

# CLASS Act

## SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

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## For the Love of Reading and Community



Photo: Alexis MacDonald/SLF

Angelina Tembo Girls School, Zambia

It wasn't long ago that Canadian libraries were places where book shelves lined the walls, magazines and academic journals filled the racks, computers were for librarians only, and everyone had to be silent.

Nowadays, go into a library and it's a very different scene. There are still book shelves but they also hold DVDs and audio books. And there are lineups at the computers as people use them to send emails to family overseas, apply to jobs, or read newspapers in different languages. Libraries hold literacy classes and special programmes for babies and toddlers – hardly quiet places anymore. In fact, Canadian libraries have been transformed into community hubs.

Many of our African partners are at the fore of the evolution of community libraries as they become community hubs. In the midst of the AIDS pandemic, this evolution becomes more compelling - strengthening and deepening what the community-based organizations already do.

It's a place where orphaned adolescents come for help to retrieve their birth certificates and apply for valuable

personal documents. It's a place where grandmothers congregate for grief counselling and the chance to share their stories. It's a place where young people come to do art work and music therapy as they begin to heal from the trauma in their lives. It's a place for learning how to use computers and receiving skills training for better employment opportunities. It's a place to talk about income generation in agriculture, crafts, foodstuffs and animal husbandry.

And it's a place for books. Because of the lack of textbooks in many of the schools, community libraries buy books for all school ages and support the academic curriculum. In the absence of books at home, libraries are central to developing a culture of reading, promoting reading as pleasure for young and old alike, attracting adult learners for literacy and skills training, and expanding library services to meet the unique needs of their communities.

In the end, libraries are a space for imagination, dreams, energy, and hope. A library can change lives forever. And what they are today does not limit what they can be tomorrow.

### Spotlight on School Fundraisers

- ▶ For 10 years, Kew Park Montessori Day School in Toronto has donated the proceeds from their annual Grandparents Concert. This year's concert raised over \$1000.00!
- ▶ Cards for a Cure is a student project at Sir Winston Churchill High School in Calgary. For more than 10 years, students hand-make greetings cards during their lunch hours and sell at community craft fairs. Last fall, \$600 was raised in support of the SLF.

### Take Action!

- ▶ Organize a fundraiser at your school. Walks, talent shows, concerts, bake sales are all great ways to raise funds and awareness.
- ▶ Do a Dare. Dare your class, or club or team to raise money. You could dare to give up your cell phone or screen time. Or dare to do some beyond your comfort zone.
- ▶ For more information or resources to help you build awareness, work on class presentations or raise funds, please contact us.

We'd love to work with you or hear what you're doing. Contact us at [community@stephenlewisfoundation.org](mailto:community@stephenlewisfoundation.org)

# An Emerging Crisis: The Child & Youth Treatment Gap

EXCERPT FROM GRASSROOTS FALL 2016

Photo: Alexis MacDonald/CFE



When it comes to HIV & AIDS statistics, the numbers having to do with young people are the most frightening of all. Today, AIDS is the leading cause of adolescent death in Africa, where a shocking 26 new HIV infections occur among 15-19 year olds each hour – 7 in 10 of them among girls.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are providing young people with innovative programmes and interventions. The responses that community-based organizations (CBOs) are rolling out are driven by a single, essential insight: children infected and affected by HIV & AIDS must be supported as whole persons. Challenges must be met by interventions that are encompassing – ensuring access to treatment, yes, but also restoring community bonds, supporting caregivers, enabling education, promoting positive living, and fostering a sense of agency in young people.

These organizations recognize that young people are unique in important ways. Where young children are concerned, for instance, they are committed to ensuring that support systems are operating effectively – engaging with children themselves, but also with their parents, grandparents,

older siblings, and the other adults children inevitably depend upon. With adolescents, meanwhile, CBOs address the tremendous social pressures faced by teenagers alongside medical challenges associated with preventing and treating HIV – talking to them about treatment, but also about sex, substance abuse and so much more.

Their innovative and awe-inspiring programming, include child-friendly clinics staffed by pediatricians and counsellors trained to relate to children and adolescents. Peer Counselling programs to engage HIV positive young people as peer educators, who can speak from with other infected and affected youth from their own experience and early-childhood initiatives which serve as an entry point into HIV care for families who are uneasy about visiting medical facilities because of possible exposure to stigma and discrimination.

Here are some examples of the kinds of programmes community-based organizations are implementing to support children and youth.

In Uganda, **Reach Out Mbuya's** (ROM's) leadership in reaching children and youth

affected by HIV & AIDS. Teenage and Adolescent Supporters are selected from among ROM's clients to be trained as peer counsellors, and make over 6,000 home visits to other young people each year. The organization also runs a music, dance and drama group and a peer-led "Friends Forum" for their young clients. At ROM, the adolescents who succeed with ARV treatment into adulthood have been embraced within a community network of care, which includes other people like them.

In South Africa, **Cotlands** has found that one of the many challenges facing young children living in disadvantaged, AIDS-affected communities is extremely limited access to early learning opportunities. As a result, the organization runs early learning playgroups, to help ensure that children do not fall behind before even beginning school. These playgroups are routinely visited by nurses who assist the children's health and screen for HIV, TB and other illnesses.

In Zimbabwe, **Chiedza Child Care Centre** helps HIV-positive children access health centres, arranging for transport and, where necessary, paying their hospital fees. Chiedza also operates its own clinic focused on child treatment, as well as a soup kitchen which provides 256 orphaned and vulnerable children with daily meals that help ensure their overall health. As well, Chiedza's volunteer Community Health Workers conduct home visits to provide follow-up support and monitoring to the HIV-positive children and youth in their organization's care.

Read more about the Child & Youth Treatment Gap in Grassroots, Fall 2016. Visit: [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)