

# **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about FFC and its Charity Work**

## **What is FFC?**

It is a charity founded in September 2003 by a small group of friends residing in Oxford, the UK. Initially it was an informal group formed to sponsor HIV/AIDS orphans in Ethiopia. The group started sponsoring children in 2004. Since then its membership has been growing, and it has become a registered charity in the UK (Charity Reg. No: 1115193).

## **What are the objects of the FFC?**

The ultimate aim of FFC is to enable HIV/AIDS orphans become self-reliant and productive citizens. To achieve this aim we focus on orphans who could be looked after by next of kin with financial assistance from our charity. Our intention is to sponsor as many HIV/AIDS orphans as possible. In doing so we also aim to support

- existing but overburdened extended family and social networks, the traditional coping mechanism to look after orphans
- under resourced local charities working with and for orphans and vulnerable children with advice and technical support (whenever possible)

## **How does the charity select beneficiaries?**

Beneficiaries are selected with the following procedure:

- when sufficient fund is available to sponsor the charity writes to local charities to submit proposals
- those with acceptable proposals are then asked to forward the profiles of suitable candidates
- the trustees select the required number of candidates.

Broadly speaking FFC asks for the profile of candidates

- (a) who lost both their parents to HIV/AIDS,
- (b) who have next of kin willing to look after them but who need financial assistance to do so.

A form designed to obtain structured profile of such candidates is sent to charities. Finally trustees make their selection taking into consideration matters such as age, sex, and area of residence to ensure fairness. They also consider the merits of the charities who administer the funds by assessing, as much as possible, their organisational capacity to monitor developments, to maintain contact with us, to provide us with regular reports on progress or setbacks, and so on.

### **Does this mean FFC members support the beneficiaries collectively?**

Yes. The regular contributions of the members and incomes from other donations and fundraising goes to a common fund which is used to sponsor selected beneficiaries. The number of sponsored orphans depends on the size of the fund. As FFC sponsorship is long term, pooled resources are better suited to honour commitments to beneficiaries. The system also allows flexibility for members to make regular contributions with what they can afford. Taking full sponsorship of a particular child can become a deterrent if the cost is beyond the means of a potential member.

### **Why do you not allow members to sponsor a particular child?**

Allowing individual members to sponsor individual orphans requires a higher monitoring capacity and overhead costs from FFC. Arranging individual sponsorships, managing them individually, and monitoring the relationship and correspondences between sponsor and beneficiaries require full time staff and office space. These in turn require huge overhead cost. Presently the charity is small and it is entirely run by volunteers. This allows the charity to use almost all its money to sponsoring orphans.

FFC cannot also guarantee the continuation of sponsorship to beneficiaries if their sponsors happen to default through negligence or financial difficulties.

However, the charity may be able to help individuals interested in direct sponsorship of orphans. FFC can get them in touch with local charities running orphanages or some other welfare projects for orphans and street children.

### **Why do you select only those who could be looked after by next of kin?**

Three considerations influence the preference of FFC to support orphans who can be cared for by relatives: the charity's limited capacity, loving home environment for the beneficiary, and the importance of supporting extended family network.

There are up to five million orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia. Considering the enormity of the problem what FFC can do (with pitifully small resources) is like a drop in the ocean. Ideally FFC likes to sponsor all the orphans in the country. In reality however this is not possible, and the charity had to adopt some sort of selection criteria to make the best use of its resources. FFC believes its adoption criteria is best suited to help bring up children in loving home environment rather than orphanages. The sponsorship money can also benefit carers and their dependents by helping to ease their financial burden.

In Ethiopia children are normally looked after by their parents, their extended family and their neighbours. There is no social service nor a welfare state system to look after children when they become orphans, or when they needed protection from abusive/negligent parents. The burden of raising up orphans therefore falls on

grandparents, or on uncles and aunts, or kindly neighbours. Presently due to the AIDS pandemic the traditional systems of support from extended family could no longer cope. The sponsorship of orphans looked after by next of kin helps to ease the financial burden of the extended family network.

### **Is there a mechanism to ensure FFC sponsorships reach the beneficiaries?**

Yes there is. Activities in Ethiopia are monitored by the charities who administer the funds. As a rule we request prospective partners in Ethiopia to make a commitment

- to visit the children regularly
- to send us biannual reports on individual beneficiaries
- to send us copies of annual audited reports posted to donors and other bodies
- to facilitate regular visits by our local representatives and occasional visits by our members who travel to Ethiopia from time to time.

We have a local representative, and we plan to approach the authorities in Ethiopia to get legal recognition for her. The representative then be able to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of sponsorship in addition to, and independent of the charities working with us.

### **What safety measures are in place when members visit the beneficiaries?**

Monitoring by staffs of the charities or by our representative are done in the presence of the carer to make sure adequate protection is in place for the child.

The carers are usually poor grandparents or uncles and aunts who have their own families. Under such circumstances the beneficiaries will grow with love and care. Neither the culture nor the family environment allow sexual abuse of the children.

### **Who can become a member?**

Any adult person who supports the aims and objectives of the charity and wants to make a difference in the lives of orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia can join by making regular contribution. FFC has a constitution and bylaws and a person who abides by the rights and duties stated therein can apply to become a member.

Minors can also join as junior members with the consent and knowledge of their parents or guardians. The children of some of our members make regular contribution out of their pocket money.

### **How much money does one have to pay to become a member?**

There is no fixed sum as such. Most of our members contribute £10.00 pcm (ten pounds per calendar month). Some members contribute up to £20.00 pcm. Adult students contribute £5.00 pcm or more, whereas minor contribute even less. A few years ago £10.00 pcm could have covered the monthly allowance paid to a sponsored child. The

allowance (ETB 180.00 pcm) was by no means generous. It was and still is meant to cover the cost of the basic needs of the child (food, clothing and educational materials). With inflation of 16% or more per year over the last two years the cost of living in Ethiopia has made the allowance inadequate. In view of this we encourage existing and new members to contribute more generously.

But any regular donation is acceptable even if it covers only a fraction of the costs of sponsoring one child.

### **How can one become a member?**

You can become a member

- a. by filling and signing a simple Membership Form; and
- b. by setting up a standing order from your bank account to that of the charity (a preferred method since it is reliable, efficient, transparent and less onerous on the officers and volunteers of the charity)
- c. by sending the form and payment information to the charity.

As soon as FFC received the form and confirm your payment the officers will send you acknowledgement and a welcome letter. They will also keep you posted about activities and progress of the charity and other matters requiring members participation and advice.

Forms can be obtained (if not already found attached to with this material) by writing to the charity.

Email to: [contact@friendforchildren.org](mailto:contact@friendforchildren.org)

Mail to: Friends For Children (FFC), 6 Forest Side, Kennington, Oxford OX1 5LQ, UK

### **What if one cannot contribute regularly?**

If you cannot contribute regularly, you can become a valuable supporter of the charity

- by making donation whenever you can
- by offering practical help (with fundraising, office work, promotional work, etc.)

For FFC which so far depends on voluntary work supporters are as much valuable as members. Contact the officers to find out how you can help.