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Ämne: AIDS Orphans Day



On the occasion of the sixth **World AIDS Orphans Day**, the International Council of Nurses and the Florence Nightingale International Foundation are pleased to highlight the **Girl Child Education Fund** – a unique project to support the primary and secondary schooling of girls in developing countries whose nurse parent or parents have died.



■ **What is the Girl Child Education Fund?**

The Girl Child Education Fund was launched in May 2005 to support the primary and secondary schooling of girls under the age of 18 in developing countries whose nurse parent or parents have died. It provides for the cost of primary and secondary schooling including fees, uniforms and books. We work in partnership with National Nurses Associations to ensure that the money goes directly to education costs. Every girl in our programme is paired with a nurse volunteer to monitor her progress at school and at home.

■ **One girl's story**

My mother was a nurse who worked at the district hospital, but in 1998 she began to have health problems. She was often in and out of hospital and the family income was now meant to take care of her hospital bills. My father's health also began deteriorating in 2003 and I thought this was because of the stress of having my mother bed ridden. In June 2004 I discovered that my mother had AIDS. This was too much to bear. I knew now that soon we would be left orphans and this was my greatest fear.

Six months later, my mother died on Christmas day. Three days after my mother's death, I received my class 8 results. I had passed my exams and was to join secondary school. Although my father was ill, he worked on and off and I was able to go to high school for the first term. But

soon he was not able to afford my second term schooling and I was forced to drop out of school. I began to look for work as a housemaid.

My father died in November 2005. Two days after my father's funeral, a knock on our door brought good news for a change. My mother's former colleague at work came to inform us that the National Nurses Association of Kenya had nominated me as a beneficiary of the ICN/FNIF sponsored GCEF. To me, this was too good to be true.

When the term began, my mother's colleague came to escort me to school; she has been always there for me and has actually filled the gap of a missing parent. My whole year fee was paid for and I have gone through this year at school uninterrupted. I have new uniform and I get meals in school. My performance has improved because I have no interruptions. I thank God for this.

GCEF is a project that has made a significant difference in my life. It has transformed me from being a house maid to a student who will be a professional and contribute to the lives of many others as nurses have contributed to my life. Thank you very much for this noble project.

■ Why does it target girls?

Education plays a key role in improved health and poverty reduction. It leads to lower fertility and infant mortality rates, better health and nutrition, higher productivity, better gender equity, and improved chances that the next generation will in turn be educated. However, due to poverty, illness, cultural practices, fear and violence, girls account for 60 percent of the estimated 113 million out-of-school children. The majority of these live in sub-Saharan Africa.

■ Why does the GCEF help orphans?

Orphaning is now a significant barrier to achieving gender parity in education. Sub-Saharan Africa, the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, is the only region where orphan numbers are increasing. Today there are close to 16 million children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, and according to UNAIDS, only about 700,000 are receiving any type of government or NGO support. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS are often the first to be denied education when their extended families cannot afford to educate them; orphaned girls may be the first to be pulled out of school to provide child care at home. They may also be denied education due to the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

■ How many girls are being funded?

In 2006 the Girl Child Education Fund was implemented in Kenya, Swaziland, Uganda, and Zambia with 40 girls receiving support. Our partnership with NNAs ensures protection of the dignity and privacy of the Fund's beneficiaries as there is no personal or direct relation, obligation, or contact between the donor and any beneficiary. The Fund is managed so as to ensure that once a girl is enrolled, funding until graduation from secondary school is ensured. A recent grant from the Stephen Lewis Foundation has meant that an additional 160 girls will be funded this year.

■ How can you help?

- **\$200 a year, or \$16.60 each month** will provide for the education of a girl in primary school in sub Saharan Africa.
- **\$600 a year, or \$50 each month** will provide for the education of a girl in secondary school in sub Saharan Africa.
- **\$5,000** will guarantee the education of a girl throughout her primary and secondary schooling years.

Contributions can be made online through the FNIF website at www.fnif.org/girlfund.htm.