

WORLD AIDS DAY – 1ST DECEMBER 2004



This is a picture of myself in July with a group of young women peer supporters in a rural secondary school in Zambia.

While on this trip I held hands with a 3 year old child who was dying of AIDS , I saw teachers being given anti-retroviral drugs to help them return to the classroom where they could earn again to support their children in the few years remaining to them. Thousands and thousands of orphans and thousands of young qualified men and women with a few years to live in health, education and public service sectors. By the road side where once vegetable sellers predominated the coffin sellers are thriving. The small white coffins are the most heart rending.

I also met young peer supporters who rose early to collect firewood to sell in the local market . They need this money to buy fuel for a tractor loaned by a local farmer so that they could travel to the next village and teach their peers in a school there. These girls teach their peers about safe sex, about caring for the dying and about befriending the orphans of HIV/AIDS.

I met many people in the 5 countries I visited all of whom are in some way affected or infected by HIV/AIDS who were determined to do the best to create resources and deliver help and to develop their countries. Their positive attitude in the context of mass bereavement and fear of sickness was amazing. The education of girls in Sub Saharan Africa was increasing until the pandemic resulted in them being out of schools to care for relatives and siblings.

If you can give a few moments to think about this then please do. WE need to be very much more aware of the dangers in the UK and round the world. If you can give money then I suggest you take a look at the CAMFED site. If you'd like to find out more about CAMFED International, www.camfed.org

This charity funds girls to stay at school in several countries. Camfed is well managed and sensitively administered. Funds are channelled through school counsellors called mentors. This fund cares for orphaned girls paying school fees and basic necessities and when their education is complete. It also helps them to set up small local enterprises so that they remain in their local communities.

The local villlage community is well involved and the governments support CAMFEDs work It was started by an English woman who has managed to raise the funding to help thousands of girls. You can also take a look at the World Aids Day site.

To find out what YOU can do today go to <http://www.worldAIDSday.org>

Thanks for your attention.

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