

Date: not applicable

Location: White River, SA/Mozambique

Mercy Air Staff Member: Anne Herbert

Ten year old Akhil runs his finger under the words on the page as he reads the words aloud in his mother tongue. This is the first book that Akhil has ever read by himself, and he has a huge grin on his face at the accomplishment.

Two years ago, Akhil's situation looked hopeless. Both of his parents had recently died of HIV, and he was also beginning to show the symptoms of the devastating disease. As the only person available to take care of his dying parents and little brother, he grew up with no education and severely malnourished.

After the death of his parents, Akhil and his brother found a new home with a missionary couple from Iris Ministries. This couple takes care of 8 orphans, all diagnosed with HIV. Not only does the couple meet the children's physical and spiritual needs, but they also ensure they are receiving a good education as well, despite their severe learning disabilities. This couple uses a series of books developed by Anne Herbert, Mercy Air's Education Outreach Coordinator, to teach the kids reading skills in addition to counting and colors. These books are available in the children's cultural context and for many, they are the first books they've seen in their mother tongue.

