

Sitting in a break-out session during the 2008 "Living in Lausanne Workshop" only a few weeks after arriving in Switzerland, I listened to Joanne Ray who had recently taken on the role of Community Services chairperson. She talked about fundraising for the groups chosen charities. Working as a teaching assistant, I was particularly interested in the choice of Cecily's Fund and wanted to find out more.

Cecily's Fund was established 10 years ago in memory of Cecily Eastwood who at the age of 19 died in a road accident while working in Zambia with children orphaned by AIDS. Her parents set up the charity in her memory and to support the children she had been helping.

In December together with Joanne, I was lucky enough to meet Basil Eastwood, Cecily's father when he came to talk to Students at the International School of Lausanne who are also busy fundraising for the fund.

Mr. Eastwood explained how the charity had evolved from its beginnings working from the family kitchen to the organisation it has become. We felt very humbled when he gave us the shocking statistics of the number of children orphaned by AIDS in Zambia.

- Zambia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Around two thirds of the population live on less than a dollar a day.
- It is also one of the worst hit countries in Africa by AIDS.
- More than 17% of adults are HIV positive across the country.
- There are 1.2 million orphans in Zambia out of a total population of 11.6 million.
- 710,000 of these children have lost parents as a result of an AIDS-related illness. Many live in extreme poverty.
- Education costs little, and it gives these children and Zambia the hope and chance of a better future.

When you listen to someone with first hand knowledge of the situation, telling you stories of grandparents who with an income of less than CHF1.50 a day are supporting five of their grandchildren whose parents have died from AIDS. We also learnt that the number of households run by children from a very young age (as parents and extended family members die of the disease) is increasing. When we heard this we really want to find a way to help these children. Education is key to providing these children with the

chance of breaking out of the cycle of poverty and disease and looking towards a brighter and healthier future.

Mr. Eastwood explained that the Fund is supporting more than 7,000 children to go to school. Funds provide uniforms, shoes, books and stationery. Once the support for a child starts the fund is desperate to ensure that funds are available to continue that support to the end of their secondary schooling. At present the Fund is supporting over 20 young people to train as teachers.

Another aspect of the Fund's work is to support a Peer Health Education programme. This trains school leavers (who are themselves orphans and have been supported by the education programme) in HIV awareness-raising and prevention skills. It supports them to run workshops and other prevention activities in schools in the area for one year. This is helping to disseminate crucial health information to young people thereby giving them a better chance of avoiding HIV infection.

I feel sure that anyone listening to Mr Eastwood would be moved by the tragic stories that he told but also encouraged by the positive work that the Fund has accomplished and the hope that it has given to so many for the future. One often wonders how much of a donation made actually goes to the deserving cause. Mr Eastwood assured us that costs are kept to a minimum and that the accounts are carefully audited to make sure that as much of the money raised is used to support the children.

Cecily's fund is a registered charity here in Switzerland and donations made are tax deductible. Further information can be found of the funds website: www.cecilysfund.org The charity wants people to have fun while raising funds and this year their motto is "Making Music Give Hope" Zambia has a great tradition of music and dance. It is the Fund's aim to put a bit of rhythm into fund raising events. Any suggestions for a musical event can be passed on to Community Services.

Gill Hibbs
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