

fighting poverty together

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A B Sample
123 Sample House
Sample Street
Sample Town
Sampleshire
SS1 1SS
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<Date>

Dear Personalised,

Children like Raymond live in real fear. Will you give £440 to help them?

We do not know how old Raymond is. For the last two years, whenever anyone has asked his age, Raymond has whispered *"I am eight years old"*. It is hard to believe when you see how small and frail he is. Malnutrition and illness have taken their toll on his tiny body.

Our guess is that Raymond is about ten now, but it's easy to understand why he's confused. This fragile little boy has no parents to mark each passing year – to buy him a present or make him feel special on his birthday.

Raymond's parents both died of AIDS, leaving him in the care of his older brother. But as HIV and AIDS ravages the community, their family is growing. Raymond – who isn't old enough to care for himself – looks after four-year-old nephew Itai, who is an orphan too.

For Raymond and Itai, childhood should be a time of learning and discovery. For many of us, it is the one period of our lives when we are truly free to enjoy the smallest things – like playing hide and seek or learning to skim pebbles on a lake.

Sadly, for Raymond and Itai, childhood is very different. It is a time of hunger, pain – and constant fear.

'Fear' is perhaps the most important word here – and the one that might surprise you. As our latest report shows, Raymond and Itai are not alone. For the very poorest people, a life of poverty means a life of fear. They endure each day knowing one event – completely out of their control – could cost them their lives.

A period of drought, for example, could destroy their crops leaving them without food. They could be thrown off their land because they do not have the paperwork to prove ownership. A conflict might force them to flee their homes and be left with nothing. And as HIV and AIDS wipes out a generation, fear grows ever stronger – with parents frightened that no one will care for their

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is a unique partnership of
people who are fighting for
a better world – a world
without poverty.

ActionAid International UK
Chataway House
Leach Road, Chard
Somerset TA20 1FR
United Kingdom

Telephone
++44 (0)1460 238000

Facsimile
++44 (0)1460 67191

E-Mail
supporterservices@actionaid.org.uk

Website
www.actionaid.org.uk

International Secretariat
Johannesburg

Asia Region Office
Bangkok

Africa Region Office
Nairobi

Americas Region Office
Rio De Janeiro

Europe Region Office
Brussels

Founder
Cecil Jackson Cole

UK Director
Richard Miller

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children when they are gone.

As a result, many poor people live in constant fear that today could be their last.

But as our report shows, the worst thing about much of this suffering is that it is needless. Poor people needn't live on the brink of disaster. Lives of fear and anguish can be transformed into happy, secure lives, but we need your help.

That's because, for all our efforts, we're still not able to reach enough people who are in great danger. A simple lack of funds prevents us from helping more children like Raymond. Which is why I must ask if you will support us today – and give more people the chance to live free of fear.

Raymond is frightened of the iguana.

During the long days that they are alone, Raymond and Itai are constantly frightened. When they venture out to play, they keep away from the large pile of rocks by their crumbling mud brick house. An iguana lives there. It has already killed one of their precious chickens and, perhaps, as little boys do, they imagine it might attack them.

When we asked what they needed, Raymond and Itai told us “*A puppy so we can teach it to chase away the iguana*”. Sadly, it will take more than a puppy to overcome the problems that these children face – like constant hunger, fear and the threat of illness.

That's because Raymond is HIV-positive. With the right care, he could live a happy life for many years to come. But like millions of other innocent children, he is left to struggle on, knowing there is no money for food or other essentials. Tragically, as he grows weaker, Raymond seems to accept that no one can help him.

This is simply not the case. We can help him. And we must help him. Like you, I cannot stand by as a precious young life ebbs away. Which is why I'm writing to ask you to help us reach more people like Raymond and Itai who live on the very edge of life and death.

Help us reach the very poorest people.

At key projects throughout the world, we are simply overwhelmed by the demand for our support – as Esther Chivasa, one of our project workers recently told me.

“You find children hungry. They have not washed because there is no soap. You find children are sick and you do not have the means to take them to hospital. You then leave and go to the next family without your presence having brought any meaningful change. In such circumstances, you begin to wonder whether you are ever going to be able to do anything worthwhile...we just wish we had the resources to do more.”

Of course, your regular gifts mean that children and their communities continue to receive our support. But the money we receive from existing sources isn't enough. If we're to reach more people in desperate situations, we have no choice but to turn to our most loyal supporters and ask for your help.

I know it is a great deal to ask. But by giving £440 today, you could transform the lives of - **not just one - but four families** which have been devastated by HIV and AIDS. At its head, there will be a young person who is little more than a child themselves yet is responsible for the care of children

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like Raymond and Itai. Your gift could buy all the materials needed to ensure they have a secure source of nutritious food. That's because £440 could pay for four drip kits which will allow people in drought stricken areas to grow crops with less water and labour. You could also pay for the tank that is needed to collect water as well as two hoes, a bucket and packets of seeds for each family.

And your gift could help cover the costs of training the young people to use their equipment as effectively as possible so they have enough to feed themselves and sell the remainder. You'll also enable us to visit regularly for up to two years to check the children are prospering. **Step by step, we'll ensure fear is driven from their lives so they have a secure source of food, income and support.** You'll show them that even in the most desperate circumstances, there is hope – as Mutembezi's story shows.

Mutembezi was frightened she'd never have a real home again.

During ten long years of civil war, the people of Goma faced a constant battle to survive. But when a volcano erupted, it swept away the homes, communities and sense of security poor people had worked so hard to build. Mutembezi and her children fled for their lives and were forced to make a temporary home under plastic sheeting. Two years later, Mutembezi, her three children and thousands of other poor families were still there – living in fear and desperation.

Without proper shelter, her children were constantly ill. There was no sanitation, food was often scarce and there was no school for them to go to. But Mutembezi was terrified that they would not survive at all. Thankfully, with a few basic materials, we were able to help.

With our support, Mutembezi was able to settle into a new home. And with their new tools and seeds, the family have been able to start cultivating the land and generating food and income. Their problems are not over, but fear is being slowly driven away.

With your gift today, another four families could have this precious opportunity to improve their lives. So please give whatever you can. Because the simple truth is your help is urgently needed. And at times like this, we all have a choice to make – we can carry on with our lives or, as Tafadzwa from Zimbabwe has done, decide to help...

'You have to ask yourself, dai ndiriini ndaiita sei?'

As a child, Tafadzwa wasn't able to go to school. Now he is desperate for an education. "*You need to be educated if you are to get on in life,*" he told us. But for now, Tafadzwa has put his dream on hold. Instead, he works every hour of every day to put four other children orphaned by AIDS through school – his brother, sister and two young cousins.

He shouldn't have to make such a sacrifice. But at just 18 years old, he's the only father that these children have. When we asked him why he'd taken on this huge responsibility, he answered "*You have to ask yourself, 'if it was you in that situation, what would you do?'*"

Tafadzwa clearly believes that in the same circumstances, we would all do the same – give up our own dream to help those in great need. Fortunately, we don't have to ask you to go to such extraordinary lengths to help people like Raymond, Mutembezi and Tafadzwa. But in such a

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desperate situation, we do have to ask you to dig deep.

Would you be able to give £440 to offer not one, but four poor families the materials and training they need to build a secure life – free from fear?

We can make a difference.

Each of us has just one life to live. At the moment, Raymond's could be a short, unhappy life of suffering. But most of us in the UK and other rich countries are more fortunate. We have the chance to make a massive difference to the lives of others. So please, take that chance today and help some of the poorest people in the world live without constant pain, suffering and fear.

Thank you for your tremendous support for our work. It means a great deal to so many people.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Miller
Director, ActionAid UK

PS Should you wish to, there is a quick and easy way that you can make your gift. You can tick a box on the donation form to increase your Direct Debit for one month only.
Whatever you give, I can assure you your donation will be put straight to good use.