

EMPOWER

2025 Q2 IMPACT EDITION

Firmly Rooted
In Safe & Loving
Family.

p7

We Do Not Play With People's Lives:
The Hidden Harm of Orphanage
Performance Tours

HELPING CHILDREN
WORLDWIDE

Contents

- P3 Executive Director's Letter
- P4 Words Matter: Rethinking "Orphanhood"
- P7 We Do Not Play With People's Lives:
The Hidden Harm of Orphanage Performance Tours
- P12 The Success of Rising Tides Conference on Transition
- P16 A Sacred Calling: Exploring HCW's
1:27 Bible Study with Dr. Andrea Siegel
- P18 "One of the best experiences of my entire life."
- P19 A Timeline of our Commitment to Family Welfare
- P29 Connecting With Mission

**HELPING CHILDREN
WORLDWIDE**

PUBLISHER

Dr. Melody Curtiss, J.D.

PROOFREADING

Linda Reinhard

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Marianna Mäkineniemi

CONTENT & RESEARCH

Dr. Laura Horvath, Ed. D.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Laura Horvath, Ed. D.

Dan Hope

Kelly Strong

Sarah Rhem

Executive Director's Letter

Dear Readers,

In this edition of Empower, we celebrate the growing movement toward Firmly Rooted Families, the focus of our second-quarter development campaign. Throughout our magazine, podcast, blog, and social media, we explore both the challenges and transformative opportunities within the HCW mission. But we also have much to celebrate in our ongoing efforts to help children worldwide.

Laura Horvath and David Musa are working with the global child reform community they convened in D.C. this past February for Rising Tides 2025. Read about the outcome of that conference and its ongoing impact to galvanize transition from institutional care to family-based placements, connecting and empowering leaders.

Speaking of Firmly Rooted, we're excited to announce that a short "sizzle" reel will be released during the second half of the year. It is compiled from the footage we've been capturing the last two years for a documentary on child care reform. We hope this preview inspires you to join us in funding the completion of the film. We know it is crucial that we inform the public about the hows and whys of care reform, recruiting more champions of change.

This July, we mark 25 years of mission work in Bo, Sierra Leone, where the Child Reintegration Centre has made a transformative impact on the country's most vulnerable children. Their work continues to inspire not only in Sierra Leone but across Africa and the globe. Two teams of mission volunteers will travel over that month to join in the celebration.

We've seen firsthand the challenges facing philanthropy this year: reduced U.S. government funding and rising global conflicts. But our enduring partnership with the United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone exemplifies how trusted,

long-term relationships can overcome these obstacles. For 25 years, we've worked together to tackle poverty at its roots, creating sustainable local networks that endure even when we're not there.

I hope you dive into this issue and revisit our Winter edition on child health. In upcoming issues, we'll focus on empowerment, global alliances, and active mission partnerships, offering in-depth looks at our work.

This issue highlights the power of strong families, which are the backbone of thriving societies. We'll tackle issues like child marriage, trafficking, and family care, spotlighting programs and organizations committed to preventing family separation and empowering communities.

Lastly, we invite you to celebrate Strong Family Sunday this November, a time to engage your local community in honoring the strength and resilience of families everywhere.

I hope you find inspiration in the stories of the people who join us in this work. I certainly do. You are welcome to send comments or questions to me at melodycurtiss@helpingchildrenworldwide.org.

Finally, thank you for being part of this journey.

In the Hands of God,



Dr. Melody Curtiss, JD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Words Matter: Rethinking "Orphanhood"

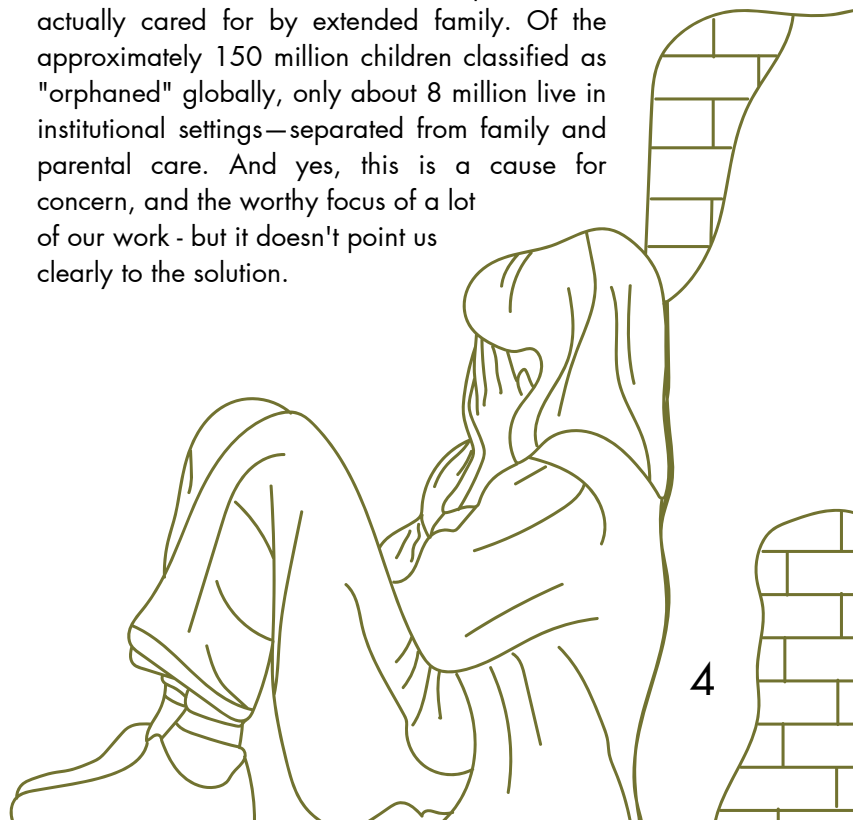
I've been with Helping Children Worldwide for a while now, but in my former life, I was a high school English teacher and a professor of English Education. My plan after college was always to become an English professor, focusing on Shakespeare and writing. Words have always been my first love. God had another plan for my life. I still deeply believe in the power of words. As a certain wise wizard once said, "Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic." So, what does that have to do with HCW's Q2 focus on child welfare, child protection, and family strengthening? Everything. Words shape our understanding, but their meanings can shift across borders and over time.

Take, for example, the word "orphan." About 50 years ago, UNICEF redefined it to include any child who had lost one or both parents. While this may have been intended to bring attention and resources to more vulnerable children, it also created confusion. If you asked the average person today what an orphan is, they'd likely say a child with no parents, or anyone who could care for them, but that's not the actual working definition used by those engaged in global child welfare. And even if a child has lost both parents, that doesn't automatically mean that they have no one to care for them, as many children are cared for by grandparents, extended family, foster care and adoptive families. The word "orphan" as defined in this way doesn't illuminate or clarify - it obfuscates.

"Words shape our understanding, but their meanings can shift across borders and over time."

I experienced this firsthand when I explained UNICEF's definition to my husband, who lost his father at 15. He looked at me like I was crazy. "I'm an orphan?" he exclaimed. His mother, very much alive and well, raised him and his siblings on her own after her husband passed. He had never considered himself an orphan, and neither did his family. This revelation frankly made him angry. It felt to him a little like a cheat designed to raise more money by blurring the definition. Kind of the opposite of the idea of words as a means to illuminate.

For years, I've wrestled with the implications of the word "orphan" and the terms that accompany it. I was especially struck by phrases like "orphan epidemic" and later, during the COVID-19 pandemic, "orphan pandemic." While these terms may help illustrate the scale of suffering, they don't truly define the issue at hand - they don't point us to the problem (family separation) or the solution (reintegration and family strengthening). The vast majority of children who have lost one or both parents are actually cared for by extended family. Of the approximately 150 million children classified as "orphaned" globally, only about 8 million live in institutional settings—separated from family and parental care. And yes, this is a cause for concern, and the worthy focus of a lot of our work - but it doesn't point us clearly to the solution.



So, where should our focus be? As my friend and colleague Elli Oswald wisely says, "The solution to orphanhood is not an orphanage." Those words may sound like they belong together, but they don't. If we accept the premise that "orphanhood" is a problem we must solve, we must recognize that the issue we're really trying to address is one of family separation - and the solution isn't a building—it's a FAMILY. Sometimes it seems to me that by placing a child into an orphanage we create "an orphan" (after all, who lives in an orphanage but an orphan?). But a child reintegrated into a family - their own or an adopted one - is no longer an "orphan." They're a son or daughter.

If we are facing a crisis, it's not an orphan crisis —it's a family separation crisis. Let's call it what it is, and then set about solving it by reuniting children with families, and by strengthening those families to prevent separation from happening in the first place.

I don't want to remove the word "orphan" from our discussions entirely. After all, James 1:27 describes caring for widows and orphans as the purest expression of our faith. But I believe we need to shift our language to reflect the real problem and the real solution. Instead of focusing on "orphanhood," we should be addressing family separation. By strengthening families and preventing separation in the first place, we can move beyond labels and work toward real, lasting change.



"Instead of focusing on "orphanhood," we should be addressing family separation. By strengthening families and preventing separation in the first place, we can move beyond labels and work toward real, lasting change."



Dr. Laura Horvath
**SENIOR TECHNICAL ADVISOR
FOR GLOBAL PROGRAMS**



An estimated 140-150 million children are classified as orphans worldwide. Only about 1/9 of them have lost both parents.

Source: Christian Alliance For Orphans, "On Understanding Orphan Statistics," 2014.

"Children are not fundraising tools. They are human beings, worthy of safety, dignity, and respect!"



We Do Not Play With People's Lives: The Hidden Harm of Orphanage Performance Tours

Years ago, Dan Hope from Strengthening Families and Children traveled with a team to Sierra Leone to do some capacity building with the case management team at Child Reintegration Centre, our allies in Sierra Leone. In many informal conversations the team had with Dan while there, he said many things we have found personally convicting—particularly around the responsibility we all take when we step into the space of vulnerability that surrounds a child separated from parental care, and assume the responsibility to care for that child.

"These are people's lives," he said. "And we do not play with people's lives."

Many of us started orphanages out of an abundance of good will and good intention. We're smart, educated, compassionate people.

But when we step up and say "I will care for this child/these children, I will protect them and ensure they have the things that they need," we need to feel the full weight of what that commitment means. It is not just to feed and protect, and give them access to healthcare and education. This is the minimum of what a child needs. Would you be satisfied if that is all your own child received?

Children—all children—must have, and rightly deserve - love, attachment, someone to belong to, identity, personal history, culture, and connection.

To presume that we can provide all of these things to children living in another country, in an institutional setting, is put simply and candidly - hubris.



Those of us who have stood up to say that we will lead in the protection and care of children must band together to help the world understand that the best way to do that is to ensure a loving and permanent family for each and every child that finds him or herself on our roster of care. And we must guard against any activity that leads to the exploitation of these children or their stories - even "in their own best interest."

Recently, Kelly Strong, a trusted friend, colleague and the Chief Executive Officer of SAFE in Kenya, wrote an incredible piece highlighting a growing danger to vulnerable children—being trafficked and exploited as fundraising tools through efforts that bring them from their homes in the Global South to perform for audiences in the Global North with song, dance, and personal stories that exploit their trauma on huge stages to goad Western audiences into donating money.

Shortly after Kelly posted this courageous story on LinkedIn, Hope and Homes for Children launched an equally courageous campaign calling out the problems with these orphanage performance troupes. Orphanage performance troupes bring children living in orphanages in the Global South to perform in churches and sometimes even larger venues in the UK and the US.

As Hope and Homes writes: "While performances from such children's performance groups are presented as charitable, cultural and often religious outreach exchanges, they are raising alarm bells for how they commodify trauma, disrupt education, blur legal lines, and prop up a model of care long discredited by international standards."

What's even more alarming is that these groups aren't just popping up in Western churches—but on TV talent shows as well. Children in these shows don't just sing and dance; they're encouraged to share their often traumatic stories in order to "tug on the heartstrings (and the purse strings) in order to raise funds to continue the support of damaging models of care (i.e., orphanages)."





It's not our intention to add anything new to this dialogue, but to put our weight behind these two important conversations shared by Kelly and Hope and Homes, and shine a light to bring others to them. To that end, we encourage you to read both Kelly's posts and that of Hope and Homes, and we'll share some highlights from each here.

As Kelly writes, "Because when children are flown across borders to sing, dance, and share traumatic stories to raise money, we must ask hard questions, not just about logistics or legality... but about dignity, consent, and power." As Kelly rightly points out, the beneficiaries in such scenarios are not the children, but "organizations, the donors, the marketing team, and even the emotional payoff donors seek."

**"We do not play
with people's lives."**



As she points out, the cost is high:

- "Children being objectified as tools for income generation"
- "Performances that blur the line between culture and exploitation"
- "Narratives that reinforce harmful stereotypes and create donor dependency"
- "The unseen emotional and psychological impacts on children, including relived trauma"
- "The perpetuation of a model of fundraising that others copy, thinking it must be okay."

As actors in child protection and child welfare, we **MUST** adopt a first do no harm approach to this work, and our highest priority **MUST** be the protection of every child we serve.

As Hope and Homes points out, these orphanage performance models that "encourage [children] to recount personal trauma, often repeatedly and without proper psychological support, can cause lasting harm. Rehearsed performances risk re-traumatization, while the children's agency and dignity are sidelined in favour of donor and congregational appeal."

The child protection risks abound when children are removed from one setting and transported to places where they're to perform.

Children often stay in the homes of church members while abroad— and what screening and child protection measures are put in place in these cases? As Hope and Homes highlights, there is an alarming lack of standardization or transparency around these practices.

Likewise, issues of consent are often not addressed at all. These performances and the advertising around them typically make extensive use of images, names, and personal stories. Since we know that 80% of children in orphanages have a living parent, and many more have extended family—were the children and their families or guardians informed or given the opportunity to refuse? Or even felt they had the right to say no?

As Kelly says: "Children are not fundraising tools. They are human beings, worthy of safety, dignity, and respect!" And again, from Dan, "we do not play with people's lives."

When we assume the awesome and fearful responsibility to care for a child, it is our duty to honor that above all else.





Children who grow up in families show stronger motor skills, better language development, and healthier emotional well-being compared to those raised in orphanages.

The Success of Rising Tides Conference on Transition

This past February, leaders, advocates, and experts from around the world gathered in Washington, D.C., for the Rising Tides Conference on Transition. The event was a resounding success, bringing together key stakeholders committed to transforming global care systems for orphans and vulnerable children. With a sharp focus on transitioning orphanages to family care, the conference reinforced the urgent need for sustainable, child-centered solutions that prioritize the well-being and future of every child.

The discussions at the conference focused on how to grow the global movement away from institutional care and toward family solutions. Research overwhelmingly shows that children thrive best in families, where they receive the emotional support, stability, and individualized care necessary for healthy development. The Rising Tides Conference provided a platform for sharing best practices, innovative models, and policy strategies to facilitate this critical transition, and move the needle in transition as a critical piece of care reform for children globally.

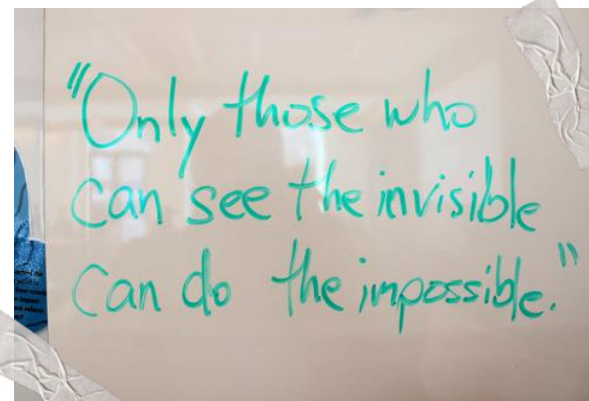
One of the key takeaways from the conference was the necessity of a collaborative approach, but also the need for better coordination between various stakeholders and systems. Government agencies, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and child welfare experts must work together to ensure that transitioning from orphanages to family care is both effective and sustainable. "Deep dive" and "fishbowl" discussion enabled thought leaders from around the globe to identify tools and practices that are working, lay out the real challenges facing transition and care reform, and brainstorm next steps and solutions to broaden the impact of transition as a component of care reform.



A significant focus of the event was the role of funding in driving care reform. Many orphanages exist not because they are the best option for children but because financial structures have historically supported institutional care. The conference emphasized the importance of redirecting resources toward family-strengthening programs, social services, and community-based support to prevent family separation and ensure that vulnerable children can remain in a safe, loving environment.

The transition from orphanages to family care is not just a policy issue—it is a moral imperative. The Rising Tides Conference reinforced that keeping children in institutions should be a last resort, not the norm. By investing in transition efforts, we can break the cycle of institutionalization and give children the opportunity to grow up in families that nurture their potential and safeguard their rights.

As the momentum from the Rising Tides Conference continues to build, it is imperative that governments, donors, and child welfare organizations commit to sustained action. The success of this conference is only the beginning—now is the time to turn knowledge into action, ensuring that every child, no matter where they are in the world, has the opportunity to grow up in a loving family.



This year marks our
25th Anniversary!

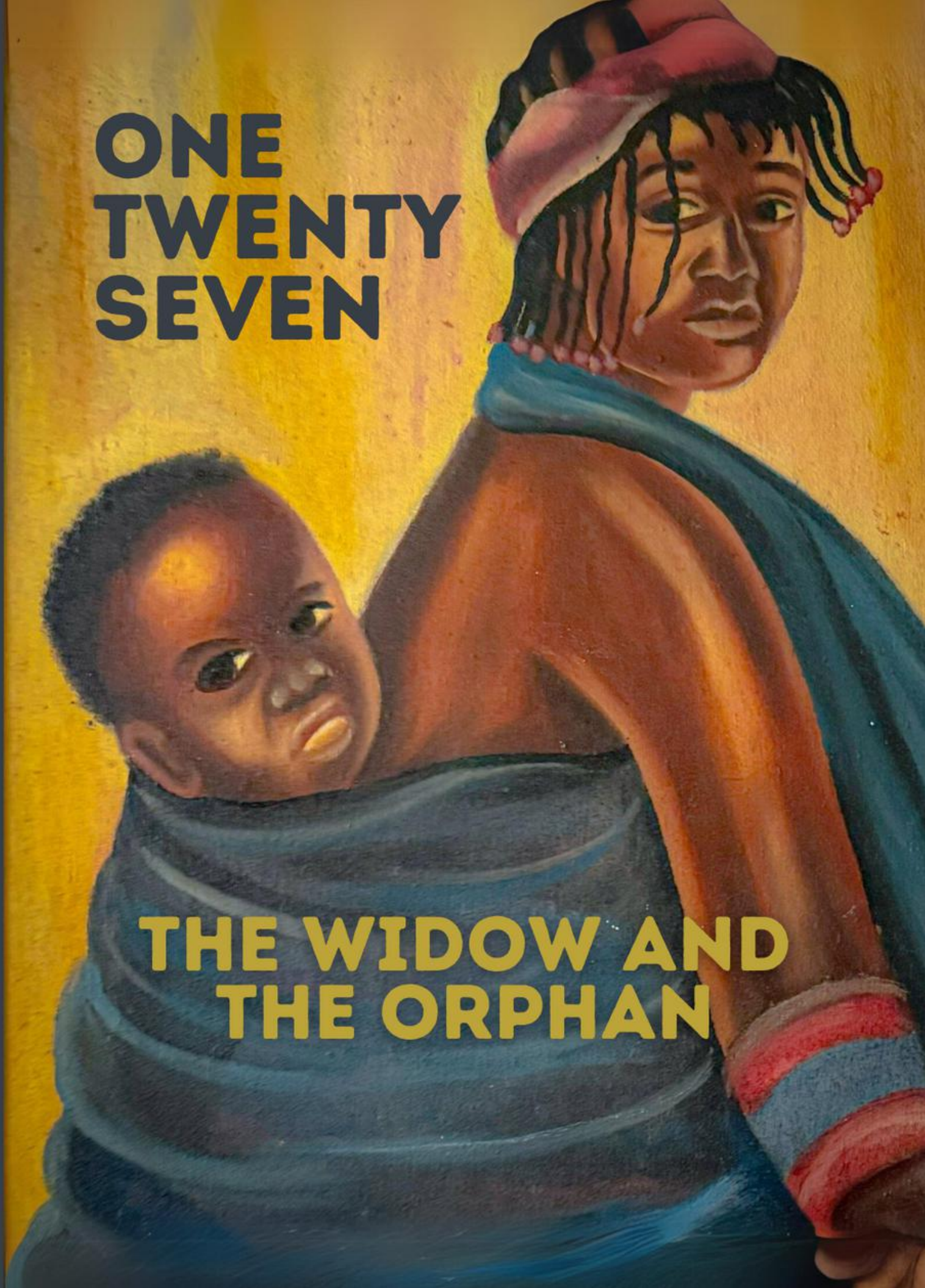
Join us in
celebrating.



READ ABOUT MILESTONES ON PAGE 19

**ONE
TWENTY
SEVEN**

**THE WIDOW AND
THE ORPHAN**



A Sacred Calling: Exploring HCW's 1:27 Bible Study with Dr. Andrea Siegel

In the heart of Scripture lies a call that is as urgent today as it was in the first century. James 1:27 reads:

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

This verse is the cornerstone of 1:27, a profound and timely Bible study developed by Dr. Andrea Siegel for HCW (Helping Children Worldwide, and available in both English and Spanish). More than just an exploration of James chapter 1, 1:27 is an invitation into the very heart of what God calls "pure and faultless" worship—caring for the most vulnerable among us.

Dr. Siegel brings a unique and deeply enriching perspective to this study. As a Jewish scholar, she opens a rare window into how the original audience of James—a community of Jewish believers—would have received and understood his words. Her lens offers not only theological depth, but historical and cultural resonance that many modern readers might miss.

JAMES 1:27

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

As Siegel shows us, when James references care for widows and orphans, he isn't introducing a new idea. He is calling his community back to the core of their shared faith tradition—a tradition steeped in the Torah's repeated commands to protect the vulnerable. In Exodus, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms, God makes His concern for the widow and the orphan unmistakably clear. James, steeped in this same heritage, echoes that divine heartbeat in a Christian context.

What Dr. Siegel so powerfully illuminates is that James 1:27 is not merely about charity—it's about identity. For the Jewish believers James was addressing, this call to care for the most vulnerable among their community wasn't optional. It was foundational to what it meant to love and honor God. Their faith - and ours, formed in the crucible of covenant and community, was always meant to be lived out in acts of justice, mercy, and love.



Dr. Andrea Siegel

**Download your
own copy here:**



Through 1:27, participants are invited not only to study the text but to be transformed by it. Dr. Siegel's teaching challenges us to re-examine what we often reduce to rituals or routines and to re-center our lives around what truly matters to God: defending the defenseless, walking with the wounded, and remaining unstained by the selfishness of the world.

This Bible study doesn't just teach. It sends. It invites churches, small groups, and individuals to embody James 1:27 in practical, meaningful ways—particularly in HCW's mission to serve vulnerable children and families around the world.

Dr. Siegel's unique voice reminds us that when we care for the widow and orphan, we're not just doing good. We are worshipping our Lord. We are aligning our lives with the very heart of God.

If you're ready to explore a deeper, richer understanding of worship, justice, and faithful living, 1:27 is a study that will challenge and inspire you.

“One of the best experiences of my entire life.”

As I was looking for an internship for my Generalist year of my MSW at Louisiana State University, I came across Helping Children Worldwide. Interning at HCW has been one of the best experiences of my entire life. At the beginning of the internship I was excited and nervous because I had never worked with a non-profit organization that helped children and families in Africa. However, after starting the internship I realized very quickly that I was going to gain a lot of knowledge and have a great experience.

In the beginning of the internship I was very excited that I was able to meet George and David and hear their experiences of living and working in Sierra Leone. This experience allowed me to understand what types of resources they have and how the case management works at the CRC. I loved being able to provide the CRC with my knowledge of being a social worker intern, and providing research through research papers.

Working with the whole staff at HCW has been nothing but amazing. Everyone is so kind, non-judgemental, and eager to help someone new learn. The greatest memories during interning at HCW involve talking with Laura about all the resources Sierra Leone has or does not have. I'll never forget when Laura told me that children there often do not have birth certificates. I was so surprised by this information, I kept asking “really, they do not have birth certificates.” Something that was so normalized in the US others did not have the access to getting those obtained.

Overall, this experience at HCW has been one I will never forget. I learned not to take the simple things that are offered for granted, to understand a child always needs a family. I learned that no matter where you are located you can always help those overseas or even in the same country. I want to thank all of HCW for allowing me to join the team for a short period of time, and offering me a lifetime of opportunities and knowledge.



Sarah Rhem

A Timeline of our Commitment to Family Welfare →

CRC Origins amid crisis (1999–2000)

The Child Rescue Centre (CRC) was born in Bo, Sierra Leone, in late 1999 during the brutal civil war that left thousands of children orphaned and homeless. It emerged from the vision of Rev. John K. Yambasu, who, though serving as a missionary with the United Methodist Church, returned to the U.S. to raise funds, with strong backing from Rev. Tom Berlin and donations—particularly from Floris United Methodist Church in Northern Virginia. By July 4, 2000, what began as a street-feeding mission had evolved into a full residential home, rescuing approximately forty children from market areas and streets, providing them with food, shelter, and education.

Join us
celebrating
these milestones
in our alliances!



Expanding through turmoil (2000–2015)

Following the formal opening in 2000, the CRC operated as a traditional orphanage through wartime and post-war challenges. The cost of managing the orphanage quickly outpaced the ability of a single church to support the ministry, and a church partnership was initiated that expanded to 16 congregations over time.

In 2003, the ministry of #CW became a formal nonprofit mission, but its goal to serve the most vulnerable children on Earth kept it tied to the evolving work of the CRC, in one of the most impoverished nations in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 70% of all impoverished children reside. The Ebola crisis of 2014 forced an 8-month lockdown, but the centre remained pivotal.

During this period, a shift in philosophy began: the U.S. program leadership introduced trauma-informed care in 2015, US and Sierra Leonean leadership began engaging in research criticizing long-term institutional care, and frontline staff— of whom were former care leavers, and led by then CRC Director Emmanuel Nabieu, himself a care leaver of the CRC —advocated for reintegration of all CRC children into families. By early 2016, a formal transition process was underway to move away from residential care toward community-focused, family-based care.



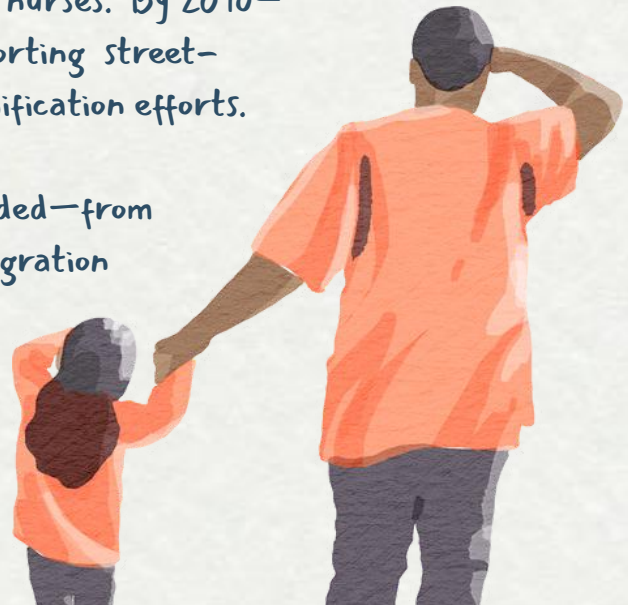
Before our ally CRC transitioned into the Child Reintegration Centre, 98% of the children in its care had at least one living parent who could have cared for them with just a little support.



Transformation and transition (2015–2020)

Between mid-2015 and 2019, CRC staff conducted community mapping and developed a strategic plan to repurpose facilities. Recommendations included leveraging the center as a vocational training, educational resource, or boarding institution for student nurses. By 2018–2019, the centre shifted organically into supporting street-connected children through tracing and reunification efforts.

In fall 2019, the institution officially rebranded—from the Child Rescue Centre to the Child Reintegration Centre—to reflect its mission of reunifying children with families through case management, micro-finance programs, workshops, counseling, and social work.



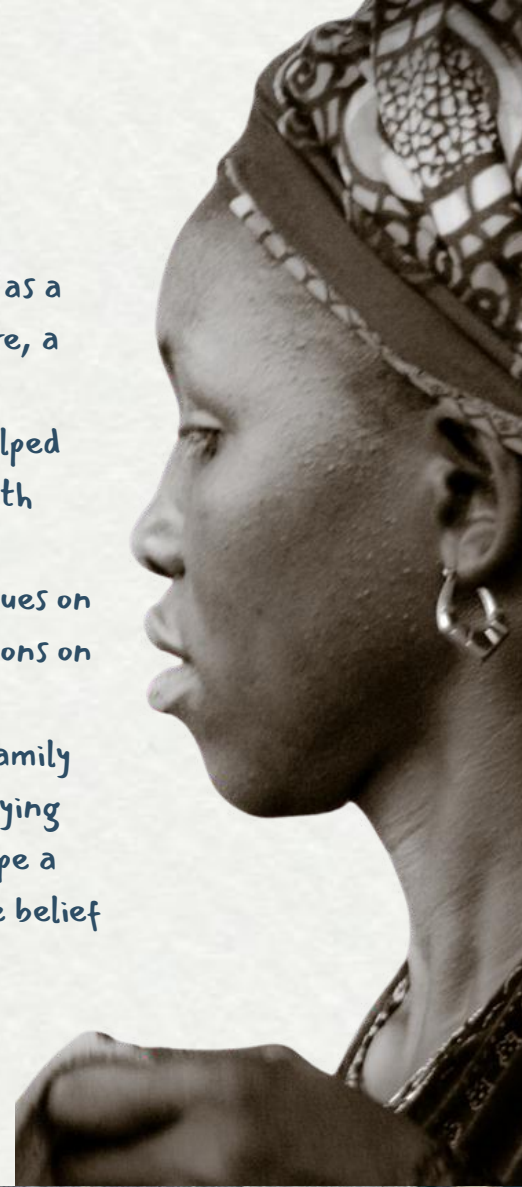
A mission rooted in reintegration (2020–present)

Since 2020, the Child Reintegration Centre has focused entirely on strengthening families and communities rather than housing/institutionalizing children. It launched its Transition, Coaching & Mentoring (TCM) department in June 2020 to guide other institutions through similar transitions. Today, the CRC supports hundreds of children and families through a mix of educational scholarships, healthcare access, economic assistance, and professional case management. It currently reaches over 1600 children and 450 families, delivering micro-finance training, family-strengthening workshops, and mentorship—marking a full transformation from rescue-based care to sustainable community-centered support.



Today: National impact

The Child Reintegration Centre has also played a critical role as a founding member of the Sierra Leone Coalition for Family Care, a collaborative network of local organizations committed to care reform across the country. Through this coalition, CRC has helped lead efforts in education, advocacy, and direct engagement with government stakeholders to influence child welfare policy and implementation. CRC staff have contributed to national dialogues on alternative care, and are working on participation in consultations on the 2024 Child Rights Act, and seeking ways to support the development of national standards for case management and family tracing and reunification. By fostering partnerships and amplifying the voices of frontline practitioners, the CRC continues to shape a national movement toward family-based care, grounded in the belief that every child deserves the love, safety, and stability of a permanent family.





- Female and male children should not be together. Male caregivers should not be with female children.
- Boys and girls should not be sleeping in the same room, especially teenagers without the adults around.
- Foster caregivers should give age appropriate chores to children.
- Do not leave children with strangers without being supervised.
- Toilets should not be too far from home, if for younger children should use ^{drugs}.
- They should not sell alcohol in the home when we have children.
- The caregivers must be attached to the child in holistic care-bonding.
- The child must attend a school/institution not too far from where the family live.
- The child/children must not be punished i.e corporal punishment - child/children should be disciplined or

Impacting the world

In recent years, the Child Reintegration Centre has also gained a growing global reputation for its thought leadership in child welfare reform, particularly through its education and advocacy work in alliance with Helping Children Worldwide (HCW). CRC staff have presented their successful transition model and family-strengthening strategies at major international platforms, including the Rising Tides conference, the Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) Summit, and events hosted by the Better Care Network. In 2024, CRC's innovative Firmly Rooted Family Strengthening Workshop was the focus of a peer-reviewed article co-authored by CRC and HCW staff and published in the Child and Youth Forum, highlighting the impact of community-based interventions on child and family resilience. These contributions underscore CRC's influence as both a practitioner and a thought partner in global care reform, with its locally led, evidence-informed model serving as a beacon for other organizations seeking to transition away from institutional care.

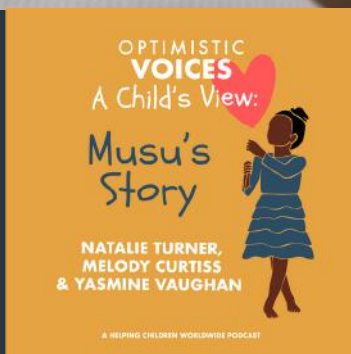
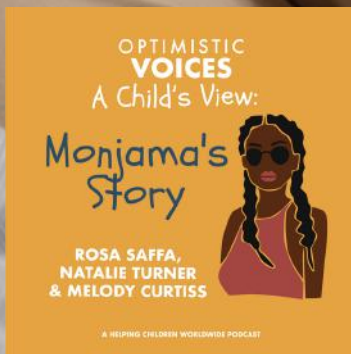
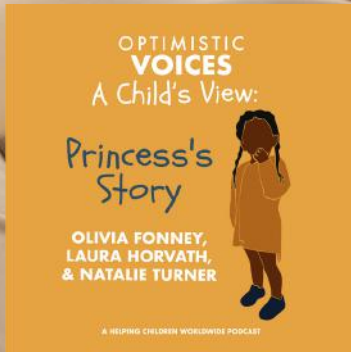
*"No, I will not abandon you as
orphans—I will come to you."*

John 14:18



OPTIMISTIC VOICES

A HELPING CHILDREN WORLDWIDE PODCAST

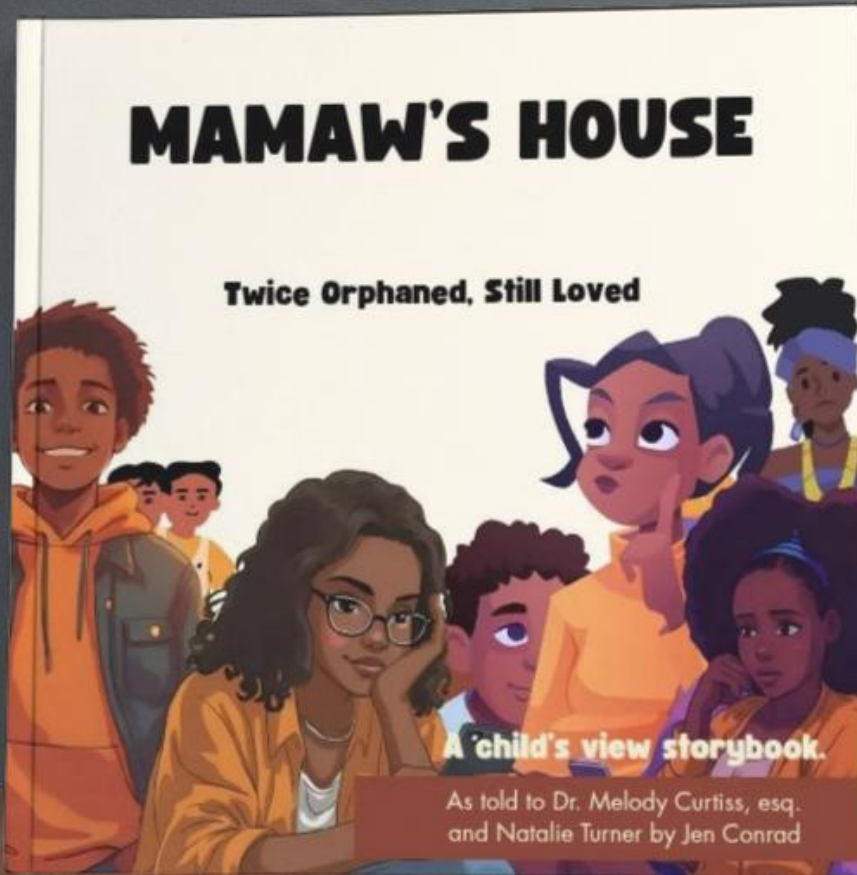


Have you listened to our newest podcast series **Optimistic Voices: A Child's View** yet?

Hear real stories of perils and mission impact through a child's eyes, with commentary from a young person. Stories guaranteed to change your perspective!



PERFECT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:



Read Twice Orphaned



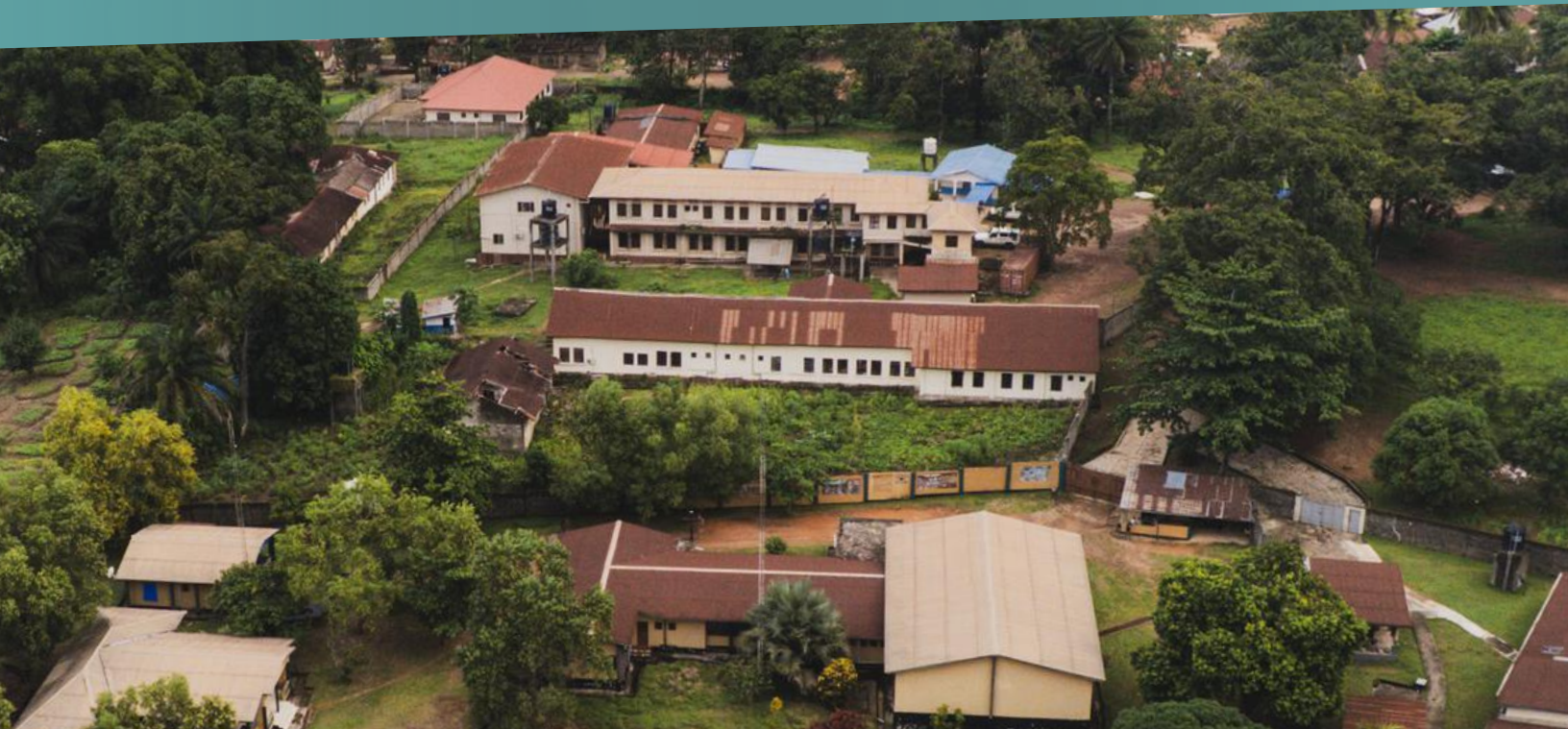
Read Tiny Miracles

These inspiring books
come from our
Optimistic Voices:
Child's View podcast
series, download your
free copies here!

Connecting with Mission

Helping Children Worldwide (HCW) is committed to strengthening families and communities, recognizing that a strong family is the foundation for a child to not only live but thrive. When you strengthen families, communities and nations are likewise strengthened, and the need for orphanages disappears. By addressing the root causes of vulnerability, we aim to build resilient communities where children can thrive. We empower local social workers, child protection and child welfare specialists and support their work, collaborating to strengthen national child welfare systems and ensure that every child is able to find permanency in a family. We believe that by investing in sustainable community-led solutions, we can create lasting change and break the cycle of poverty and despair.

Sierra Leone's current child protection landscape underscores an urgent need for stronger, family-oriented solutions. Despite recent legal reforms—such as the 2024 ban on child marriage and growing advocacy against Female Genital Mutilation, and the passing of the Child's Rights Act which enshrines (among many things) a child's right to family —poverty remains pervasive, with nearly 60% of the population living below the national poverty line and staggering levels of malnutrition among children. Around 27% of the 2.7 million children are considered vulnerable and often lack a primary caregiver, while formal protection systems like police units and Child Welfare Committees remain under-resourced and limited in scope and reach. Many children face abuse, trafficking, child labor, early marriage, or placement into orphanages, frequently driven by economic desperation and weak social structures. In this context, institutional or crisis models like orphanages fall short—they can't heal deep family separation, attachment disorders, or social stigma. Instead, the expansion of family-strengthening programs with social support, positive parenting training, and community-based case management is essential to keep children safe, supported, and thriving right where they belong: within loving families and resilient communities.





Helping Children Worldwide’s approach to child welfare is grounded in the belief that sustainable change must be locally led and contextually relevant. Rather than importing external solutions, HCW invests in building the capacity of local leaders—like those at the Child Reintegration Centre—to design, implement, and adapt strategies that reflect the realities of their communities. This includes technical support for developing case management systems, linking our allies to training in trauma-informed care, and providing ongoing mentorship in strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation. By equipping local partners with the skills, tools, and confidence to lead their own reform efforts, HCW helps ensure that solutions are not only effective but also culturally appropriate and sustainable over time.

This capacity-building model also extends to HCW’s support of coalition-building, peer learning, and cross-sector collaboration. Through initiatives like the Rising Tides Conference and its connection to global leaders in care reform, and HCW’s involvement as the secretariat to the Sierra Leone Coalition for Family Care, HCW fosters opportunities for local leaders to share knowledge, shape policy, and amplify best practices on both national and global stages. The result is a growing network of empowered practitioners who are transforming child welfare from the inside out—anchored in local expertise, strengthened by global collaboration, and focused on ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow up in a safe, loving family.

Please support our work:
www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org



A final word to readers.

I would be remiss if I failed to invite you to become an even greater part of our alliance for good. Our mission is to help children everywhere thrive in any way we can. For that reason, we employ a bold, collaborative strategy aimed at tackling the root causes of life-threatening challenges that children face in our increasingly complex and troubled world. Through strategic alliance, we ensure that donor contributions are managed with integrity, promoting sustainable progress while adhering to ethical practices for engaging in community-led initiatives.

Helping Children Worldwide is committed to the orphan prevention strategies featured in our last two editions. Future issues will delve into critical topics on building community resilience, advancing economic empowerment, and fostering robust, principled alliances for global good.

The upcoming issue of Empower online magazine will highlight initiatives and alliances to strengthen communities, organizations, and individuals who can directly enhance resilience and recovery of children afflicted by severe poverty, lethal conditions, and dangerous situations.

To learn more about this vital work, please visit helpingchildrenworldwide.org.



Get in touch:

support@helpingchildrenworldwide.org

Don't forget to follow us:



Strong Family Sunday Nov 9th 2025

The United Methodist Church's Strong Family for Every Child campaign provides free resources to help churches:

Educate congregations to advocate for family care models for all children

Mobilize advocacy & fundraising for family-strengthening programs

Support missions that return and/or keep children in loving families

Strengthen communities by helping families in crisis