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Planning for our Children

- **Why** do parents need to make plans for their children?
- **When** is the right time to start planning?
- **Who** can we rely on to take care of our children in the future?
- **Should we include the children** in talking about plans?
- **Who** can help us make the best plans?
- **How** can we be sure our plans will be carried out?



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MEMORY PROJECT

PLANNING FOR OUR CHILDREN - check list for workshop leaders

Here are some ideas to look for when group members give feedback on discussion on PLANNING FOR OUR CHILDREN.

Why must parents make plans for their children?

- In a community where many people have HIV/Aids we can't rely on the traditional ways of caring for orphan children.
- Its important to check whether grandparents or other relatives are able to take on more responsibility.
- The pattern of HIV/Aids is unpredictable. Parents don't know if they have a short or long life ahead of them. They must be prepared.
- Most parents have strong ideas about how they want their children to grow up. Making good plans gives them some say over the future.

When is the right time to start planning?

- Some parents put off making plans because they still feel well. But this is the time to do it, when they have strength to make visits and organise plans.
- Making legal arrangements for guardianship and sorting out property rights takes time. Don't delay!
- Once parents have begun to talk openly to their children, they can become involved in planning for their own future. They need time to think.
- Children will be reassured when they know that parents are making plans for their future care.
- First plans don't always work out. Its important to leave time to start again.

Who can we trust to take care of our children?

- Some families are lucky to have relatives who can be trusted to treat the children as their own. But even in the best families this needs to be sorted out and agreed well before the parent is very sick.
- Other families will turn to trusted friends and again this needs to be formally agreed so that relatives won't move in after the parent's death.
- If parents name a legal guardian it is essential that person is asked in advance and agrees to take on the responsibility.
- Older children may keep the family together if someone can be found to give them support.
- If families have no-one close to turn to, its important to go to community leaders or talk to members of a local support group who have experience of helping parents with their plans.
- The worst decision is to do nothing.

Do we include the children in talking about plans?

- The plans are FOR the children, so of course their hopes and wishes are important.
- Children need help to be realistic about what can and cannot be arranged.
- They need to understand the family finances, for example whether there will be enough money for school fees, who does the family home belong to. All these things can be covered in discussion about future plans.

Who can help us make the best plans?

- Parents with strong families or trusted friends can turn to them
- Others will talk to members of support groups who have exerience of helping parents make plans.
- Parents who feel very isolated may need help from community leaders or welfare organisations.
- Attending the Memory Project training will give parents ideas on how to make a start.

How can we make sure our plans are carried out?

- Don't leave anything to chance!
- Plans need to be written down. Preferably in the form of a legally valid Will.
- The Will should include information about all the property owned by the parent and the names of people who are willing to be legal guardians of the children.
- Parents who attend the Memory Project Training will learn how to make Wills and how to get good legal advice.
- Above all, children who are old enough to take responsibility, need to know about the plans, where to find the important family papers and where to go for advice if things do not go according to the plans.