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## World Orphan Day: Guest Comment

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A child is a treasure to every parent and a gift of God. Children instill a great deal of adventure and fun in our lives. However, many children lose their parents in an early age or in their adolescence. Such a child is known as an orphan. A loss of a parent from the maternal or the paternal side is devastating for the child. More than 150 million children in the world are orphans. The major causes which render a child parentless are natural disasters, poverty, HIV/AIDS, war etc.<sup>1</sup> The effects of becoming an orphan are atrocious. The child does not get proper nutrition, healthcare, education, shelter etc. India has the highest number of orphans in the world (31 million) followed by China (20.6 million) and Nigeria (12 million).<sup>1,2</sup> As India is a developing country, the situation of orphans is even more catastrophic. The orphaned children and adolescents have various negative traits such as anxiety to adults, lower IQ, slower rate of mental development, poor self-respect etc.<sup>2</sup>

The Greek philosopher Plato once said “Orphans should be placed under the care of public guardians. Men should have a fear of the loneliness of orphans and of the souls of their departed parents. A man should love the unfortunate orphan of whom he is a guardian as if he were his own child. He should be as careful and as diligent in the management of the orphan’s property as of his own or even more careful still.”<sup>3</sup>

Various communities such as ORPHANS and AIDS have pleaded the United Nations to dedicate one day every year to these children. Hence, every second Monday of November is celebrated as World Orphans Day.<sup>2</sup> A great deal of endeavour should be made to support these impoverished children. An adoptive family environment can provide improved developmental outcomes for children, especially those coming from orphanages.<sup>3,4</sup> Campaigns and events should be held for their proper education and guidance regarding health, education etc. Various foundations should come up with the initiative of providing grants for food, health, shelter.<sup>5</sup>

As was quoted by World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of children, “The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable, and dependent. They are also curious, active, and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, of playing, learning, and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their lives should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences.”<sup>4</sup>

Hence, by lending some of our time, energy and resources, we can contribute to the welfare and upbringing of these forgotten children.

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