

Help these girls achieve their dreams

BY FRED MUBANDA

LOST Children

Many children get lost every day, while others are abandoned by their parents. Every Saturday we bring you stories of those seeking to reunite with their families



Azara Atibu, 50, a resident of Naguru, a city suburb, has no children of her own, but her small house has become home to several abandoned and orphaned children aged between four and seven years.

Atibu says some of the children's mothers were also homeless while others died of HIV/AIDS. Most of the mothers had failed to identify the biological fathers of their children.

"At the hospital where we used to get treatment, the mothers always used my name as their next of kin to their children. When they passed on, I took on the responsibility," Atibu explains, adding that some of the children were street babies dumped by their mothers over the years.

However, the children are in dire need of education, medical care, food and a permanent home as Atibu finds it increasingly difficult to support them.

She says she has been HIV-positive for 33 years and every day, her health deteriorates.

"I have tried to start small



Atibu with some of the children she supports. Photo by Fred Mubanda

businesses, such as hawking household goods, in order to care for these children, but my life and health makes it hard for me to work," she says.

She says most of her family members perished in a vehicle accident in November 1996 and she was the only survivor of 17 people on board. In addition to that, the larger clan members were not interested in her after learning

about her HIV status. She says the children comfort her.

"They are my family and clan members."

However, Atibu says they are insecure because the authorities may evict them from the house they occupy.

According to Reilah Buyu, the local council chairperson of Naguru Zone Two, Atibu is a law-abiding citizen, who has a rare parental

heart, considering her own circumstances.

"Atibu always surprises me, although she is sick, she guides and tries to give care to the children," Buyu says, adding that as the chairperson, she sometimes provides a few basic needs, but the children need more support.

To help these children, call 0704177440.