TOPIC 7. OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

Planning for the long term care of our children.

Preface:

Please note that this topic (Our Children's future – Planning for the Long term care of our children) is based on ideas which were developed as part of the original Memory Project training programme in Uganda.This means that some of the language and examples are geared to the culture of Uganda and the particular problems of families living with HIV/Aids.

But we believe that most of the basic ideas will be useful for people living in other parts of the world and facing many different problems.

We hope that workshop leaders will find ways to adapt the ideas to fit the culture and the needs of their group and we shall be very pleased to have feedback about different ways of getting the messages across. We can then pass on useful information to other groups who are going down the same road.

Please contact us via: **www.memorybooks.org.uk/feed-back-form**

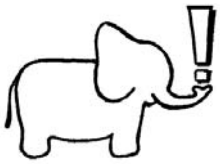
Icons used in this document:



This is where you can get a picture of how the topic fits into the whole structure of the Memory Book training programme and what it aims to achieve with the group members.



When this icon appears at the beginning of each topic it describes how the topic is broken into sessions or group activities and provides a guide to the time to be spent on each session. Elsewhere this icon details what needs to be taught by the end of a particular session or activity



Elephants don't forget and you should not forget this important piece of information or idea.



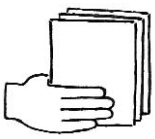
Key facts for the trainers/workshop leaders to get across during the session.



Guidance notes for trainer/leaders on how to run this session.



A story that draws a picture of a situation or explains a point or idea to the group.



Material/sheet to be given out to the group.

Background information for trainers/group leaders



This topic is covered in two sessions:



Part A. Planning ahead – why we cant leave things to chance. This section helps parents to think the unthinkable – what will happen to their children if they are not around to see them through to independence? For some parents its too painful to face the prospect of being separated from their children, whether its due to death, marriage breakdown or war, because they just cant see a solution. Other parents still cling to the hope that, if the worst happens, the old family support networks will take over as they did when communities were more stable. For the children who live in families where disaster is just around the corner, but where no-one talks to them about it, their lives are a nightmare of uncertainty. On the other hand, if parents can be helped to face reality and to talk openly with their children about what might happen in the future, they have taken the first steps towards making a workable plan. Their children will be better prepared to cope, knowing who to trust and rely on. This topic will help parents to face their fears and look at practical solutions. The information given below ties in with ideas raised in other topics (eg. knowing what children can understand and cope with at different ages (topic 2), opening up communications in the family (topic 3) and knowing how to use the law to make plans stick (topic 9.)

Part B. Family Group Conferences.* This section focuses on a well-tried system for bringing family members and the wider community together to work out how to look after children who are orphaned or separated from their parents. Through role play, workshop members will have the chance to try out this system and decide if it could help them to work out a safe plan for their children.

(* the ideas suggested in this section are based on a model for using Family Group Conferences, which was developed in New Zealand and is now widely used in many other countries. But the basic idea, of the whole community pulling together to find a way to support vulnerable children, will probably feel quite familiar and comfortable to many workshop members because it was the way many communities in Africa worked things out in "the old days.")



Part A. Planning ahead.

Aims of this session are to help parents to:

- Understand that PLANNING FOR CHILDREN is at the centre of the Memory Project.
- Realise that a good plan is the best legacy for their children.
- Listen to new ideas, learn to think more widely about how to make a safe plan.
- Think about the family's situation from the child's point of view.
- Be open about their fears for the future and join forces with other parents so they can help each other.

MATERIALS needed for this session:

- Newsprint and marker pens + rough papers and pens for group members.
- Copies of Discussion Poster questions for small groups.
- Copies of Planning Jigsaw for each person
- Copies of Mango Tree for each person
- IF POSSIBLE make a list of useful contacts in the local area – support groups, local council, local courts/legal system, NGOs/CBOs operating in the area, any other individuals or groups that may be useful for parents. It may be better to make this list after the workshop so you can include ideas from members of the group.

Copies of all these materials can be found at the end of these notes.



KEY FACTS TO GET ACROSS IN PART A:

- We live in an uncertain world and **everyone** needs to make fall back plans for their children, not only parents with HIV/Aids.
- We cant risk just hoping for the best because many families and communities are more broken up than they were in "the old days" .
- Children nearly always know when there is a crisis in the family. Its much better for them if the facts are openly discussed and they are involved in future planning.
- Starting to plan and prepare our children early increases the chance that arrangements will work out well.
- There must be many other parents in our community facing the same problems. We will all benefit if we join forces, share ideas and find ways to help each other.
- Our plans may not be perfect but are better than NO plan!



CASE STUDY 1

This is a story about two sisters, one living in Kenya, the other living in London. Both were widows with big families, both of them living with HIV. Both of the sisters put off making plans for the future care of their children because they were sure that if they died, their sister would step in to take care of the children. The only problem was that the two sisters hadn't talked to each other about their HIV status. They were relying on a "plan" which had never been discussed and, because both of them were ill, there was absolutely no security for the children.



How to run this session:

⇨ Introduce the subject of Planning by reminding parents it is at the very centre of the Memory Project and all the other topics, both before and after today's session, will help them to understand more about what's involved and why its so important.

⇨ Follow on with a short presentation covering the Key Facts given at the start of this Topic and relevant sections of Information on the Memory Project. (This information sheet is used in Topic 1 to provide a summary of the whole of the Memory Project training programme. It is included at the end of these notes so you can easily use the parts of the paper which are specifically about Planning. These parts are high-lighted in yellow.)

⇨ Next divide workshop members into small groups of 3 or 4. Ask them to work through the questions in Discussion Poster "Planning for our Children." Its important that they tackle all the questions. (Set a time limit depending how much time you have, suggested 30" minutes minimum.)

⇨ Bring the small groups together to feed back their ideas. Write up on newsprint (and keep an eye on the checklist given below to make sure main issues are covered.)

⇨ Next introduce the idea of the Planning Jigsaw. Draw a big version of it on newsprint. The idea is for parents to fill in the spaces with each new skill or idea they learn or already know which will help towards making a good plan.

⇨ Invite group members to call out relevant ideas/skills they feel they have already achieved. Write these onto the blank jigsaw. (For example, "learning to listen to my children", "collecting information for my Memory Book", "becoming Open about HIV so my children understand the problem", "joining a support group where I can get ideas on planning" etc.) ***See check list and make sure important ideas are raised.***



⇨ When you are sure that group members have understood that all these little bits of knowledge are part of the "big picture", give out copies of the Planning Jigsaw to take home so they can keep filling in the pieces.

⇨ Next put up a big copy of the "Mango Tree" poster. (This poster can be used in various ways in the workshops. In the context of Planning for Children, it is an easy visual way of collecting names of people or organisations who might be able to help with making plans for children.)

⇨ Explain the purpose of the Mango Tree and invite workshop members to call out with suggestions to fill in some of the mangoes. (They don't need to give actual names but, for example, "my daughter's godmother", "the teacher from primary school who stayed interested in my kids", "the pastor at our church".)

⇨ Beware that some people will feel there is absolutely no-one amongst family or friends that they can ask for help. So encourage discussion about more official types of support, such as the clan elders, local council members, any NGOs or CBOs working in the area, the legal/court system in the locality. Make sure that people know how to make contact if they need to turn to these organisations or official people for advice.

⇨ Give out copies of the Mango Tree for people to take home.

⇨ Finally summarise the different ideas you have introduced today - the questions on the Planning Poster, the Planning Jigsaw and the Mango Tree. Reassure the group that no-one is expected to have all the answers just like that. It takes time, talking to friends, even better talking to the children, to begin to work out the best way forward…… Also reassure them that other workshop topics will help to fill in some of the details. In particular the workshop on legal matters will help parents to know how to make sure their plans will be carried out.

⇨ Before closing the session, encourage workshop members to think about who could become their Planning partner so they can carry on working on these ideas at home. This does not necessarily have to be the person who might be named as guardian but, for example, someone who also has to think about planning for their children. So together they can share ideas and keep each other focussed on what they need to do.

END OF PART A….

PART B. Family Group Conferences – Another way to help make plans for our children.
(this part of the topic is coming shortly)