

## **Did you know?**

More than 128,000 children live on the streets of Zambia's capitol city, Lusaka. Many are AIDS orphans, meaning they've lost one or both parents to the disease. HIV strikes the children of sub-Saharan Africa twice. First the virus attacks their bodies – 2.8 million of the 3 million children living with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. Then AIDS kills their parents – 12 million of the 15 million AIDS orphans also live in this region.

Zambia is one of the hardest hit countries. Around 90,000 Zambian children live with HIV. Those children who escape the virus will probably watch a relative or friend die of the disease. Often, it's a parent. There are 630,000 AIDS orphans in Zambia, and the number is growing. Traditionally, when a child's parents die, care is passed to the extended family. However, this system has broken down under poverty and disease. School is impossible. The children live on the streets.

In 1996 four young Zambians started Fountain of Hope to take care of the street children. Working out of a corner office in a government building, full-time volunteers created a community school and, sometimes, provided food. Now this seemingly chaotic organization makes secondary school, which means clothes, food, and shelter for street children, possible.

The dedicated volunteers caught the eye of a woman named Jane Meyers. Meyers began reading to the children. "They melted," she said. Eventually, she used her position in the U.S. diplomatic community to acquire outside funding. She also got hold of books, and soon Fountain of Hope had a library. "The library has had an incredible impact that no one could have guessed," Meyers said. Fountain of Hope paid for children's secondary school, and its library provided the knowledge the children needed to pass the entry test. Now, secondary school graduates return to Fountain of Hope to read to other street children – giving them the same opportunity.

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National Geographic Magazine (Online)  
September 30, 2005