

Dear Lovemore

What a pity your mother didn't leave a will. If she had, your life would not be so hard now. Your uncles should be ashamed for taking your family's possessions.

At your age you should not have to deal with this situation alone. Every community includes people and organisations who look after and support young people who have no parents. Find them and ask for help. Ask the pastor for advice. Talk to people or organisations in your area, especially groups who help families affected by AIDS. Ask head teachers, nurses, traditional leaders or government district officers.

Don't give up and don't be shy to ask for help – all young people deserve to be cared for and have food, clothes, a place to live, education and safety.

Yes, a lot of young people are in the same situation. Talk to them. You have so much to share – your sadnesses, struggles and victories too. You can also share information and ideas about solving your problems. Plan an activity together – like starting a vegetable garden. Ask government and organisations for things you need; you are stronger as a group than by yourself.

I wish you and your brothers and sisters happier times.

Auntie Stella

ACTION POINTS

- Children need love, food, a place to live, education and a life that feels safe. Are there many young people in your area – with or without parents – who don't have these things? How are they surviving?
- Where can children and young people like Lovemore go for help in your area? Do you think they get enough help? If not, what can you and your community do to make their lives easier?
- **A PLAY:** Make up a play about a group of young orphans who are invited to a District Health Committee meeting to discuss the help they need from their community. Decide who else is at the meeting (for example, a nurse, government officials, someone from an AIDS support organisation). After the play, discuss the following questions:
 - a** What happened at this meeting? Did the adults listen to the young people? Why or why not?
 - b** How can young people make sure that health and community services listen to their opinions about their real needs? What support do you need to make this happen and who could give it?