

# Africa United



## The Back Story: AIDS Orphans

Leader's Guide



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# The Back Story: AIDS Orphans Leader's Guide

*Africa United* is a story about children with big dreams who make an extraordinary journey. On their way across Africa, Dudu, Beatrice and Fabrice pass through amazing landscapes and make new friends, Celeste and Foreman George. But they also come face-to-face with some of the challenges that have gripped the continent.

We learn early on in the film that two of the central characters, Dudu and Beatrice, have been orphaned by AIDS. Despite the difficulties they face, the children are resourceful and have great hopes for the future. Beatrice dreams of getting an education so that she can become a doctor, and find a cure for the HIV virus.

This Back Story session guide will help you to look more closely at the issues, and think about what you can do to help. As the session leader, it's a good idea for you to familiarise yourself with the key facts on the next page so that you can inform the discussion. It would also be useful to look through one or more of the websites in the Find Out More section.

The session has been written to be combined with the short video *The Back Story: AIDS Orphans*, which is available for free download from [www.damaris.org/africaunited](http://www.damaris.org/africaunited). The video features Phil Wall of HOPEHIV talking about some of the issues raised by the film *Africa United*.



There are two sets of questions, one for an adult discussion and one for a youth group session.



## What Are the Facts?<sup>1</sup>

- It is estimated that over 15 million children worldwide have been orphaned by AIDS, with 13 million of these living in sub-Saharan Africa. In the worst-affected countries, such as Zambia and Botswana, it is estimated that 20% of children under 17 are orphans.
- 12-15% of those who have lost one or both parents to the virus actually have it themselves.
- Children whose parents are living with HIV are likely to suffer neglect and emotional trauma long before they are actually orphaned. They may then have to adjust to a new situation, with little or no support. Many AIDS orphans struggle with anxiety, depression and anger.
- The loss of the family's breadwinner leads to economic challenges, and children becoming more vulnerable to disease and malnutrition. Taking on responsibility for their siblings, orphans are often forced into vulnerable situations in order to earn an income. Many AIDS orphans may turn to begging or prostitution.
- The stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS exacerbates the distress and isolation experienced by children who have been orphaned. Due to the shame often associated with the virus, and the assumption that all orphans are HIV-positive themselves, they may be denied access to education and healthcare. Their rights to inheritance and property may also be affected.
- The length and severity of AIDS epidemics in Africa has resulted in the breakdown of family structures. AIDS is generating orphans so quickly that a generation of children have been left behind to fend for themselves in communities without the resources to care for them. HIV reduces the caring capacity of families and communities by deepening poverty, through medical and funeral costs as well as the loss of labour.
- The prevention of new HIV infections, and better access to antiretroviral treatment are necessary to tackle the root causes of the problem. Care and support is also needed for children who have already been orphaned.
- Education protects children, giving higher self-esteem, better job prospects and economic independence. Stigma also needs to be broken down so that children can be an active part of their communities, with their human rights protected and their emotional needs met.

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced from Back Story video and [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)



## Adult discussion

### What are the issues?

**Q:** What do the words 'AIDS orphan' mean to you? Do you know anything about the issue already?

(Having elicited initial responses, show AU035 The Back Story: AIDS Orphans to inform the rest of your discussion)



**Q:** What is your first reaction to the facts and stories in this video? What surprised or moved you the most?

**Q:** What rights do children have in life, and what opportunities should they have? How might AIDS orphans be denied these basic rights and opportunities?

**Q:** What might be some of the immediate emotional, social and economic consequences for children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS?

**Q:** Why is there a stigma attached to the HIV virus, and how might this exacerbate the problems which orphans face?

**Q:** What judgments or assumptions might we be tempted to make about AIDS orphans who have turned to begging, stealing or prostitution for an income? Under what circumstances do 'choices' cease to be choices?

**Q:** What kind of care and protection might children orphaned by AIDS need? Why might it be better for children to stay within their communities, rather than going to orphanages?

### What can we do?

**Q:** Though the issue might affect particular countries, its impact is global. What might be the long-term consequences of a generation of children growing up without a primary caregiver?

**Q:** Why should we focus on tackling the underlying causes of this issue? What bigger global problems might contribute towards the situation that AIDS orphans find themselves in?

**Q:** In what ways might education benefit children who have been orphaned by AIDS? How might educating families and communities help to tackle the problem at its root? What messages need to be spread, both in countries affected by the problem, and all over the world?

**Q:** In what ways could AIDS orphans be 'part of the solution' for HIV and AIDS? How can your community group find out more about the challenges they face and the potential that they have? Discuss ways that you could raise money and awareness for this cause.



### What are the issues?

**Q:** What do the words 'AIDS orphan' mean to you? Do you know anything about the issue already? Write down five words that you might associate with it.

(Show AU035 The Back Story: AIDS Orphans to start off your discussion)



**Q:** What is your first reaction to the facts and stories in this video? What surprised or moved you the most?

**Q:** What things do we all need in life to be happy and healthy? As a child orphaned by AIDS, which of these things would be taken away from you?

**Q:** How might children orphaned by AIDS be affected emotionally by their experiences? What might be the practical consequences of losing their parents?

**Q:** Why is there so much shame and fear associated with the HIV virus? How might prejudice from their communities make orphans' problems worse?

**Q:** What judgments or assumptions might we be tempted to make about AIDS orphans who have turned to begging, stealing or prostitution for an income? Do you think that they have any real choice?

**Q:** What kind of care and protection might children orphaned by AIDS need? Why might it be better for children to stay within their communities, rather than going to orphanages?

### What can we do?

**Q:** This issue might feel far from our everyday lives. Why should we be motivated to do something about it? What might be the consequences for the world if generations of children continue to grow up without parents?

**Q:** Why should we focus on tackling the underlying causes of this issue? What bigger global problems might contribute towards the situation that AIDS orphans find themselves in?

**Q:** In what ways might education benefit children who have been orphaned by AIDS? How might educating families and communities help to tackle the problem at its root? What messages need to be spread, both in countries affected by the problem, and all over the world?

**Q:** In what ways could AIDS orphans be 'part of the solution' for HIV and AIDS? How can your community group find out more about the challenges they face and the potential that they have? Discuss ways that you could raise money and awareness for this cause.



**Find out more**

HOPEHIV [www.hopehiv.org](http://www.hopehiv.org)

AVERT [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)

Stop AIDS campaign [www.stopaidscampaign.org.uk](http://www.stopaidscampaign.org.uk)

