

Preamble:

To everyone reading this every father, mother, brother, uncle, or friend know that your support can rewrite a child's story. You can be the reason a boy stays in school. You can be the reason a girl dares to dream. **BlackAndWhite** is not just funding education, we are restoring dignity, rebuilding futures, and proving that love in action can heal what trauma has broken.

Will you stand with us?

The Education Program A BlackAndWhite Project

When home hurts, trauma disrupts a child's education

(Note: "Shasha," "Jiji," "Jojo," and "Maia" are not their real names. They are used here to conceal identities out of respect and protection of privacy.)

In the quiet corners of families, children carry invisible burdens, grief, stigma, abandonment, and the aching silence of trauma. I've walked alongside girls whose mothers died by suicide, others whose fathers vanished into alcoholism, and some born into the shadow of HIV. These children do not lack intelligence or ambition. What they lack is peace, protection, and a steady hand of guidance.

1. The Challenges Facing Children Affected by HIV

BlackAndWhite has seen firsthand the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on families and children. The three girls we've had the privilege of supporting, Shasha, Jiji, and Jojo are a testament to the strength and courage of those living with HIV. Their mother, Maia, who is also living with HIV, has shown remarkable bravery in the face of adversity. Despite the odds, two of the girls have successfully graduated from college, and the third is now in her first year at university. It's heartbreaking to think that, without continued support, children like them could be left behind due to circumstances beyond their control.

Maia once hoped that marriage would bring her the joy and stability of a loving family like those she saw in successful homes. But that dream was never realized. After three failed marriages, she never remarried. Instead, she was infected with HIV and left to raise her children alone, with no reliable source of income. She works as a casual laborer, and on days when she cannot find work, the family simply goes without food.

The children have grown up at their grandmother's home, the only place they've ever known. No father has ever come forward to claim responsibility.

As Maia once said:

"The easiest job for some men is to make children but not to be responsible for them."

I have lived and worked alongside people affected by HIV/AIDS and orphans. Their stories are filled with pain, resilience, and a quiet strength that demands to be seen. These children deserve more than survival, they deserve dignity, opportunity, and the chance to thrive.

Securing Education, Restoring Hope

When BlackAndWhite saw Shasha, Jiji, and Jojo living in a dangerously exposed environment, surrounded by local nightclubs, drug dealers, and the looming threat of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, we knew we had to act. These girls were barely attending school due to lack of fees, and the risk of dropping out was growing by the day. We couldn't stand by and watch their futures slip away.

BlackAndWhite stepped in to secure their education by enrolling them in boarding schools, where they would be safe, supported, and shielded from the chaos around them. During holidays, we provided accommodation, ensuring they had a stable home from elementary school through high school. In college, they became more independent, but BlackAndWhite continued to walk beside them.

Beyond fully funding their school fees, BlackAndWhite also covered their personal upkeep: transport, stationery, books, accommodation, medical care, and clothing. Every detail mattered. Every act of support was a lifeline.

2. The Scars of Suicide

(Note: "Remboo" and "Simo" are not their real names. They are used here to conceal identities out of respect and protection of privacy.)

A Family's Struggle with Loss and Resilience

We've witnessed the unbearable pain and loss that suicide leaves behind. One of the girls we support, Remboo, lost her mother to suicide — a tragedy born of deep frustration, emotional exhaustion, and the silent wounds of domestic violence. Her mother, overwhelmed by years of hardship, took her own life, leaving behind two precious children, Remboo and her brother Simo, who now carry the weight of that loss while navigating life without her love and guidance.

Since elementary school, Remboo received small donations from different well-wishers, drawn to her quiet determination and resilience. She worked hard both at school and at home, even under difficult circumstances. Her stepmother, who showed little interest in her education, often assigned her heavy chores like collecting firewood, fetching water, and caring for her agemate stepsister, who was treated like a boss in and out of the house.

Today, Remboo is in university, thanks to the generosity of well-wishers who stepped in to finance her fees, alongside BlackAndWhite activities that have supported her accommodation, mentoring, personal upkeep, transport for university educational tours, and medical needs. Her journey is a testament to what hope and support can achieve. Education has become her lifeline, a path to healing, independence, and self-worth. It offers her not only knowledge, but the dignity of being seen and the power to shape her own future.

Sadly, her elder brother Simo was not as fortunate. He dropped out of school due to various challenges and the absence of parental guidance. His father openly declared that he did not care about his son and had no business to do with him, leaving Simo without paternal support at a critical time in his life.

I remember when Achim, Simo, and I all hopped onto motorbikes and drove more than 50 kilometers so that Simo could sit for his elementary national school examination. He passed and proceeded to high school with the support of BlackAndWhite, who tried everything — including personally bringing him to a boarding school and securing payments.

Yet Simo was overpowered by depression and peer influence, which led him to drop out of school and disappear into an unknown place. Later, he returned home worn out, like a prodigal son. His stepmother did not and still does not care, but with guidance from BlackAndWhite, Simo is slowly getting back to his normal daily life. His story reflects the harsh reality many children face when emotional trauma is left unaddressed and educational support is out of reach.

Remboo and Simo's journey brings to light the urgent need for comprehensive support systems, ones that address not only educational needs but also the emotional and psychological well-being of children affected by trauma, loss, and domestic violence.

These children deserve more than survival. They deserve safety, healing, and the chance to dream beyond their circumstances.

3. Mama Nina's Fight for Her Daughters' Future

From broken books to bright futures or The Pain of Alcoholism and the Cost of Lost Opportunities

(Note: "Mama Nina" is not her real name. It is used here to conceal her identity out of respect and protection of privacy.)

In one of our family community visits, Mama Nina shared a heartbreaking moment with us. Her husband, struggling with alcoholism, dismissed the value of education, saying: "Education is useless. I never went to school, yet I feed you and the children. There are no jobs anyway. Girls are meant to be married, not educated for another man."

This mindset, shaped by pain and loss of hope, is not uncommon. It reflects a deeper crisis where poverty, addiction, and hopelessness rob children of their right to dream, learn, and thrive.

For Mama Nina and her children, this reality was compounded by domestic violence. Picture yourself coming home, finding your father insulting and yelling at your mother. As you enter the house from school, he grabs your school bag, pulls out one of your homework books, tears it, and rolls tobacco in it before smoking. As if that's not enough, he goes to the kitchen where food is being prepared, overturns the boiling water, extinguishes the fire, and then chases everyone out of the house.

That was the daily reality for Mama Nina and her kids. They endured violence and despair, and each day they went to school hoping for empathy from teachers, but instead they were repeatedly sent home. Their father's words and actions reflected a cycle of hopelessness that threatened to end their education before it truly began.

Yet, despite these challenges, the two girls in Mama Nina's family are defying the odds. With partial support, they are both enrolled in high school. One is currently sitting for her final national exam (KCSE), and the other is in Form Three. Their resilience and academic progress are a testament to what is possible when even modest support reaches the right hands.

It was only when BlackAndWhite heard Mama Nina's story that hope was restored. Today, the two girls are happily in school, their lives transformed by the intervention that gave them back their chance to learn and thrive.

Mama Nina's journey reminds us that behind every child's struggle lies untapped potential waiting to be unlocked. With even modest support, despair can be turned into dignity, and broken opportunities can be restored into futures filled with hope. Every act of generosity is not just a gift. it is a lifeline that keeps dreams alive.