

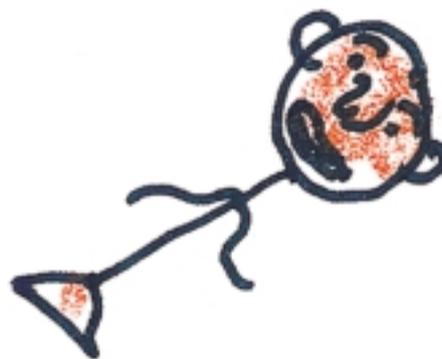
# CARE for the Carers

10

Hospice



social workers.





One child's story of what her life was like before she was helped by an organisation highlights the vulnerability of HIV-affected children who are not receiving any support.

**Tiko, 13 years old:** "When I was still at the age group 10/11 years, I was doing standard 4, my mum started drinking. I had three sisters to look after. The one was 4 years old, the other one was two years and the last was 3 months. My mum left our home for good and we stayed with our granny who took care of us.

At the time, my sisters were my responsibility. I didn't have no choice because my Granny was working. I had to make sure that each and every day when I came from school I would become a babysitter and a mum at the same time. I was cleaning the house, washing my sisters' clothes, washing nappies and cooking for my sisters' something to eat. At that time I was so stressed because I did not know where my mom went. Asking myself that! What will happen to my sisters and me if my mother dies? I had fears about my life. I thought that I would have no future. I blamed myself for all of the problems and troubles I was facing. I was always running to open the door when someone knocks thinking it was my mother. I couldn't sleep at nights. My young sister was crying all night wanting breast feeding from me.

It was so difficult for me to go to school. I went to school twice a week and I could spend a week not going but looking after my young sisters. 95% of my mind was on looking after my sisters and 5% on my books. When I went to school I was asking myself where are my sisters? Who is looking after them? What are they eating? I just can't get that off my mind. I couldn't concentrate on my books at school. Pretending that I was fine at school. Asking myself: Why must I suffer like this? Screaming, asking myself what have I done that is unforgivable? Why am I being punished? Why don't you take me because I am nothing? Nobody knows what I was facing, even my teachers.

I tried hard to forget my mum, but I just couldn't. I wanted to run away from home, but I couldn't because my Granny always told me not to run away from my troubles - because they don't last always. I tried to commit suicide 7 times. But because of fears of leaving my sisters I couldn't.

After a few months my mum came from Gauteng. She told us that she was in Gauteng. I was so angry with her. I even didn't want her to touch my sisters. But I got over that. My mum had a new baby and I was happy because

he was the only son in our family. But I didn't know that he had the HIV virus. One of my teachers told me a month ago that my mum and my brother are HIV+. I was so shocked fears started coming back to me. But all I was about to do was to kill myself. But XX [an NGO] came into my life and they showed me love. They brought sunshine into my life.

I could say the storm is over now and I can also smile like other children. I thought that it was the end of the world for me. But they comforted me and stood by me. They were always there for me when I needed them most. They supported me and my mum. They took me for counselling. They moved me from home and took me to a hostel where I'm living now. I was disturbed in my mind. Noise in my ears hearing my sisters crying.

The government must support organizations such as the one that helped me, to provide them with money because they give us food, clothes, and help us with cleaning materials. They do counselling, they teach us about relationships at home, how to communicate, how to protect ourselves, they teach us about HIV/AIDS. They preach the word of God and stand against abuse. And they go from house to house helping people who are sick. If they can't wash themselves the organisation can do that, and dress them in clean clothes. Government must give them money to keep doing good work."

### 10.1.2 "Government must help them to help more children"

The children called for the government to support the organisations that feed, clothes and care for them.

**Nosiphiwe, 11 years old:** "Sometimes children who are affected by AIDS do not go to school because they are given lots of work at home. XX [an NGO] brings them food and blankets and clothes. Government must help XX with money so that they can help more children."

**Joseph, 9 years old:** "I think that government must help the organizations that help us. They need money. They give us food and clothes and really help us, but they need money. Or the government can give them food to distribute to other people."

“ I could say the storm is over now and I can also smile like other children. ”



“Centres and NGOs should be supported by government because these places make it better for us as children to be less sad. And the sick person doesn't get to be alone and suffer by himself.”



**Wendy, 13 years old:** “Centres and NGOs should be supported by government because these places make it better for us as children to be less sad. And the sick person doesn't get to be alone and suffer by himself.”

**Sizwe, 11 years old:** “At home my mother had got HIV/AIDS. We are helped by XX [an NGO]. They bring us food and clothes. My mum's sister also helps us with blankets and food. The government can help people like XX by giving them money so that they can be able to help more people.”

**Sindile, 14 years old:** “Government should build places like home care centres so that people can get help. We want love and support from our caregivers or nurses. Most of the time XX [an NGO] helps people who are HIV+. They know exactly how to meet their needs. To meet the need is not only about money. Support and love is the best for the life of these people. I will be happy if they can give funds to NGO's so that they can help the community. Government doesn't know about us. It is very hard to find us because we are living at the rural area.”

## 10.2 Conclusion

The children's stories reinforce the fact that community-based, faith-based and non-governmental organisations are critical components of our country's response to the impact of HIV/AIDS on children. Many children are entirely reliant on organisations to provide them with food, clothing, school fees, emotional support and care in general. However, the work done by these organisations only reaches a small proportion of the large and growing number of children in South Africa that need help. We need to evaluate our programmes, learn from the experiences of grassroots service providers and actively support and replicate appropriate successful initiatives at a national level.

Resources and capacity building need to be made available to organisations providing services to vulnerable children. In particular, where government programmes are unable to reach children, community-based, faith-based and non-governmental organisations delivering services need to be recognised and supported.