

The use and misuse of emotion. Section 5: the inspiration business.

5.2.

The starfish story

Something to help donors appreciate the difference they make.

By Robbie Macmillan

Children of Rwanda is a registered Scottish charity that provides financial help to children and families in Rwanda by paying directly for school and health insurance costs. The children that have been selected to receive this aid are located in two adjacent villages, Ngoma and Kigarama, on the coast of Lake Kivu in the western part of the country. Each child is chosen according to his or her individual circumstances, each case is unique, but all are in desperate need of help.

Last year Children of Rwanda allowed 109 of the most in need children to return or continue to attend their local schools and paid for basic health insurance for them and their families, granting 284 individuals access to medical facilities. This year Children of Rwanda will see that 113 children return or remain in school and that 499 people receive health insurance.

Unfortunately, one of the children on this program no longer requires the charity's help as he died shortly after he had been selected. He contracted malaria, an easily treatable disease, and died because his family could not afford to take him to hospital.

Robbie tells the starfish story to explain why, in the face of hundreds, thousands and millions of children in huge need, helping even one child matters and makes a difference.

A boy is walking along a beach and spots an old man kneeling often

and picking up one of the thousands of starfish that have been washed ashore.

The old man gently throws them back into the ocean because, as the sun is out and the tide is so low, they will die if he doesn't do this.

'But old man', the boy said, 'don't you realise there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it! You can't possibly save them all, you can't even save one-tenth of them. Even if you work all day, your efforts won't make any difference at all.'

The old man listened calmly and then bent down to pick up another starfish and threw it gently into the sea and said, 'It made a difference to that one.'

There are many more children in these two villages alone that we are unable to help, but we can make a difference to these 113 and their families.

Help us make a first step towards securing a better future for these **Children of Rwanda**.

Robbie Macmillan founded Children of Rwanda when he was just 20 years old. You can contact him here.

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Robbie's starfish story reminded me of something Gandhi said, (or was it an old Chinese proverb, or something from Martin Luther King? I can't be sure, but it doesn't matter). It went like this.

'It's better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness.'

This was our slogan at ActionAid, when I started my career in professional fundraising 40 years ago. It was hugely effective. Supporters loved it. It's not hard to understand why.