

ZIMBABWE AND HIV/AIDS

Zimbabwe has not been abandoned

Amidst the chaos that has been widely reported to have taken over Zimbabwe, are humans quietly laying a sound foundation on which to build a better tomorrow.

This article is about Oili Wuolle and Seppo Ainamo, from Finland, and about the foundation, the Zimbabwe AIDS Orphans Society, that they, both now retired, set up in Dzivarasekwa, a poor township outside Harare.

In 1992 Seppo Ainamo was working for the Helsinki School of Economics, when he promised to pay the school fees of an 8-year-old boy, whose mother, widowed and 23, could not afford to pay them.

By 1994 Seppo was sponsoring 4 children and by 1995, 8. To start with all the children were at the same school, Dzivarasekwa No. 4 Primary School, but gradually other schools were included.

In 1996, Seppo was joined by Oili Wuolle, at that time employed by the Bank of Finland, and in one year the number of children rose from 18 to 36. By 2008, they are sponsoring nearly 400.

In the beginning, all the sponsors were family members or friends of Seppo and Oili.

Since 1997, the circle of sponsors and other donors has widened to include a wide range of individuals

Selecting our Children



A twinkle in the eye



Seppo, Grade 2

Criteria for Selection

All the orphans in our programme come from Dzivarasekwa, a very poor, high-density township of Harare, and have lost either one (usually the father) or both of their parents. The families are extremely poor and cannot afford to pay the school fees or uniforms, however small these sums may seem by European standards.

We endeavour to select children who are bright and eager to learn. Usually the children's head teachers or "teachers-in-charge" have recommended them to us. Sometimes the children themselves or their guardians have heard about our education support facility from others already in the programme and have approached us direct.

Before accepting children, we always look closely at their

Children selected for the programme must satisfy five requirements:

1. They must be orphans or half-orphans
2. They must have started, or be about to start, school in Dzivarasekwa
3. Their guardian must be unable to pay the school fees
4. They must do reasonably well at school
5. They must behave well and be keen to learn.



Post cards from Zimbabwe. Oili is the Scandinavian female, Seppo the Scandinavian male. From their foundation web-site.

als and organisations in Finland, Britain, Germany, Norway, and Sweden

The children are divided into 2 groups – those receiving full support, and those receiving partial support.

The full-support children, currently numbering 220, must satisfy 5 requirements:

- 1) they must be orphans or half-orphans
- 2) they must have started, or be about to start, school in Dzivarasekwa
- 3) their guardian must be unable to pay the school fees
- 4) they must be doing reasonably well at school
- 5) they must behave well and be keen to learn.

Before accepting any children for the programme, Seppo and Oili look closely at their background, visit their homes and, together with the school, check on their academic ability. In a sense, the support is a reward for working hard.

The number of children receiving partial support is currently 165. These orphans do not satisfy all 5 requirements, but whose need is so great that, without support, they might well drop out of school altogether. They do not have individual sponsors.

Altogether, 385 children are in the program, and this, according to Oili and Seppo, is the maximum number, as they are determined to know and have personal contact with every single child.

Several things have attracted so many donors to the foundation. These include, first, the commitment of Oili and Seppo to the orphans, second, the assurance that every cent of support donated is spent on the children, and third, the knowledge that the children in the program are being given a future when they had no hope of one.

So how are the donations spent? Oili and Seppo have set up a local Trust Fund, the Dzikwa Trust (of

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ZIMBABWE NO LONGER TRAINS SPECIALIZED NURSES

Zimbabwean nursing colleges have abandoned specialised training for students because of a lack of medical equipment and poor funding. The latest development is likely to have a catastrophic effect on the country's health delivery system, itself currently in the intensive care unit arising from the 'brain drain' and poor salaries for medical practitioners.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony for nurses 2 weeks ago, Chief Executive and chair of the Parirenyatwa Hospital, Thomas Zigora, said "All the other training institutions have abandoned specialised fields such as midwifery as there is no theatre, dentists, physicians," Zigora said.

Zimbabwe has 8 nursing colleges. Working conditions have deteriorated for health personnel: poor salaries, lack of hospital machinery and equipment, accommodation, transport and lack of protective gloves and gumboots that have led to some nurses dying after exposure to diseases.

The government recently prohibited student nurse pregnancies during training, which violated a court order in 2000 in a similar case lodged by a student teacher against Morgenster Teacher's College that had adopted a similar stance. Section 24 of the Zimbabwe Constitution includes: "No person shall be discriminated on the grounds of gender". This was upheld by the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land.

Some human rights groups have argued in court that nurses must not be discriminated against. Commenting recently in the House of Assembly over the pregnancy issue, Deputy Health Minister Dr Edwin Muguti said it was up to Parliament to come up with a clear Act to ensure the rights of female students were adhered to.

Tens of thousands of Zimbabwean students apply each year to go to nurse training schools because of guaranteed jobs in the profession arising from the shortage of nurses - in a country where unemployment stands at more than 80%. A nursing qualification for students is also a sure way of getting a visa to go to the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand which in recent years have been advertising in local papers for nurses because of a critical shortage in their own countries.

Summarized from an article by Clemence Manyukwe on 19 Oct 2008

which they are both trustees), which monitors and implements activities on the spot in Zimbabwe. All support received is channelled to the children

through the trust. No funds go to the children themselves or their guardians direct.

The trust pays the children's school fees and any extra tutoring they might need, buys their school uniforms (without a uniform a child is not allowed to attend school), books and equipment, pays for one hot meal for every child every day of the year, pays their medical expenses, and pays the maintenance cost of a shelter home for homeless orphans (currently 36 are living in the home) and a library.

Preparation of one hot meal a day calls for vast quantities of ingredients - meat, vegetables, grain and fish - and also firewood, as the meals are cooked over open fires.

The money also goes towards the children's extra-curricular activities - visits to museums, game parks, the theatre and concerts, and so on.

Oili and Seppo's latest project is building an Activity Centre in Dzivarasekwa, to give the children a place to go after school. When ready it will house a modern kitchen to replace the current cooking shed, a dining room cum study area that could also serve as an assembly hall or cinema, classrooms for extra lessons, a conference area, an IT classroom, a library, offices for field workers, and toilets and showers. There will also be a vegetable garden, a basketball court, and a caretaker's cottage. A start has been made - the corner stone was laid in November 2007 and the bore well has been sunk. However, getting supplies in Zimbabwe ranges from difficult to impossible, and the centre may not be fully operational for a year or more.

Oili and Seppo spend roughly half the year overseeing the running of activities in Dzivarasekwa, where they have a devoted team of local helpers. The bulk of the other half is spent fund raising - either at home in Finland or in the other donor countries.

By Gillian Hakli

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:

After I laid out the article by Dr Teketel, I received a letter from Gillian Doherty Hakli who was born in Africa, in Egypt, and lives in Finland with her husband of 40 years. Her father was a British army officer whose African tours of duty included Ghana and Egypt.

Gillian told me of a Finnish couple who moved to Zimbabwe to quietly raise and educate children who were orphaned by HIV/AIDS. I asked her to write an article about them, and she did, immediately. Here it is.

Included on these pages are screen shots of the website (www.zim-orvot.org) of the Zimbabwe AIDS Orphans Society, plus photos Gillian downloaded.

Disclosures: Gillian and her husband pay the support of 2 of the orphaned children. They are my cousins, Gillian and I have a common Irish ancestor named Doherty.