

Christian Ministries Still Battling AIDS in Africa

While the agenda for much of the West has moved past AIDS, the deadly disease remains a major concern for many poverty-stricken countries.

That's why Christian ministries like Compassion International are working to provide prevention education, HIV testing, rehabilitative care and lifesaving treatment in communities crippled by AIDS. The goal is to help children and adults not just survive but to thrive.

"Despite much progress made, we are continually challenged to teach the children and youth how to prevent the spread of AIDS before more contract the disease," says Mark Hanlon, senior vice president at Compassion International. "Cultural practices across the globe continue to emerge that must be identified and then overcome to effectively treat and reduce the spread of AIDS."

During the past five months, Compassion International has conducted first-time HIV testing for more than 14,300 children, and their parents and siblings, in 10 countries. Of Compassion's 1.2 million beneficiaries, 5,750 have been identified as having AIDS and are receiving anti-retroviral therapy.

"It is impossible to address poverty issues without addressing the pervasive influence of AIDS in these communities and families," says Regina Hopewell, director of Compassion's AIDS Initiative.

Across Africa, Compassion International uses sports camps and health fairs to encourage HIV testing. At a recent Compassion-organized soccer camp in Mombasa, Kenya, HIV-positive players stepped forward to tell their personal stories of testing

positive for HIV and how they have learned to stay healthy and treat the disease.