

TOGETHER

preparing the next generation

HANDS AT WORK IN AFRICA | SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Section One | What is Education?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does the word 'education' mean to you?
- What images, experiences or emotions are evoked when you hear the word Education? Take time to consider and share what your **formal** education looked like, and what **informal** education opportunities you have had in your life.
- Discuss and share who was influential in your education experiences
- For participants with experiences with school-aged children, share how you've facilitated and/or observed their formal and informal education opportunities.

Have a look at the images provided. Share with one another how you see education being played out in each image.

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

- Deuteronomy 11:18-19

Section Two | Why Education is part of the Hands Model

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What is your understanding of the role that education plays in the Hands at Work model of care?
- If you have been to Africa before, what did you observe of education being played out in the communities you visited?

WATCH Visit www.handsatwork.org/education and watch the videos provided

(We recommend the full version of the Education video and the short version of George's video)

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- Now that you have watched these videos, has your understanding changed about the role that education plays in the Hands model? If so, how?

Education is one of the three essential services that Hands at Work provides the most vulnerable children across Africa; the other two are food security in the form of a daily, nutritious meal, and access to health care.

The provision of basic primary education is Hands at Work's response to address the need of millions of orphaned and vulnerable children in Africa who have no access to it. The most vulnerable are often forced to abandon school for a number of reasons, including inadequate funds for school fees, caring for sick family members or younger siblings, emotional distress, and the responsibility of providing for their families. However, Hands at Work recognizes that education can play a key role in unlocking a child's God-given potential.

We have heard how Hands at Work value so highly the whole area of Education. Our dream for our children is not just to help them **survive** today, but to **thrive** in their futures. Education is an important part of that dream and Hands at Work seeks to encourage and advocate for the education of children both formally – in school settings, and informally. We've also heard that Education is a broad term and how important it is - for those of us serving and supporting communities in Africa - to *really* understand it and to appreciate and champion the complex challenges and opportunities faced by our children.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which rocked the world and changed the face of Education for millions of people, our children were part of a system which was very far from ideal. Where formal schooling existed, children were often packed into classrooms with scarce resources and a lack of trained teachers and proper learning materials. For the most vulnerable, the challenges were even more pervasive: some children started school very late into their development and found it extremely difficult to keep up, and some had to repeat grades multiple times alongside much younger pupils. Undocumented children faced repeated interruptions to their education as schools forced them away. Poor health and the impact of malnutrition also factored into poor educational outcomes, and teenage girls missed out on huge portions of education due to 'period poverty' or early pregnancy.

Yet formal education did have a place in the lives of the most vulnerable. Children experienced a level of value and identity by participating in organised education and even the basics of literacy propelled them forwards and gave them an advantage within their vulnerable community contexts. Not least, the 4-6 hours children would spend in school afforded them a greater level of protection from abuse and trauma in the home or of them needing to be engaged in manual work in markets of the fields.

So when COVID-19 was a reality in Africa and education took a hit, it paralysed an already insufficient system. Children who were normally accounted for on school or Life Centre registers now had little accountability and safety issues quickly became an urgent crisis. With little to do occupying the school day, teenage children started to engage in dangerous behaviour involving drugs, alcohol and sexual relationships and pregnancies soon were on the rise.

Unlike in western contexts, children in vulnerable African communities had no access to any kind of self-taught educational resources or online learning. So formal education ground to a complete halt on the day the schools closed their doors. And unlike in contexts where children may have fallen behind in their education but where costly resources are now

being ploughed in to help them catch up, for vulnerable African children, many will never re-enter a formal school environment again; the jump is now simply too high.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- When we digest this reality for the most vulnerable children, what is our immediate reaction or emotion?
- Discuss amongst you the challenges and the opportunities for Hands at Work to educate children in light of this new reality.
- What would *you* say to a vulnerable child (for example, on a Holy Home Visit) as described in this session, who will never re-enter formal schooling?

Section Three | What does this have to do with me?

OPENING QUESTION

- Have these sessions impacted or changed your understanding of Education in vulnerable communities?

Serving the most vulnerable children means preparing and developing them for their future. This is one of the world's greatest tasks. But today in the world's poorest places, where families and communities are strained and fragile, many children are not receiving the crucial skills they will need to survive for their futures. Hands at Work strives to fill some of the holes created by the loss of one or both parents through regular interactions by Care Workers with the child in their home (also known as Holy Home Visits) and outside their home at Care Points where engaging activities such as play time, youth programmes and teaching of practical life-skills take place in a safe environment.

Read the story of Timothy and Alfred shared from the point of view of Tyler Ralph (Regional Support Team Leader in Zimbabwe):

Living in Pimai C Community in the Honde Valley in Zimbabwe is a family that has experienced much pain and brokenness. Growing up Timothy* and Alfred* lived with their sister and mother but several years ago, their mother abandoned her children, leaving the young children to care for themselves. Seeing their situation, some relatives took in their sister, while Timothy and Alfred were sent to live with their uncle who is 28 years old.

Tyler shares,

“Their uncle loves them and desires to care for them well but he has his own challenges and struggles with alcohol. He wants to do well for them but doesn’t know how.



This is when Noah from our local Hands at Work team in the Honde Valley stepped in and started visiting their home regularly. When their kitchen shelter fell down, he helped to rebuild, he didn't simply rebuild, he did it with them, teaching and modelling what needed to be done.

He has drawn close with the uncle, to be able to speak into his life and help care for his nephews well. When they didn't have anything in their house the Honde Valley team was able to help with providing buckets, pots and cups – just basic things to be able to cook and live. Noah was able to not just provide food, but teach the family how to plant and do it well.”

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- How do you see education play out in the lives of Timothy and Alfred?

Over the last few sessions, we have heard about the importance and value of different forms of education – both formal and informal. We have shared with one another our views on education and the people who have been influential in our learning experiences. We have gone deeper into understanding the role that education plays in the Hands at Work model and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on education in Africa and around the world.

Now that you have heard and gained a deeper understanding of education, we encourage you to think about how you can get involved. Hands at Work has many opportunities for you to get involved in the work that is happening on the ground in Africa, with the most vulnerable children and their families, whether that be from your home country or coming to Africa yourself.

COME | If you're interested in spending time on the ground in Africa, please connect with your local international office. To learn more please visit our website at www.handsatwork.org/come

ADVOCATE | As we finish our sessions together on understanding education and Hands at Work's desire to create new learning experiences for our children outside of the normal classroom, we encourage you to share what you have learned with your family and friends and follow along with our social platforms to hear more stories and updates. To learn more please visit our website at www.handsatwork.org/advocate

PRAY | We encourage you to follow along with our prayer app for weekly prayer requests from the ground in Africa. You can download our prayer app at www.handsatwork.org/pray

GIVE | If you feel called to give either through your church partnership or as an individual, please connect with your partnership representative in your church or visit our website at www.handsatwork.org/give

CLOSING QUESTIONS

As we finish our session, take some time to personally reflect on the action you want to take now. How do you want to take forward what you have learned? Share – and feel free to make commitments and ask others to hold you accountable.

For small group members with school-aged children, how can you engage with the rest of your family around this issue? (There are also children’s resources available to assist you)

All of the resources from these sessions are available at www.handsatwork.org/education



