

Firelight Foundation Letter of Inquiry 2012
Keeping Children in Families and Community
Deadline: February 15, 2012

The mission of Firelight Foundation is to improve the well-being of children made vulnerable by HIV, AIDS and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. We support grassroots organizations that help families and communities meet the needs of their children.

Under this request for proposals, Firelight seeks to fund organizations that work to strengthen the ability of families and communities to provide care, support and protection to orphans and vulnerable children.

HIV and AIDS have had a devastating impact on the lives of children, families living in poverty. As families take in more children they struggle to pay school fees, buy uniforms, provide regular meals, and support children through grief of losing a parent. Faced with these struggles, families often decide to place children in orphanages. While orphanages can provide temporary shelter or last resort housing for children with no other support, they are not recommended as a long-term solution for children. Orphanages are more expensive than family-based care and reach smaller numbers of children. Most importantly they separate children from community and family life. As a result, they fail to meet the social and emotional needs of children that support their whole development.

Children grow best in families. Therefore a more appropriate and more sustainable solution is to strengthen the capacity of family and community to provide the love, care, and support that children need.

Every child, regardless of race, creed, or country, deserves the promise of a future. To that end, Firelight supports community-based initiatives that work directly and effectively to strengthen families and communities to provide care and support for vulnerable children. We believe that grassroots programs are often the most effective and sustainable when they arise in direct response to needs and strengths within local communities. Firelight supports this vital work with initial one-year grants of \$1,000 to \$9,000 with the potential of renewal grants.

ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS IN LESOTHO

Firelight receives around 1,000 requests for funding each year and is able to support a small percentage of these. In order for us to focus our efforts in an effective and sustained manner, we will only accept letters of inquiry in 2012 from organizations that meet our criteria. We will decline funding requests inquiries from organizations that do not fit the criteria outlined below.

Specifically in Lesotho, we are interested in funding organizations that are currently operating in districts beyond Maseru. **Organizations with programs in Berea, Leribe, Mokhotlong, and Thaba Tseka will be given priority.**

Program Criteria:

In Lesotho, Firelight's is seeking to support programs that respond to the needs of children in transition, including, children living on the street, survivors of abuse, child-headed households, and children in temporary placements (like short-term foster homes, transitional care orphanages, or temporary stays with family members). Priority is given to programs that create a supportive environment for children's holistic growth and development through programs that include various activities such as:

- Permanency planning programs that work towards providing children with a safe, stable home under the care of a nurturing caregiver who is committed to a life long relationship with that child.
- Reintegration of children from orphanages and other temporary placements into long-term family and community care.
- Building skills and knowledge of caregivers to develop sustainable livelihoods so they can meet the material needs of children.
- Enhancing parenting skills and knowledge of caregivers so they provide supportive and nurturing care and guidance to children.
- Legal aid to protect children's rights for vulnerable children.
- Local and national level advocacy on children's needs and rights.

In selecting organizations to support, Firelight Foundation looks for:

- Direct support and services that meet the needs and rights of vulnerable children.
- Holistic support for children's development that nurtures children's voice, leadership, and active participation in decisions that affect their lives.
- Approaches that mobilize community support and resources, and build family and community capacity.
- A history of effective community action that spans at least three years.
- Networking and collaboration with other organizations and relevant government agencies.
- Effective programming with innovative responses to the challenges affecting children's well-being.
- Sound organizational governance and management systems, including distinct roles between the Board and Director.

Firelight does NOT fund: individuals; scholarships for individual use; government entities; organizations or programs designed to influence legislation or elect public officials; organizations or programs solely intended to generate income or provide charity to individuals; academic or medical research; fundraising drives; or endowments. Firelight believes strongly in non-discrimination and does not fund programs that limit participation based on race, tribe, religion, gender, or nationality. **We very rarely fund US-based organizations or branches of international non-governmental organizations.**

Firelight Foundation believes that children develop best when raised within families and communities; therefore, **we do not fund the institutionalization of children, i.e. orphanages.** We are often asked for food aid, medical care, and housing. We understand the urgency of these needs, but we are not a relief agency. If you request such assistance, **please explain how the planned activities will be undertaken in a sustainable and holistic way.** Similarly, we receive many requests for school fees. Firelight rarely funds requests for school fees alone. If your organization seeks such assistance, please describe how your group plans to address children's other needs, and what your plan is for sustaining school fees beyond Firelight support.

LETTER OF INQUIRY TEMPLATE

If your organization is a charitable organization and meets the criteria described above, we invite you to send a letter of inquiry and provide us with basic information outlined below. We accept any kind of written or electronic submissions. We currently accept applications in English, and Sesotho. **Please limit your letter to three pages.**

- Full name of your organization (and acronym if applicable)
- E-mail and postal mailing address (both PO Box and street address, if available) and location of proposed activities
- The names and contact information for three people at your organization (name, title, e-mail, phone)

In your letter, please explain how your work meets Firelight's criteria by briefly answering the following questions:

1. Tell us your organization's founding story. When did you begin? What inspired the founding of your organization and who was part of the process?
2. Briefly describe your organization's main programs.
3. Please share two or three things that you have achieved in the time that you have been operating.
4. Describe how your organization is operated (including its management structure, number of paid staff, and number of volunteers).
5. Describe your approach in implementing your programs.
6. What activities do you propose for Firelight funding?
7. How much funding are you requesting? Please provide a breakdown by activity. (Remember, **Firelight awards first-time grants of \$1,000 to \$9,000.** Greater requests will be declined.)
8. Please estimate the number of children, families and communities you expect to reach through these activities.
9. In the previous year:
 - a. What was your organization's budget?
 - b. What were your main sources of funding?

THE DECISION PROCESS

The deadline for receiving letters of inquiry is **February 15, 2012.** Selected organizations will be invited to submit a full application by **March 15, 2012.** Because we are a small foundation with limited resources, we cannot support

all of the qualified organizations that submit inquiries. If we decline your request, we will try our best to explain why. Funding awards will be made in July 2012.

Please forward all letters of inquiry via mail, fax, or e-mail to:

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