

Children's Villages as a Possible Solution for the World's Orphans

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Abstract

Continuing rise in the number of orphans in the world, due to AIDS, natural disasters and poverty, offers the prospect of an entire generation or more growing up without parents. The implications of a complete absence of parental figures have frightening societal possibilities. This paper outlines the experience of the movement known as *Youth Aliyah* in absorbing thousands of orphan refugees at the end of World War II through the medium of large children's villages. The goal, methods and results of the movement will be discussed in the hope that similar methods can be helpful elsewhere.

Introduction

Numbers

Continuing rise in the number of orphans throughout the world presents a formidable challenge to all child-centered and humanitarian organizations. In the year 2000 it was predicated that by the year 2010 there would be 44 million orphans, with 68% of them, or 30 million, AIDS-related.¹

At present, it is estimated that there are fifteen million AIDS-related orphans under the age of fifteen and the number is increasing exponentially. HIV/AIDS became one of the ten leading causes of death of children under fifteen in 1999.² Unless there are startling breakthroughs in health-care in the near future, it is estimated that by 2010 there

will be at least an additional ten million AIDS-related orphans. Of these, about half are at present double orphans (that is, with no living parents) and this ratio is expected to triple within the next five to ten years.³ About three quarters of the worldwide population of people living with HIV/AIDS are in sub-Saharan Africa and eighty percent of all the world's children orphaned by HIV/AIDS reside there. More than half of them are between the ages of ten to fifteen.⁴ One in ten households in Swaziland is run by orphans, fourteen-year-old heads of households are becoming commonplace and by 2010 in twelve African countries fifteen percent of all under-fifteens will be orphans.⁵ In Lusaka, Zambia, 100,000 children live on the street.⁶ Although the *tsunami* tragedy in East Asia focused the attention of the world on its 250,000 or so victims – and this is not to decry the extent of the losses – an equal number die of HIV/AIDS *every month*.⁷

Immediate problems

In addition to the enormous current problems of providing food, housing, education and health-care to these children, their social and emotional needs are equally challenging. Not only are such children often stigmatized or ostracized by their community, but:

“These children are much more at risk of becoming a victim of violence, exploitative child labour, discrimination or other abuses. Surviving children face malnutrition, illness, physical and psychosocial trauma, and impaired cognitive and emotional development. Unaccompanied girls are at especially high risk of sexual abuse. And because of all this they too are very likely to become HIV-positive.”⁸

In addition to sexual abuse as such,⁹ there is fear that both rape and incest is concomitant with the orphans' situation.¹⁰ Many of these children are already being exploited in numerous ways – they are used for unskilled labor in dangerous fields, such as construction and quarries; many are made into prostitutes or become the victims of pedophiles; and many become domestic servants under conditions that approach slavery.¹¹ Indeed, in countries where actual slavery still exists orphans are probably more vulnerable than any other sector of the population. Still others are sold – legally or illegally -- through commercial adoption rings to foster or adoptive parents, with no supervision or inspection. They are also stripped of their inheritances by distant relatives.¹²

Since it takes about ten years from HIV infection until death from AIDS and with global infection rates still rising “HIV/AIDS will continue to cause unprecedented suffering among children for at least the next two decades, if not longer.”¹³

Thus, unless conditions change drastically, this generation will produce another generation under the same conditions.

Future implications

This has frightening societal implications. We face complete generations growing up without caregivers, role models, protectors, restrainers and social arbiters. Nobody to limit behavior, to inspire, to give meaning to life, or even just as an adult to talk to – which could result in a condition of almost complete anomie. What will be the morals, attitudes, knowledge and activities of millions of people growing up without parents or parental substitutes? The possibilities are almost too frightening to contemplate.

These anomic children (and later adults) are ripe for exploitation by any number of ideologies and entities. Youth gangs are one prospect, since – as has been found in many places -- groups can provide emotional support and peer pressure leading to activities beyond the reach of individuals. Many have already been forced into petty crime by their poverty,¹⁴ and they may form Mafia-type criminal organizations that will make youth gangs seem like child-play. They may be impressed into, or voluntarily join, military or pseudo-military forces that offer material comfort and social interaction, becoming -- as the children in the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda -- child soldiers. There then arises the question as to whether they can be held responsible for participating in actions like genocide. They might be proselytized by organized religions, or by cult-like movements. The prospect of millions – or tens of millions -- new Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, Shiites, Sunnis, or Wahabis in the heart of Africa may be viewed differently by various observers, but that they will represent an entirely new situation is unquestionable.¹⁵

Such proselytizing – sometimes accompanied by material aid -- has already begun among the *tsunami* survivors, and there is well-grounded fear that this will upset the sometimes tenuous *modus vivendi* arrived at by different religions in some countries.¹⁶ The situation of Hindus within Moslem majorities, or Christian minorities within pagan or Moslem countries, or Moslems within Christian countries – each of these could become a flashpoint of violence were the current balance to be upset.

Further, youngsters in the anomic conditions described above might be ripe for movements like that which resulted in Johnstown; or for Satanic groups; or for Mau-Mau-type organizations. There are already 4,000 children in 718 communal settlements in 100 countries affiliated with the “Children of God” movement, which has been

charged with child abuse.¹⁷ What seems certain is that it will be very difficult for these orphans to grow up into moral, polite, altruistic adults, unless their present lives are greatly changed.

Current attempted solutions

It is not as though this problem is being completely overlooked or neglected. A number of attempts have been and are being made to overcome -- or at least to alleviate -- the current situation. In June, 2001, the United Nations General Assembly held a special session on HIV/AIDS in which member countries:

“Vowed to develop national strategies and policies that build and strengthen the ability of governments, communities and families to support orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS by 2003, and to implement those policies by 2005.”¹⁸

It is now 2005, and any programs put in place in the meantime have been almost totally ineffective. Indeed, one can only echo the 2002 UN report on the 1990's: “The 1990's was a decade of great promises and modest achievements for the world's children.”¹⁹

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS, is said to be the main advocate for global action on the epidemic.²⁰ UNICEF is “working with governments to help them create national policies, laws and action plans to meet the goals they have committed to.”²¹ There are other international organizations like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria,²² as well as governments,²³ non-governmental organizations, church groups and volunteers who have undertaken numerous projects, like helping parents to live longer, eliminating school fees,²⁴ providing health and psychological services, etc. It is difficult even to estimate how

many national and international organizations have the welfare of children as their objective. Googling “*international* childcare organizations” produces over fifty groups.²⁵ However, in contrast to *tsunami* victims, HIV/AIDS orphans are, “Not as visible or heroic,”²⁶ making the efforts of these groups much more difficult.

Traditionally, and particularly in Africa, orphans are taken care of by nuclear family members, by extended families, or even by distant relatives. Supporting and helping such arrangements seems to be the method of choice among many of the organizations active in this area. Unfortunately, foster home and distant relative arrangements are, and increasingly will be, completely inadequate in the face of the overwhelming numbers to be expected. Harber notes the increasing difficulty of recruiting sufficient black South African adopters.²⁷ Indeed, the extended family is already said to be, “collapsing under the weight of the HIV/AIDS crisis.”²⁸

Simulated families

Consequently, another popular method used by organizations seeking to deal with orphans is through simulated families, as in children’s villages. This type of facility has a long history. Boys Town, in Nebraska, was opened in 1917 and has now grown to 72 homes throughout the world. SOS-Kinderhof operates 440 children’s villages in 173 countries and since it was founded in 1949 has taken care of over three hundred thousand children. Other groups, like the Pestolozzi Children’s Village in Troge, Switzerland, have established group homes. UNESCO has a somewhat similar program operated under the aegis of the International Federation of Educational Committees (FICE), which was founded in 1948, and now operates in twenty-five countries

The philosophy – or, rather, the dictum -- of almost all of these organizations is, simply speaking, that small is good. This expresses itself in most cases as an attempt to recreate a nuclear family for the orphan, with pseudo-parents and siblings. Indeed, this is the stated goal of UNICEF operations:

“UNICEF believes that whenever possible, children who are orphaned should remain in their communities to be raised by their extended families. Recognizing that family care is far better for children and far less costly than institutionalized care, children who grow up in families also develop better social skills and are psychologically better adjusted than those who grow up in institutions because they receive more affection and attention and develop a better sense of personal identity.”²⁹

In most cases the residents are limited to eight or ten to a house, and the number of houses in a village is likewise limited to ten or less for the same ideological reasons:

“Every SOS ‘village’ consists of about ten group houses, each with six to eight children and two adults. The goal is to make each village feel like a community, and each home feel like a family.”³⁰ ³¹

Is smaller better?

This is a continuation of what was a social work creed for many decades: That any home is better than any institution, or – in the words of former New York mayor LaGuardia – “The worst mother is better than the best institution.”³² This axiom is not only the accepted wisdom – it has taken on an almost moral value and become, in effect, a mythology, if not an ideology. This view has become so

embedded that “bias against the orphanage care option dominates the child care profession.”³³ This view seems to be based on a vision of Dickens-like warehousing of children, a view which shows little awareness of the reality of modern institutions. The possible positive effects of growing up in a healthy, nurturing environment in an institution seem to be written off in advance.

Yet, there are many examples of total-care children’s institutions whose results are no worse than family care, and in some instances seem to be better. These include modern orphan homes, summer camps, boarding schools, *kibbutzim* (the plural of *kibbutz*), and Youth Aliyah children’s villages.

Orphan Homes

First and foremost regarding orphan homes: There is *absolutely no empirical research* to bolster the popular negative conception of orphan homes. The last large-scale survey of orphan homes was conducted about 1929 and no study of such magnitude has been published since.³⁴ In addition, “No controlled studies exist comparing the effectiveness of orphanages with that of foster care,”³⁵ just as there is almost no research that individualizes children in long-term total-care institutions and compares them with those in their own families. Similarly, it is difficult to locate longitudinal studies of the after-effects of institutionalized childhood.³⁶ Of the scattered research that has been published, McCall says, “Oftentimes, the conclusions did not seem justified by the procedures.”³⁷

The only definitive longitudinal studies of the outcomes of orphanage childhoods are reported by McKenzie.³⁸ He found: “Of the (orphan home) boys and girls who graduated from high school in the late 1950s more than 80% now have college and

advanced degrees.”³⁹ Going even further, he conducted two detailed and extensive investigations of orphanage alumni, nine years apart, and found that:

“According to their own reports, the orphanage alumni have outpaced their age counterparts in the general population on a substantial majority of the social and economic measures covered in the study. Also, nine out of ten respondents indicate that they would prefer to have grown up in their orphanages than in foster care.”⁴⁰

In his own name – as an orphan home graduate -- McKenzie comments:

“Few of us would have entertained adoption, and virtually all of us today shudder at the foster-care option.”⁴¹

Not only is there no real evidence that institutional living is necessarily bad for children, there are many examples of abuse in foster home placements, as well as corruption and lack of supervision.⁴² As McKenzie puts it: “With all the talk about ‘family values,’ critics must never forget that some families value very little.”⁴³

Summer Camps

Another example of a large institution, for children only, is the widespread summer-camp movement in many countries. Despite the fact that these are short-term experiences – usually no longer than two months – they are, by definition, large childcare institutions. There are camps with fifteen hundred campers,⁴⁴ and the largest summer camp in the United States has a capacity of four thousand children at a time.⁴⁵

And most people, including children, parents and professionals, consider summer camp experiences to be positive. To buttress this intuitive feeling, there is research that agrees. A four-year longitudinal investigation of year-round development anchored in a

summer-camp period⁴⁶ found that the results included growth of a sense of security, independence and personal achievement as a result of the camp experience.⁴⁷

Camps, like institutions, can be constructed and led to achieve positive developmental results. They are intentional communities, deliberately constructed to achieve specific results. Kurt Lewin called camps “cultural islands” that promote change.⁴⁸ Throughout the literature re the camping movement there runs the theme of the “culture of the camp,”⁴⁹ which, it appears, can be deliberately created for various ends, becoming – among other things -- “a caring community.”⁵⁰

Boarding schools

Those who denigrate large live-in institutions for children and youth seem to totally ignore the experience of boarding schools – not those which were once called reform schools, or any other penal institutions, but freely chosen and often expensive live-in schools. The British boarding schools are said to have created the elite of that country, and in the United States:

“Compelling research results based on interviews with 2,700 students and alumni from boarding schools, public schools, and private day schools prove that contemporary boarding schools have a diverse body of motivated and well-rounded students who study and live in supportive, inclusive academic communities where they learn about independence and responsibility – traditional values that help them achieve success at higher rates than private day and public school students – in the classroom and beyond.”⁵¹

In contradistinction to the theory which holds that only small groups can achieve educational and developmental aims, it is worth noting that the most prestigious of American boarding schools have from five hundred to over a thousand students.⁵²

In addition to boarding schools as such, there are junior boarding schools with children from five to fifteen years of age. In the United States, each of these may contain over four hundred students.⁵³

Kibbutzim

The longest running experience in non-family childcare is that of the Israeli *kibbutzim*. Founded in 1911 – and thus approaching a century of existence -- these communal agricultural villages at one time included three percent of the total population of Israel, and now number over two hundred and fifty individual villages. In every case, caring for children was performed primarily outside the family setting. Each *kibbutz* had an infants' house, youth house, and adolescents' house where the children lived under the care of selected staffs. This method, called collective education, was “unique in that the children live in the children's homes from birth on.”⁵⁴ It should be noted, however, that there was frequent contact with parents in after-work hours and on holidays.

It will be recognized that this was a reversal of the accepted axiom mentioned above concerning families vis-à-vis institutions, and the empirical results defied the accepted wisdom. *Kibbutz* members who grew up in children's and youth houses were no less adjusted and effective within Israeli society than others, and – in fact – often became the leaders in many fields of education, medicine, etc. The educational level in the *kibbutzim* is higher than that in Israel generally, and the same percentage of *kibbutz* members have an academic degree as does the general population. Twenty percent have

post-secondary school certificates, as compared to 12% in the general Jewish population.⁵⁵

On a more empirical note, a nine-year-long study of the moral development of *kibbutz* children as compared to children coming from outside the *kibbutz* found that, “There were no significant differences in moral-issue choices between *kibbutz* and non-*kibbutz* subjects” in two of the three fields studied. In the remaining field, children from North African parents were more likely to see the father as an authority figure. However, the researchers report that the results might be skewed against the *kibbutz* subjects, since the instrument used missed: “The *kibbutznicks*’ (*kibbutz* members) communal emphasis, social solidarity, and greater emphasis upon collective happiness.”⁵⁶ Another study found *kibbutz* children to exhibit more developed group functioning skills, albeit less warmth and involvement with peers.⁵⁷

There is other research indicating that care given by kin may include problems that do not exist in non-kin situations: “Kin-caregivers’ costs are perceived as a drain on their own emotional resources...In contrast, non-kin foster caregivers appeared to be more focused on the difficulties of the child’s behavior than on feelings of personal distress.”⁵⁸ In addition, “in many cases (adolescents) prefer to be with an adult other than their parent.”⁵⁹

There has been, of late, a return to children growing up in their parents’ homes in the *kibbutz*, but this was clearly in response to a need expressed by parents, and not by children, nor was it based on perceived outcomes. It was, in fact, a concrete example of the old folk-saying: “More than the calf wants to suck, the cow wants to suckle.”

Regardless of the small-group/large-number philosophical and educational

argument, it has been made moot by the growing millions of orphans in need of care. The current merciless growth of numbers makes discussions of home versus institutional care moot. The small-home, small-group philosophy is fast becoming a Canute-like response to an overwhelming tide of need. It might be helpful, therefore, to look at the experience of large children's villages.

Youth Aliyah Children's Villages

In 1934, sensing the threat to the Jews in Europe, an attempt to rescue the children, at least, by sending them to Palestine, was undertaken. The first group of forty-three children, under the aegis of Henrietta Szold, arrived in Palestine in 1934. The movement was named Youth Aliyah ("Ascent of Youth") and was supported and financed by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. At the end of the war in Europe, in 1944, the first group of children who had been imprisoned in death camps and survived death marches arrived in Palestine.⁶⁰

The most natural institutions to absorb these children were the *kibbutzim*,⁶¹ with their children's and youth houses already in place. The absorption of small numbers of refugee children was not difficult for the *kibbutzim*. However, most *kibbutzim* were themselves small, and the number of children they could deal with was limited. As waves of immigrants continued to arrive, the device of autonomous youth villages was necessarily adopted. The six hundred thousand Jews living in Israel at the emergence of the State received and absorbed over two million new immigrants during the first few years. Thus, new, large institutions were needed. The tradition of children and youth living in their own community, with responsibilities, democratic decision-making, and

individual choice – as exemplified in the *kibbutz* children's and youth houses – was extended to the many non-*kibbutz* children's villages subsequently established.

The largest of the non-*kibbutz* youth villages was Neurim, with a population of 1200 children. There seems to have been no educational or physical limits to the expansion of this village, in which the population ebbed and flowed according to need. Housing in youth villages was mostly dormitory style, with fifteen to forty children in each building. There was a central dining room, and various activity rooms. In addition to full-fledged educational programs, activities were centered around agriculture, with a heavy addition of cultural activities. Regardless of age at time of entry, the villages were structured to take care of the children until they could enter into normal Israeli society.

Within the villages there were groupings according to age, and each group had the leadership of educational, recreational, and social teachers and counselors. There was a heavy use of volunteers – often from Israeli youth movements, and sometimes as a national service provided by the army. In general, the ratio of staff to child was two staff members to about fifteen children.⁶²

The structure of the children's village allowed for as much autonomy as possible on the part of groups, with children's committees, councils and task-forces a prominent feature. Many villages published their own newspapers. Punishment for anti-social behavior usually took the form of exclusion from certain activities, such as a hike, a visit to a city, etc.

In addition to refugee children, *Youth Aliyah* in its later days began to accept into the villages children who, for many reasons, could not remain at home with their families. These included children from dysfunctional families, victims of parental abuse, children

of single parents, and those from homes so poverty-stricken that they could not raise their children properly. According to the present Director of *Youth Aliyah*, given money, knowledgeable staff and proper supervision, there is no reason why the children's villages pioneered by the organization could not be expanded considerably.⁶³

It was recognized during the earliest days that success in working with children in such settings could not be based merely upon good will and empathy, but required at least semi-professional training. Consequently, training schools and courses specifically designed to prepare staff for children's village were set-up. The average training course for professional staff was for two years, although a myriad of short-courses on specific subjects or problems was continually offered. The prestige of being a *Youth Aliyah* counselor⁶⁴ was high, and as they organized themselves, they also developed a Code of Ethics to govern their own behavior in their jobs.

At present, over 300,000 Israelis are graduates of *Youth Aliyah* villages. There does not seem to be any discrimination or prejudice concerning adults who grew up in youth villages and those who grew up in families. On the contrary, "The residential villages of *Youth Aliyah* are very prestigious in Israeli society...some of the leading elites were formed in the residential villages of *Youth Aliyah*."⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that the present President of Israel – President Katzav – is a *Youth Aliyah* graduate who grew up in a youth village. Recent studies indicate that 90% of *Youth Aliyah* students are mainstreamed into regular high schools, with 85% accepted into the Israel Defense Forces⁶⁶ -- which administers psychological, emotional and other tests to recruits -- although preparation for army service was never one of the goals.⁶⁷

Application to Africa

In comparison with the numbers of children needing help worldwide, the Israel experience may seem minuscule, but the principles and methods outlined above may be helpful. Insofar as timing is concerned, *Youth Aliyah* has now been active for over seventy years, and given the timeframe of present and future cohorts of AIDS-related orphans, planning and preparation that may take years – even decades -- is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary

Staff training

Among the first steps in planning for a widespread program of youth villages is the preparation of staff. Assuming that the necessary teachers as such will have been trained in that discipline, (which will require a massive increase in schools of education) the areas that seem closest to those used by *Youth Aliyah* leaders are social group work, informal education and child growth and development. Since any of these areas can be full-time long-term subjects, it will be necessary to tease out the parts most needed for the preparation being planned. One precedent for this kind of training may be found in the Hebrew University's Schwartz Program, which was instituted in 1968 to provide directors and senior staff for a planned network of community centers. The program was directed jointly by the schools of social work and education, and after its inception added a specialization in pre-school development. Another precedent is the course of studies offered by the *Youth Aliyah* staff training institutions themselves.

There arises a double question: Who will be the teachers, and where will the teachers themselves get trained? Without going into too much detail, it is possible that African schools of social work and education can provide faculty for the initial training of

teachers and/or indigenous personnel can be sent for training abroad. There are presently 69 schools of social work in Africa, with twenty of them in South Africa alone.⁶⁸

Expansion of these schools and the establishment of new ones – perhaps schools devoted entirely to training staff for children’s villages – is indicated.

(Chart One about here)

The subject of teachers and/or youth counselors relates to another important element, not only as regards staff, but as it affects the children themselves. That is, the importance and difficulty of working with several languages and/or ethnic differences.⁶⁹ As has been pointed out, Africa is far from a homogenous entity, and even within one country, or one area, several languages and/or dialects may be spoken.⁷⁰ In addition, tribes and clans are an important part of the African tradition, and thus, “Severing a child legally from the clan would be regarded as depriving a child of his or her birthright.”⁷¹ Consequently, great care would have to be exercised not to impose a Western pattern on the African community. The goal, ideally, would be to, “Find ways in which African and Western notions of childcare can be married.”⁷²

Costs

It is difficult to base a cost-estimate of children’s villages on the Israeli experience, for all or even part of the target population, given the differences in exchange rates, varying costs of living, rural/urban ratios, etc. However, as one possible measure, note that the gross national income per person in Israel is about \$16,000. The same factor ranges in sub-Saharan Africa from \$3,120 in Gabon to \$90 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The average GNI per capita in fourteen of the African countries under discussion is slightly less than \$1,000; and the median is about \$500.

(Chart Two about here)

In short, the average GNI in sub-Saharan Africa is about a sixteenth of the \$16,000 GNI in Israel. Accordingly, the \$4,000 annual cost per child in an Israeli village would correspond to an average of \$250 per child in Africa. If the GNI figures at the lower end of the scale seem unbelievably low, it might be salutary to recognize that in forty of the Organization of African Unity countries people live on less than \$100 a year.⁷³ Contrariwise, note that in New York foster families receive on the average about \$28 a day for each child, a figure that is soon to rise.⁷⁴ This comes to over ten thousand dollars per child per year, which is at variance with the oft-repeated argument that foster care is cheaper than institutional care.

Again, it should be clear that GNI does not represent local costs, but insofar as it is even a rough approximation of differences in costs between Israel and the African countries being discussed, the cost of fifteen million children in villages (using an absurdly optimistic assumption that all of the children could and would be accommodated), would range between about \$12 billion dollars – if the cost were that in Gabon – to \$33 million dollars in the Democratic Republic of Congo. If the average cost of about \$250 is used, all of the orphans could be settled into children's villages for less than four billion dollars a year. These upkeep costs do not include the initial investment in buildings and grounds, nor do they include the costs involved in training staff. The *World Orphans* organization estimates that it costs about \$8,000 to build a shelter or about \$200 per child.⁷⁵

At first glance even the annual costs may sound like a formidable amount, given the small contributions that trickle in to organizations like UNICEF from member countries.

But the United States alone spends \$15 billion on development aid each year.⁷⁶ It has spent about \$60 billion so far to fight the war in Iraq, and is spending almost \$4 billion *a month* on the troops there. Tax cuts in the United States amount to about \$20 billion a month.⁷⁷ Indeed, one of the bills introduced in the United States Senate calls for \$3.35 billion for HIV/AIDS spending, which means that the \$4 billion necessary to take care of AIDS-related orphans is not a pie-in-the-sky amount.⁷⁸

Similarly, were the fifteen million orphans to be seen as great a catastrophe as the 2004 earthquake and tsunami which cost 250,000 lives, the uncounted billions of dollars donated for relief and reparations there would make the cost of children's villages minute in comparison.

On a more realistic note, it is clear that all of the orphans in Africa cannot and will not be accommodated. Consequently, cost figures must be reduced to fit a realistic child population in children's villages. With this in view it should be recognized that Europeans spend over \$40 billion dollars a year on cigarettes; Americans spend about \$60 billion a year on personal beauty products; in Britain over a billion pounds sterling is spent each year on pet food; and the world trade in drugs amounts to over \$400 billion a year.⁷⁹ Even Ethiopia, with an annual health budget of \$140 million, spends over a billion dollars a year caring for orphans.⁸⁰

Sponsorship

Only an international organization, intergovernmental or non-governmental, could possibly raise the funds and administer the program being suggested. Either an existing organization, like UNICEF, or a newly created one would be needed. It is theoretically possible to form a consortium of all the current organizations aiding African

orphans, but realistically nobody wants to be coordinated unless they can be the coordinator, and the chances of such an over-all organization seem remote.

However, the use of children's villages does not have to be seen as an all-or-nothing proposal. If international aid and cooperation are not feasible, then the substitution of children's villages for family-type programs can be undertaken in a specific area, or even a local community, by those organizations now focusing on small family-like settings. The major thrust of this proposal is to reach many more orphans than are presently being served.

Nothing in this proposal should be interpreted as denigrating the small, family-type children's villages. They are doing a useful, if limited, service. As the *Talmud* tells us, "He who saves one life is as though he had saved the world," and the proposal made here is to supplement, and not necessarily to supplant, the efforts already being made.

Conclusion

The relentless rise in the number of orphans -- and particularly AIDS-related orphans -- throughout the world, demands new methods of addressing the problem. The emphasis on small-scale family-like settings must be reconsidered. Regardless of the small-group/large-number philosophical and educational argument, it has been made moot by the growing millions of orphans in need of care. The current merciless growth of numbers makes discussions of home versus institutional care moot. The small-home, small-group philosophy is fast becoming a Canute-like response to an overwhelming tide of need.

The use of large-scale children's villages, instead of the presently preferred family-like settings, is urgently needed. There is no evidence that such villages are inherently

less effective than much smaller settings, and some reason to believe that they are as good, if not better, than the present method. The success of such large villages is predicated on the existence of properly trained staff – personal, supervisory and administrative – which requires specialized training. Costs are not astronomical, and given the fact that not all of the orphans will be affected, can even be seen as reasonable. Failure to deal with the problem of the world’s orphans may create more than a generation of rootless, amoral, illiterate persons, with implications of great social upheavals.

Despite the difficulties of conceptualization and implementation of such programs, social planners should be aware of the admonition in *The Ethics of the Fathers*: “It may not be given you to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist.” Or, on a more secular plane: “The only thing necessary for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing.”

¹ Porter, C., “Report Predicts World’s Orphans Will Exceed 40 Million by 2010.” *Fact Sheet*, United States Embassy, Tokyo, 2000.

² Wines, M., “AIDS-Linked Death Data Stir Political Storm in South Africa,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2005, p. 1.

³ *Africa’s Orphaned Generations*. Geneva: UNICEF, 2005, pp. 9-11.

⁴ *Children Orphaned by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*. UNAIDS Fact Sheet. Geneva: UNICEF, 2003.

⁵ Care and Support for Orphans and Families Affected by HIV/AIDS. http://www.unicef.org/aids/index_orphans.html, October 18, 2004, p. 1.

⁶ Porter, *op cit*.

⁷ Kristof, N. D., “Land of Penny Pinchers,” *New York Times*, January 5, 2005.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ See, for example, Lachman, Peter, “Understanding the Current Position of Research in Africa as the Foundation for Child Protection Programs,” *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 28 (8), 2004, pp. 813-815.

¹⁰ Lalor, K., “Child Abuse in Tanzania and Kenya,” *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 28 (8), 2004, 833-844.

¹¹ *Africa’s Orphaned Generations*, *op cit*, p. 30.

¹² LaFraniere, S., “AIDS and Custom Leave African Families Nothing,” *New York Times*, February 18, 2005, p. 1.

¹³ Lalor, *op cit*.

¹⁴ Porter, *op cit*.

¹⁵ Judaism, it should be noted, does not proselytize.

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- ¹⁶ See Rohde, D., "Mix of Quake Aid and Preaching Stirs Concern." *New York Times*, January 22, 2005.
- ¹⁷ Goodstein, L., "Murder and Suicide Reviving Claims of Child Abuse in Cult," *New York Times*, January 5, 2005, p. 1.
- ¹⁸ Care and Support..., *op cit.*, p. 2.
- ¹⁹ *Yearbook of the United Nations 2002*. New York: United Nations, 2002, p. 1170.
- ²⁰ *TakingITGlobal*, <http://understanding.takingitglobal.org/health/AIDS>, December 18, 2004, p.1.
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