

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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A Small Act

Film Shows that Tiny Gestures Can Make a Big Difference

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What Happened:

Decades ago, Hilde Back—a Holocaust survivor who lives in Sweden—decided to give a helping hand to a small, impoverished boy in Kenya, paying for his schooling at the rate of \$15 a term. It didn't seem like much to Back; but for student Chris Mburu, the money made all the difference in the world.

Mburu went on to earn a law degree from Harvard University and now works as a human rights attorney for the United Nations. He also started a nonprofit organization called The Hilde Back Education Fund to help others who come from similar circumstances.

Back's and Mburu's story is chronicled in *A Small Act*, a documentary that recently was screened at the Sundance Film Festival. The movie helps illustrate that small monetary gestures can make a world of difference to recipients—a message particularly resonant in the wake of the Haiti earthquake.

"I wanted to show something positive," Jennifer Arnold, the film's director, told *The New York Times*. "There are a lot of stories in Africa aside from refugee camps and child soldiers."

The film also may point to how critical good child sponsorship agencies such as World Vision and Compassion International can be.

Though not all child sponsorship organizations are reputable, World Vision and Compassion International have earned high marks for their fiscal responsibility. Both have helped hundreds of thousands of children around the world.

Compassion International's Leadership Development Program caters specifically to youth such as Mburu: Through individual sponsors, promising students are given the opportunity—and the means—to go to college. Some have become doctors, lawyers, nurses and politicians. The hope is that the program will foster new leaders who have a desire to help the poor.

"It's giving them the potential," says Wess Stafford, president of Compassion International. "It's [also] giving them the opportunity to reach as high as they can reach, but it's allowing them to go back where they came from so they can breathe hope into the next generation."

Talk About It:

Do you help a child through some sort of sponsorship organization? Does your family? Does your youth group?

Stafford says that sponsored children love getting letters from their sponsors. Some keep them close at all times or hang their sponsors' pictures by their beds. Why do you think this is the case?

How important is schooling in a country that's not very educated? What advantages would youth who go to high school or college have?

What the Bible Says:

"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver" (Prov. 16:16).

"A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength; for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisors" (Prov. 24:5-6).

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" (2 Cor. 8:2).

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has not pity on him, how can the love of God be in him" (1 John 3:17)?

<http://www.asmallact.com/index.html>