

# The "Q" Fund

*Changing The View*

## BACKGROUND

In the time it takes to read this message, 10 more Africans will lose their lives to the AIDS virus. As alarming as that statistic might be, it does not begin to address the horrors encountered by African children left orphaned, when their parents die of AIDS. The United Nations estimates that by 2010 the number of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa will rise to between 18 to 20 million. In a recent address, US Secretary General Kofi Annan said he believes this number to be grossly understated.

HIV/AIDS has touched almost every part of the world. No other region has been harder hit than sub-Saharan Africa—home to nearly three quarters of the world's people living with HIV/AIDS. UNICEF estimates that by 2010, there will be approximately 20 million children (8 out of 10) in sub-Saharan Africa who will have lost at least one parent to HIV/AIDS, bringing the total number of orphans in the region to 40 million.

The 'Q' Fund, established by Chellie Kew in 2000, is a US-based 501(c)(3) (ID: 93.1323840) is a non-profit organization that supports sub-Saharan orphans affected by the AIDS virus. Kew was a busy mother of two teenaged children, and the wife of an international business executive, when in 1997 she first met the orphaned children and came to love them and the African continent.

The principal tenet of the organization is the fact that many of these children are healthy but alone. These children are the future work force of Africa: its politicians, doctors, teachers, writers, laborers and artists. They must be cared for now—including sheltered, fed, protected and educated. Common sense dictates that when so many children are robbed of their childhood our shared future is at stake. These children must have their basic human needs met.

Kew spent over nine years living and touring in Southern Africa. She traveled to Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, visiting the orphanages of children whose parents had died of the AIDS virus. Escorted by an ex-military intelligence operative, Kew toured squatters' camps outside Johannesburg, refugee sites along the border of Mozambique and remote towns. In Zimbabwe, for instance, entire villages were run solely by children, every adult dead from the virus.

Kew's experience as a former fashion model in New York City gave her firsthand knowledge of the power of the camera lens. After many years of honing her skills as a photographer, she undertook what she considers her single most important accomplishment: a series of portraits of the African AIDS orphans.

The 'Q' Fund raises funding through various projects and activities to improve the quality of life for these children. In part through publication, lectures and sales of Kew's book, *African Journal: A Child's Continent*, a compelling photographic journal that changes the contemporary view of children affected by AIDS, Kew uses the lens of her camera to focus on the beauty of each child and not on their disease.

With blessings from the Minister of Education and Finance of Zambia, the organization directed funds to construct the Chimoza Community School in Zambia (2004). Today, the school provides basic education to 500 AIDS orphans, widows and the underprivileged. We have put in a bore-hole, planted gardens, and purchased chickens to sell eggs that pay 6 teachers their salary. Recently (2005) we purchased a banana plantation to provide the village with a sustainable source of income. Chimoza teaches traditional classes for grades one through seven during the day with vocational classes open free to the community at night. We believe it is vital to collaborate directly with any community that we offer our support to. We also believe the community must understand and embrace its role as a key success factor for long-term sustainability. The community arranges for and supplies the labor while we purchase the necessary materials and arrange for transportation of these materials.

The 'Q' Fund has also provided support to The Othandweni Children's orphanage, located in the heart of Soweto. This institution finds homes for the 'AIDS babies' who have been abandoned on the streets of

Johannesburg. We pay to keep the doors open to schools in Botswana and Zimbabwe, and pay from teachers training. Today we have a feeding program that feeds 2000 children and grandparents in southern Africa.

Another organization which has received support from The 'Q' Fund, is The Evangelical Rural Mission, based in Durban, South Africa. Kew worked closely with these missionaries during her frequent travels to refugee camps, orphanages and remote outposts throughout the sub-Saharan region. During these visits, she mentored young adults on aspects of AIDS, working to dispel the local myths and superstitions about the virus.

Now host to several lectures and photographic exhibitions at schools, universities, churches and bookstores, along with numerous radio and television appearances, Kew seeks to challenge current views by bringing into the light the selflessness, unconditional love, and courage these children face in the harsh realities of their day-to-day lives.

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