



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

THE IDEA

Everybody needs to make plans for the future. When young people are thinking about their futures, they need to decide what are their realistic goals, and what preparations they will need to achieve their goals. For children in families affected by HIV and AIDS it is even more important to plan for the future. With access to good food, medicine and support, many people are now living long and healthily with HIV. However, it is still important to prepare for the future. Many projects now work with parents living with HIV to help them to plan for their children's future. This topic here cannot replace that vital work. However, this topic will help children and young people to think in practical terms about their future and will encourage them to be ready to talk openly with their parents or guardians as and when the issue arises. Sometimes, tragically, children face multiple bereavements, when they lose their parents and then their guardians. This topic is intended to help them gain confidence and to think about practical concerns to achieve their goals, such as how to remain in school.



Involving parents and guardians

Please discuss this topic with parents and guardians before starting. It helps children to be informed about the realities of their family life by their parents and guardians. The level of information depends on their age. It is advised that this topic should be done when children's parents and guardians are being supported through a similar process, such as in the Memory Project. It must always be the parents' choice to decide whether to disclose their HIV positive status to their children. Please consider carefully the group of children you are working with and their experience, and decide which of the following activities are appropriate for them.

Understanding

- Here is a letter to a newspaper from a 15-year-old girl. Read this to the children.

Dear Auntie Farah

I need your advice please. I am 15. I live with my mother and my three younger sisters. My father passed away more than ten years ago. Next month my mother has to go into hospital for an operation. The doctor says she will probably make a full recovery, but my mother also wants to prepare us in case the worst should happen — which I pray it doesn't. I don't want to think about this — but I know that my mother is being sensible. How should we plan for the future? What things do we need to think about? I hope you can advise us.

With thanks, Tasha

- In groups, the children can discuss the letter and decide what advice to give. They can write Auntie Farah's response to Tasha. The whole group can then discuss this advice and write a list of all the practical things to prepare for.
- Ask the children: Why did Tasha not want to think about the future? Is it good to make preparations for the future?
- Below is a list of preparations from a manual written for parents living with HIV from the Memory Project. Today, with growing access to anti-retroviral drugs, more parents are living longer and more healthily with HIV. However, it is important for all parents, whatever their health status, to have made plans for their children's future. Nobody knows how long his or her life will be. Children can look at the list of questions and decide which are important for parents and guardians to discuss with their children.

Finding out more

- Children can interview their parents or guardians, or other family members with children. Ask them what preparations they would make if they had to leave their children to visit another place for one week. The children can summarise their list of preparations.
- Children can talk to someone they admire in the community. What plans did that person have for the future when he or she was still an adolescent? What practical preparations did they make to achieve their goals? What advice do they have for today's young people?
- Some children have been forced to leave school. Find out what reasons made them leave school. What support do they need to enable them to return and complete their schooling?
- Children can draw a picture with three boxes. In one box, they draw themselves now. In the second box, they draw themselves in five years' time. In the third box, in fifteen years' time. Underneath, they can write the practical things they need to do to make these dreams a reality.
- Children can discuss practical efforts which can be made to help orphans and other vulnerable children to remain in school. For example, they may need help with work at home, perhaps looking after a sick parent. They may need help with school stationery or with any school fees. Children as a group can discuss what

Preparations for children's future

- Who would the children identify as guardians or foster parents?
- Do these people have the same ideas about bringing up children?
- Will the children be able to stay together? Is that important for them?
- Would the children want to or be forced to continue living alone as a family? If so, who could help in looking after them?
- How will the children continue in education? Who can help them?
- Where will they live? Are they used to this environment?
- What are their spiritual beliefs and needs? How will these be met?
- Who else can help the children? Who have been good friends to the parents?
- What is the children's inheritance? Have parents written a will? Who will help to protect the children's inheritance?
- Where is the will kept? Where are other important documents, e.g. birth certificates?
- What are the values that parents would like their children to uphold?
- What are the parents' hopes for their children's future?

they can do to help other children to remain in school.

- Children can draw a map of their community and identify all the people and places where children can get different kinds of help.
- If children are concerned



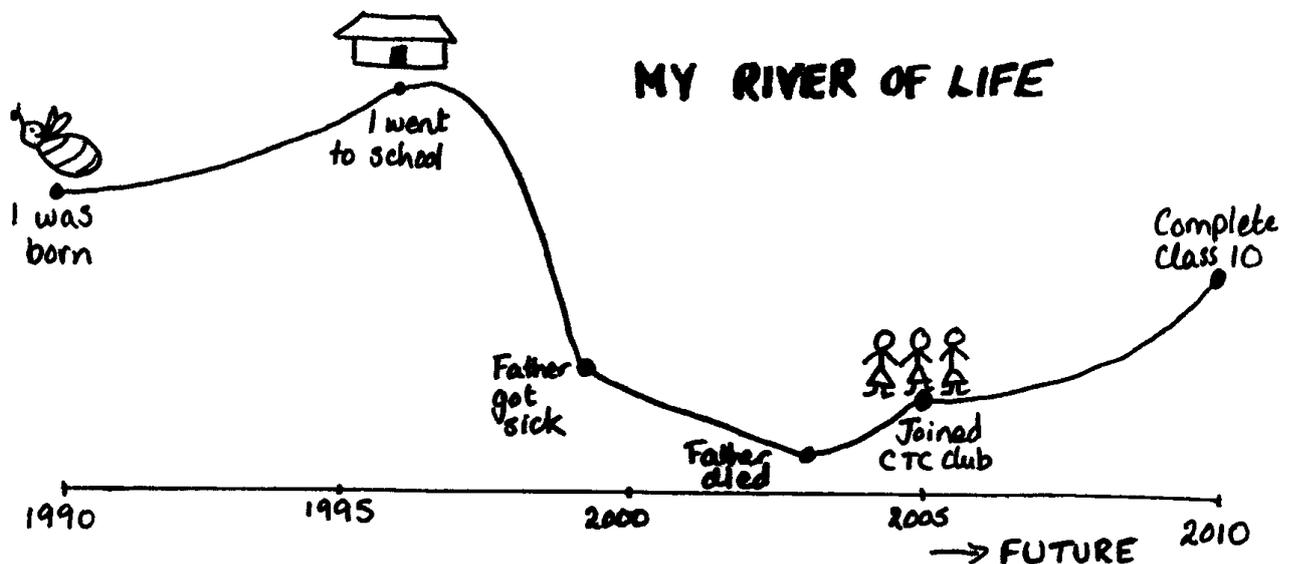
about these issues but don't feel able or ready to talk with their parents, the facilitator can either counsel the children or connect them to a person who can counsel them.

Please note

It is best if parents/guardians take a lead in these discussions. If they think about the issues in advance, they can be ready to answer the children's questions when they arise.

Planning and doing

- Children can draw a River of Life. This shows the course of their life from birth until the present – and then five years into the future. The line goes up in good times and down in bad times. The children can draw pictures or write a few words to explain what happened at different stages in their life. They can also show who has supported them on the way. They can discuss this picture with their parents or guardians. The River of Life also shows the future. This may provide a way in for talking about the uncertainty of the future, and who could be possible foster parents or guardians should it ever be necessary.



Discussing the results

- Children can discuss whether they have made any practical plans for the future. If so, how do they feel about this? Is there any other action they want to take, or plans they want to make?
- What advice would they give to other children?
- What help have they been able to give other children?

Doing it better

This is an ongoing activity. Children and young people, especially orphans and other vulnerable ones, will need continuing support to help them to cope with the challenges of their lives. They can also become role models for other young people facing similar difficulties.

USING THE SHEET

Teachers and head teachers can use these ideas in schools to help children to think about their goals and the practical steps they need to take to achieve them. School authorities, as well as teachers and children, can also consider the ways in which they can help orphans and other vulnerable children to continue in school.

Community and faith-based groups and youth group leaders can use these activities with their young people.

Organisations supporting parents living with HIV can use these ideas with children along with the work they do to help parents prepare for their children's future.

The media can follow up stories of orphans who have achieved their goals, as they would serve as a role model to others.

This Activity Sheet can be used together with 1.4 **Helping Children Who Do Not Go To School** and 8.3 **Helping Children whose Friends or Relatives Die**.