

# NOAHS ARK CENTRE

Please click the relevant topics below to learn more about Noah's Ark

{slide=AN INTRODUCTION TO NOAH'S ARK}

The new Noah's Ark Centre was officially opened 22 November 2005.

It presently has over 100 children in its care and has a staff of teachers, a cook, a caretaker; and a secretary.

The old Noah's Ark day care centre for HIV orphans had been started in 2001. It was located in a road-side kiosk at Mumias in western Kenya and catered for about 16 needy children. The purpose of the centre was to provide them with schooling, food, clothing, medical care and guidance on behaviour.

The old building had been due for demolishing by the authorities because it was too near the main road for the safety of the children. Plans were drawn up for a new building that could give Day Care to more children, at an estimated cost of £30,000.

{/slide} {slide=A TYPICAL DAY AT NOAH'S ARK}

The children who come each day receive classroom lessons and care, as well as times for playing. They are provided with a meal which often includes ugali (maize meal, not unlike our porridge) or rice with meat or vegetables. For some of the children this will be their only meal for the day.

{/slide} {slide=WHY DO WE NEED A DAY CAR CENTRE?}

AIDS and HIV are rife in Africa, and frequently deprive families of their breadwinners, leaving children orphaned. (See HIV and AIDS) with no one to look after them.

Families are often extended, and widely dispersed, so it is not unusual to find a 12 year old trying to provide for siblings, or a grandmother trying to do the same. Some of them manage to make out. However, many do not, and the future for these children is bleak indeed.

Orphanages are few and far between - and they are seldom free. However, there is an alternative &ndash; the day care centre.

Noah's Ark has been set up to enable these orphans to lead a normal life in homes with grandparents, older siblings or guardians to look after them. However, this only works if there are people ready and able to take the children

into their homes.

{/slide} {slide=THE NEED OF THE HOUR}

If there are family members available, however remotely related, they will take the children in, although they may not be able to feed them or provide them with anything more than love and warmth. These are not things to be sneered at, but they are not enough on their own. In effect, the children are still at risk, and perhaps, the host family as well.

The issue here is not willingness but affordability. Many rural people live at subsistence level, a level of subsistence which would simply not be tolerable in the UK, let alone acceptable. Despite this, they have a generosity of spirit and sense of community which are remarkable. Some people will take in children who are not related to them, but few indeed can afford to do so.

A day care centre can supply what is missing, and can go much further than the basics which a poor rural family could provide.

{/slide} {slide=THE WELFARE SYSTEM IN KENYA}

Kenya does not have a welfare system such as we enjoy in the UK. Education and medical care have to be paid for, and in a relatively poor country covering a large area, they are not necessarily available.

Even if a school can be afforded, there is a massive stigma in Kenya, as in most of Africa, towards children who have AIDS or HIV, or who come from families whose members have AIDS or HIV.

Early in 2004 a school was reported in the press as suing the Kenyan government for allowing HIV-infected children to enter it as pupils.

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