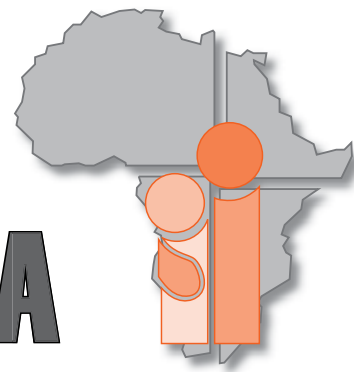


THE HEART OF AFRICA

A Publication of Helping Hands Africa



Children - Our Forgotten Generation ?

by Trino Jara



We've heard it, we've read it and we know it children have a very special place in God's heart, and in His Kingdom. Remember ? Jesus gave them priority over the everyday business of his disciples. With their faith, their heart, their trust, and their unbiased attitude, children serve as examples of what our faith should be like. They are our benchmark for entrance into the Kingdom of God. Wow! Do we really realize what precious beings we are dealing with? It appears that children have a value, which - unfortunately - is not recognized by many, if not, most parts of our society, and... our churches.

The World 20 Years From Now

Do we really realize that in 20 years from now, children will be our world's nature and society's very fibre, shaping it with their character? Do we realize that if all they learn today is violence, the world will be violent? If all they know is neglect, it will be an uncaring world. If they are abused, it will be a world full of abuse. If all they learn is anarchy and disorder, the world will be a place of anarchy and disorder. Do we realize that if all they learn to value is materialism, the world will just be a materialist place without values ?

A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to participate in a meeting with some major African church unions and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Africa. During this meeting Mr. Lorenzo A. Davids, CEO and founder of The Urban Issues Agency, made some thought provoking remarks about the performance of the church in caring for, feeding, and raising children. I want to prompt us to re-examine our own house and evaluate our own ministries. Are we on target, or are we perhaps missing the mark?

His thoughts were gathered randomly, based on intense observation. They are reflections as a result of conversations, mail received, papers read and travels to many places. And they are ignited by a deep frustration. Frustration of seeing children die, becoming trapped as soldiers in adult wars, seeing them sleep in holes in the ground, seeing them scavenging for food on garbage dumps, seeing them unable to go to school, and seeing them being exploited for their labour. And frustration, on the other side, about the state of church leadership and the church itself within the African context. It is all happening within a context of the rising fame of the African church

leader who dwells in the shadow of his or her own importance, whose personal wealth and popularity have increased enormously. Mr. A Davids says:

Some Thought Provoking Statements

“What we unwillingly do admit as church leaders is that our fame on the international Christian stage and our new-found wealth are in fact hollow victories. The 11 year-old child soldier with his AK47 tells us our fame is a hollow victory. The 12 year-old girl lying on a sex-stained mattress in a dingy, dark, stinking back-room, where she has to have sex with ten people on average per day tell us our nice new suit is a hollow victory. The 14-month old baby who has had non-stop diarrhoea for the last two weeks and whose weak body is about to breathe its last breath scream at us that our next trip to yet another conference is a farce, a time for the leaders to get away from it all, but for her however, it’s a death sentence. She will be dead by the time you get back. We have failed. In the midst of the modern era which announces the greatest organizational success ever for relief and development organizations, the greatest amount of money ever raised, the greatest expansion of the church ever, how dare we celebrate leadership growth and success when these are not measured against the lives of children saved?”

Too Many Conferences

“Africa’s leaders attend too many conferences. Full stop. Each conference has resolutions. Each conference has outcomes. With the limited administrative infra-structure at hand for African leaders, it is self-explanatory that resolutions and outcomes will suffer in the process because the capacity to implement at that level and volume just does not exist. I think we fail our children when we go away to these meetings and come back with no intention to do anything with the information gathered. Foreign agencies also are implicit in this ‘crime’ committed against children. They always invite those recognized leaders because it gives their event a certain profile. It’s a bit of an ego-booster to have a major African leader around. Little do they know that this conference is the third one he is attending this

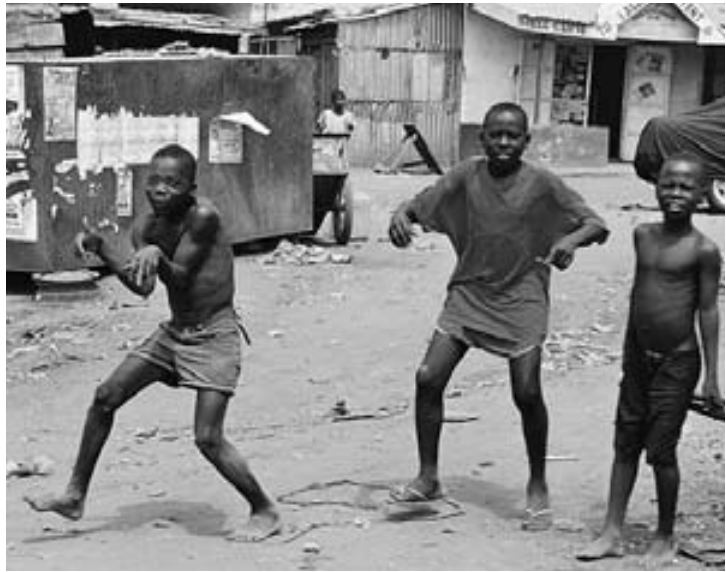


Picture from “Kindernothilfe” in Germany

month and that his presence in person does not guarantee his presence in mind and full participation.”

There is a Great Imbalance

“It seems that the church in Africa is like an abused wife: despising the violence, but too scared to leave her abusive husband, and so the children in the home see the face of domestic violence everyday. This is one of the horrors of the modern day church in Africa. Money is spent on things that do not address the plight of the main concerns of our communities, especially the plight of children. Despite the many resolutions, programmes, etc. we see an ever deepening gulf erupting between the demands of scripture as normative for the well-being of entire communities, especially the plight of children, and the realities. But the church in Africa seems unable to stop this spiralling catastrophe. I think that God is horrified by His church universal, not just in Africa, whose leaders have developed themselves into teaching gurus more popular than Jesus, whose programmes claim to be more relevant than ‘anything ever designed’ and whose trademark success indicator is that ‘thousands attended’ whatever it was they did. And they do all this while 16 000 children die each day on the continent of entirely preventable diseases. Such abuse must stop!”



Street-Kids in Africa

Who Speaks for the Children?

“African leaders have failed to be prophetic on behalf of children and the church. We have chosen to compromise our voice in favour of personal survival. The bible speaks out uncompromisingly on injustices towards children. The prophets cried out against the death of children on the streets

They implored God to judge the death of children. Jesus says that those who cause children to stumble and who prevent them from coming to him deserve death. Despite thousands of children dying daily from entirely preventable diseases we

appear to be unable to speak out prophetically against the injustices perpetrated against children. We have chosen not to fulfil our prophetic role when we decide not to challenge governments who spend aid money and taxes on useless arms and personal enrichment.

We have chosen to remain silent when we see church leaders ignoring the death of children by spending money on buildings and travel and not on much-needed medication, education and other areas of prevention and intervention.”



Nobody is at Home to Take Care of this Child

There is a Solution!

Helping Hands Africa believes that Child Development Centres are a major answer contributing to the solution of creating a better world for our abandoned, abused, molested, harassed, forsaken, unloved, and un-cared children. Here children find shelter, a meal, somebody who encourages them in their schooling, people who help with their homework, a place to make friends, and people who care. Ultimately they will find Jesus.

Maybe you have heard of the story of a soldier called Ryan... Private Ryan. His story was filmed by a famous movie director, Steven Spielberg, a couple of years ago. It is the story of a soldier fighting in World War II. The youngest of four brothers who had all been killed in the same war,

Private Ryan was the last of his mother's sons, and the last hope to inherit and carry the family name into the next generation. In the film, the Army makes a tremendous effort to find this soldier before he dies and to bring him back home to his family.

Saving Children for the Kingdom

We firmly believe we are commissioned to go into this territory – a territory that is extremely hostile towards our vulnerable children – and save them. Save them for the kingdom, save them for their future, their dignity, their worth. Save them for a better life, and save them from death – physical, emotional, and spiritual. Will you join us in our efforts ?

Child Development Centres Explained

by Carla van Hoof



Children from our Child Development Center in Soweto

In one paragraph - Helping Hands Africa's Child Development division understands itself as a holistic ministry, focusing especially on vulnerable children and orphans. Our aim and commission is to help them recognize and, ultimately, achieve their God-given potential and purpose, by stimulating their spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, replacing negative experiences with positive ones. We need to help those children to regain their dignity again and to develop or restore a healthy self-image and faith in a wonderful loving God, who is above all circumstances, and who is able to turn every situation around!

How do we do this? The Helping Hands Africa Child Development program partners with local churches, who provide the facilities. Children are invited to attend a centre on a daily basis during the week, right after school. There they will receive a nutritious meal to start with. After the meal other activities, with which we try to stimulate the development of the children, follow.

They are designed by the local church according to the specific needs of the children and usually include home-work supervision, fun-activities, sports and games, art, dance and drama classes, help with the upkeep of the centre, and bible classes. These activities have born tremendous results in different places. Children are receiving Christ as their personal saviour, improving their health status, learning to read, and improving their behaviour.

Kopano, a 12-year old girl attending one of our centres in Soweto, near Johannesburg, South Africa since last year October, says:

ties, showing them Jesus' love in a practical way.

Child Development Centres Grow!

Since May 2006, the Child Development department has grown rapidly. We have extended our partnerships with local churches in the last year from four Child Development Centres in two countries to 20 Child Development Centres in six countries by April 2007.

When a new Child Development Centre was recently opened in Botswana, we had more than 150 children and 50 adults in attendance. For



*God made the sun,
And God made the trees,
God made the mountains,
and God made us!*

*I thank you, oh God
For the sun and the trees.
I thank you, oh God for the mountains,
And I thank you, oh God, for us!*

*I thank you for your salvation,
For the talents and gifts within,
For life that's so freely given,
And for making us your friend!*

Thank You

by Kopano, from the CDC
in Moroka, Soweto, South Africa

“What a different life I have now, after a friend of mine invited me to come to the Nazarene Church after school. Before I was just roaming the streets doing nothing, or not good things. Here we sing, we dance, and we learn drama. I met new friends. And Mama Buble is so nice to us. We get help with our school assignments. I discovered that I like to write poems. And here I got to know Jesus. I love him so much... When I am older, I want to become a doctor and a priest... A doctor because I can help people, and a priest, because I want to know much more about God!”

In addition, the Child Development Centre has the great opportunity to minister to the children's families and their surrounding communi-

ties, showing them Jesus' love in a practical way. many parents it was the first time in a church, and they were very happy to see what the church does for their children. We started with devotions, then followed this with songs and drama. The dramas dealt with HIV/AIDS and abuse. The chief of the area, being the special guest, gave his input, expressing his concern for the village children, and thanking Helping Hands Africa for their ministry.

Self-Sustainability is a Must!

In terms of finances, the strategy of Helping Hands is to support the centres financially over a period of five years. In those five years each

centre has to work towards and achieve self sustainability, developing and deploying different sources of income. If requested, Helping Hands offers assistance in this. It is so impressive to see how the centres are implementing these sustainability activities, coming up with wonderfully creative ideas. One of our centres in Brits, near Pretoria, the capital of South Africa, has set up a day care centre to generate income for their Child Development program. Some of the centres receive food donations from different grocery stores. Another centre makes jewellery which is being sold in South Africa, Europe, and the United States. Some of the centres have fruit and vegetable gardens, providing not only a healthy

component in the daily diet of the children, but also additional income for the facility.

Thanks to Dedicated Volunteers

But it's not only income generating and fund-raising activities that enable self sustainability. The centres have wonderful and dedicated volunteers who are donating of their time and their hearts, investing in children, making them better and more appreciated persons, who in turn will then influence their communities and make them better places to be...

Second Children's Camp in South Africa

by Guguletu Khuzwayo



The Children at the Camp had the Time of their Life

Thanks to our Lord, and to you and your support through prayers and gifts, we were able to host the second long-weekend camp for the children of our Child Development Centres (CDCs) in January this year. It was a wonderful time of fun, adventure, learning, and inspiration.

One hundred children had the privilege of spending a long weekend at a wonderful campsite on the outskirts of Johannesburg, away from grey and dusty streets, noise and traffic, away from struggle, and coldness. "I never knew that there is so much beauty and quietness in nature, and that the trees can be so green. It is as if I can feel a peace here!"

Fun, Lessons and a Glorious End

During the weekend we had lots of activities for the children: Shooting with bow and arrow, climbing and 'abseiling' like a mountaineer, a long hike through the dark night, passing a cemetery – ooohhh, that was scary. We try to link all of our activities with a good lesson for life. Like the trust game, where the children had to lift each other, relying on each other's weight and strength, or guide each other blindfolded,

learning that one not only has to sometimes trust somebody else in life, but even more importantly, be trustworthy and reliable oneself.

Shooting arrows was meant to show them the importance of having goals in things that can be achieved, and even if we miss the first time, we can keep on focussing until we reach our goal. But there was also a great deal of fun. The children could not get enough of the swimming pool and the water slides – things most of them never had enjoyed before in their lives. It was so special for them. All of this helped to create bonds and make new friends.

The most important part of such a camp, though, is telling the children about Jesus. It was wonderful to see God's blessing. The volunteer helpers did not even have to encourage the children to come out of their rooms for devotions. The children could not wait to learn more about Jesus and our heavenly Father and hear their stories. Praise the Lord! Twenty children committed their lives to Jesus and accepted him as Lord and saviour!



Shooting with Bow and Arrow also Teaches Lessons for Life

Little Girl, Get Up !

by Samantha Chambo

The story in the gospel of Mark 5:35-43 is very touching to me. In it we see a little girl in a seemingly hopeless situation, a dead little girl for that matter. We also see the reaction of the community. There were already mourners present, amongst them those who truly loved and cared for the girl, namely her family, and those who were paid, according to custom, to cry. Then an amazing thing happened! Jesus walked in and told them they do not have to cry because the girl is not dead, just asleep. The community found this very funny. They laughed at him, because they all knew that the girl was dead, that there was no hope for her. Jesus did not allow them to discourage him. He reached out, grabbed the girl by the hand and said to her: 'little girl, get up'. Then the most amazing thing happened. The girl got up and walked. She was alive!

The story of this nameless little girl reminds me of the situation of little girls all over the continent of Africa.

According to the UNICEF state of the world's children report for 2007 the situation of girl children in developing countries is grave:

- Nearly one out of every five girls, who are enrolled in primary school in developing countries, does not complete their primary education.
- Only 43 percent of girls of the appropriate age in the developing world attend secondary school.
- Among the greatest threats to adolescent development are abuse, exploitation and violence, and the lack of vital knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.
- Every year, as many as 275 million children worldwide become caught in the crossfire of domestic violence and suffer the full consequences

of a turbulent home life. Violence against children involves physical and psychological abuse and injury, neglect or negligent treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse. The perpetrators may include parents and other close family members.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, young women are more vulnerable to HIV infection but have less comprehensive knowledge about HIV than young men.
- Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) involves partial or total removal of, or other injuries to female genitalia for cultural, non-medical reasons. The practice of FGM/C mainly occurs in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and some parts of South East Asia. FGM/C can have grave health consequences, including the failure to heal, increased susceptibility to HIV infection, childbirth complications, inflammatory diseases and urinary incontinence. Severe bleeding and infection can lead to death.

This is just an overview of some of the conditions that children, especially girls in Africa, face. The



Girls in Africa are Especially Vulnerable

Heart of Africa

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of Helping Hands Africa. If you would like to receive it regularly, or if you have any questions or want to get involved, do not hesitate to contact us.

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attitudes, practices and beliefs that result in this gross violation of the humanity of children are entrenched in long and age old cultural, social and religious norms and traditions. It is for this reason that the situation of girls in Africa and their situation seems almost hopeless just as it was in the case of Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter.

I think it is a pity that the modern day church, much too often, buys into this theology of hopelessness. They cry and mourn for the situation of our children but they are not willing to do much in order to raise up our girls.

Jesus' response to the situation was very surprising. He first off all asserted that the girl was not dead, only asleep. Jews never touched dead people, because that would defile them, but Jesus reached out and touched the nameless girl and in so doing gave life back to her. He reached out in love and compassion and restored hope to a hopeless situation. I believe that Jesus feels the same way about the seemingly hopeless situation of girl children in Africa and the world. Thank you HHA for having a vision for children. May it