

## **Woza Moya School Sponsorship Programme**

On behalf of Woza Moya we would like to acknowledge, with enormous appreciation, the tremendous benefits we receive from our supporters for the orphaned and vulnerable children that we assist. In the past year 581 children were beneficiaries of the School Sponsorship Programme (SSP). This number is increasing all the time thanks to your generous donations. Supporting children left bereaved by the HIV/Aids pandemic is a vital part of our work. We aim to do this while keeping the children within their community so they can maintain their sense of belonging and cultural identity. A strong and essential part of Woza Moya's support for vulnerable children is ensuring that they not only attend school but stay in school. More than anything it is school attendance that keeps vulnerable children within the fabric of the community.

In this regard we would like to respond to frequently asked questions as to how we do this and why our priority is to focus on those children already in school as well as enabling new children to enter the sponsorship programme.

Over time we have noticed that those foster parents who ensure children in their care are in school tend to offer the kind of support that is necessary to keep those children in school. It is harder for Woza Moya to ensure sustainability of school attendance for those children without support from guardians. Of course it is our on going concern to make sure, where we can, that those children left without foster care get the kind of support that enables them to be in school in a sustainable way, however our first priority is to support those children already registered.

Orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC's), even with foster care, tend to be the most impoverished. It is more likely that they will be severely stigmatised against due to their lack of resources which show up as such things as having no shoes or proper school uniform. There have been many cases when not only fellow pupils discriminate against these children, but sadly also some headmasters and teaching staff. We have had incidents where children have been refused entry as the principles or teachers do not want a reputation of ragged children in their schools. We have had reports of children having jumpers - that are not school uniform - confiscated, leaving them cold throughout the day and most distressing, children who are obviously impoverished having their end of school reports withheld or being manhandled.

Woza Moya attempts to address some of these incidents of abuse within the schools; however as a project we are often in a difficult position in relationship to the power structures of the community. Therefore we also focus on lessening stigmatization of vulnerable children. It is for this reason that it's vital that Woza Moya ensures that those children already in school meet the same criteria of the other children, which means they can afford the school fees, have shoes and clean and neat school uniforms. We are however, also very pleased to report that schools have given us feedback about SSP recipients, saying that sponsoring them has dramatically improved their attendance at school and also their performance and growing self esteem. Also keeping children within the School Sponsorship Programme in school also ensures they have a daily hot meal.

## **To clarify some further questions that are often asked:**

Woza Moya only sponsors children in Primary schools throughout the Ufafa region; there are 6 primary schools in Ufafa. We do not sponsor children beyond our area of operation, (like at the more privileged Mariathal Mission School which would mean that we'd need to provide taxi fares for the year, which is unsustainable)

A sponsor takes on a child for a one year period (R500) (of course we welcome sponsorship for more than one child and for a longer period!) However, we've found it much easier to get sponsors when they realise that it's not a long term commitment. At present we have 100s of children on the waiting list which keeps growing. Once a child is in the programme, the donations paid by you (which don't need to happen just for the beginning of term, but can be given at any time), give the best opportunity for on going sustainability.

With the R500 the donor will receive an electronic picture and short story about the child. The child receives new uniform, jersey, shoes and other accessories like socks, underwear, vests. This does not allow us to provide stationary. There are also many hidden costs which aren't covered in the basic R500, such as employment of our seamstress, (to make the school uniforms), extra staff time, shopping and fuel which increase each year. Taxi fares for SSP's alone so they could attend the WM Christmas party last year was about R2500.00.

In selecting children for the SSP we aim to be as fair as possible, supporting an equal number of male and female children, as well as ensuring those children who may be marginalised, due to things such as disabilities, get equal opportunity. We also aim for support to be more widely and evenly spread around the community.

The actual process of selecting a child involves the WM Community Care Workers reporting back to Thembi at the WM monthly meetings on children in distress. Thembi then follows up with community visits to monitor and assess OVCs, both speaking with the child in question and taking a picture.

Each child is then passed onto Shirley who matches child with a donor and sends stories electronically to sponsors; any queries about this can be emailed back to Shirley at the Woza Moya office.

If a sponsor does wish to continue with the same child the following year then they're welcome to request this, they then receive a more recent picture and Thembi re-visits the same child to see how it's going.

Woza Moya prefers not to encourage further contact between donor and child; this is simply to do with not having the human resources to manage this. When sponsors want to come up for the day and meet their child, it usually means Jane is out of 'work' for the whole day, as most of the OVCs we sponsor live in the more remote regions of Ufafa and we can't contact them except via our CCWs. Jane, on more than one occasion, has spent the whole day trying to locate a child. You can imagine with 581 children within the sponsorship programme, it would be a full time job facilitating sponsor visits to their children!

However, a good occasion for sponsors to meet their child/children is the annual Christmas party where they can meet in person those they've sponsored for the year. Shirlet at Woza Moya emails all sponsors with an invite closer to the time. Appropriate gifts for the children from sponsors are also fine as we can give these to the CCW to pass onto the child. (Please contact Shirley for further advice if needed)

Woza Moya can also provide donors with the telephone numbers of the relevant schools, teachers name and cell no if they should wish to enquire about school reports.

Woza Moya does not always immediately allocate a child with their requisites once funding has been received, we wait until we have about 50 children to do because we get big discount on big orders. Hence sometimes there is a time delay between receipt of donations and allocation of child.

As with many dimensions of Woza Moya's multi faceted work, we are learning as we go along, often through very difficult challenges and experiences. On the whole, through our experience, we feel we have come to a fair and sustainable policy with our School Sponsorship Programme, one that respects both child and sponsor while aiming for sustainable support for each child and foster family.

I hope this goes some way to addressing any concerns or queries you may have about the School Sponsorship Programme. Please feel free to enquire further if you are already a donor or wish to offer sponsorship.

With many, many thanks for your on going support which we rely on and look forward to.

With good wishes and many blessings for you well being and good fortune.

Thanissara (Founding member of Woza Moya Project)  
Dharmagiri [www.dharmagiri.org](http://www.dharmagiri.org)