

Support through Sida to Orphans
and Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

Developing Rights-Based Support to AIDS Orphans

Sean Sprague/PHOENIX



AIDS awareness workshop, Tanzania.

The magnitude of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has highlighted the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Coping with the cumulative impact of over 17 million AIDS deaths on orphans and other survivors, on communities and on national development is an enormous challenge. Of the 13.2 million children under the age of 15 that have lost one or both parents to AIDS, 95 percent live in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that

No child should be denied their right to a family, play and recreation, education, health, protection from violence and abuse and growing up while developing democratic skills and learning about their rights and their responsibilities as citizens. Children should enjoy their rights regardless of race, sex, religion, nationality or social origins.

Governments' responsibility to ensure the rights of each individual child is essential in order to prevent and limit the adverse affects of the HIV/AIDS on children. Protection is the right of every child. Violence, abuse, neglect and the spread of HIV/AIDS threaten children throughout life. It is important to work with prevention, through information and education, that promote positive attitudes and life skills, including self-esteem. It is likewise important to improve the capacity of communities and schools to provide education for all and the support to the children. Legislation against discrimination, social and economic support to the survivors of the family and child-headed households are also of high priority. The support to children will only be effective if parents, teachers, community workers and decision-makers listen to the views of children.

The Swedish Government emphasises child rights in its development cooperation activities. More than SEK 1.2 billion are annually allocated to development programmes affecting child rights. The Government has recently reiterated its commitment to a rights-based approach in development cooperation and underlined the importance of working for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Priority areas are political leadership, gender equality, measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission, anti-retroviral programmes, access to information, developing health and education systems, developing youth-friendly health services, support to communities and empowerment of children and adolescents. It is also a priority to support children affected by HIV/AIDS. Sweden works in partnership with UN organisations, NGOs and governments.

Examples of Sida's Support in Africa

► *Young people as a resource*

In Tanzania, Sida and UNICEF support an innovative youth programme, jointly planned by young people themselves, to stimulate life skills.

Youth in Tanzania enact dramas and work with communities to identify problems and solutions. There is now a well-trained, acknowledged and articulate group of young people who can involve others of the same age in providing solutions for protection of orphaned children, disabled children, abused children and children living with HIV/AIDS.

While this programme provides valuable support, preventive measures must also focus on the needs and rights of adolescents, including education, health, sports, citizen awareness and guidance in democratic principles. Sida and UNICEF will continue to work with young people as a resource for their own development. A future challenge will be working with youth councils at the national level and ensuring that they gain due representation.

Eric Miller/PHOENIX



A Cape Town day care centre for HIV-affected children.



Siblings are often left to care for each other, Zambia.

The Tanzania youth programme receives SEK 48 million from 2002 to 2004.

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► **Caring for orphans**

In "The Botswana Christian AIDS Intervention Programme", orphan care services have evolved from local initiatives all around the country. Four orphan day care programmes have been established and the programme provides support and care to children orphaned by AIDS through basic physical and social support services. At the local level, committees have been formed to manage support activities. The programme especially focuses on schools in order to foster understanding and support among classmates for chil-

dren affected by HIV/AIDS.

Education and information workshops are organised for teachers and community opinion leaders. Sida's contribution is SEK 2 million for two years.

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► **Developing a support structure**

Sida supports the UNICEF regional office for Southern and Eastern Africa in developing new systemic approaches for provision of resources, social counselling and empowerment of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The experiences in implementing projects in Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe will form the basis for rights-based responses to the increasing number of AIDS orphans in the region. ►

Swedish Non-Governmental Organisations

Sida supports many Swedish non-governmental organisations that work in partnership with local NGOs with HIV/AIDS orphans and preventive work to stop transmission of HIV/AIDS. Save the Children Sweden and the Church of Sweden are two such organisations. Save The Children Sweden has worked

with groups of adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa, South Asia and Asia to develop strategies for support to them based on their own understanding on how they could work to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS and discrimination of adolescents with HIV/AIDS. In Zambia, Save The Children Sweden has supported a study on

young men and their views on gender roles and sexuality as well as a pilot programme on using drama in schools for discussions on prevention of HIV/AIDS.

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The Church of Sweden
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In each of these countries, the UNICEF office works with several partners, in addition to the partner government, in developing legislation and policies, and improving monitoring and coordination.

The responsibilities of government, communities and families for AIDS orphans are identified. By increasing their ability to fulfil that responsibility, they can ensure that the rights of the child are respected. These rights include birth registration, non-discrimination, participation, education, information, health care and social support as well as protection from exploitation, stigmatisation and abuse. Social support to children and communities is based on a rights approach rather than charity.

The complementary roles of government, civil society and the private sector are being explored, whereby the private sector funds micro-credit schemes. Institutions for children are only a solution when all other community-based alternatives have failed. Such alternatives include voluntary divisions of labour for farming, child care and community projects, as well as foster parent schemes. Education, including pre-school education, can normalise the life situation and develop children's social skills and life skills. The project also includes measures to counteract discriminatory regulations and customs at national and community level.

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► **Improving psychosocial support**

The "Regional Psychosocial-Support Initiative for Children Affected by

AIDS", REPSSI, seeks to improve psychosocial assistance for children affected by HIV/AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa. Through advocacy at regional, national and local levels, the initiative hopes to strengthen organisations that assist these children. Central to the programme is the firm belief that orphans and vulnerable children themselves have the inherent capacity to identify and respond to their own needs, and can assume community leadership in providing services. Sida supports REPSSI with SEK 27 million over five years.

REPSSI, Zimbabwe www.repssi.org
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► **Home based care in Southern Africa**

"Home based care, prevention and orphan support" is a project to improve the lives of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, networking with national Red Cross societies in ten Southern African countries, has initiated home based care support to orphans and other vulnerable children. The project also seeks to provide HIV prevention/advocacy skills at community level. Red Cross societies have volunteers managing the programme and sharing best practises. Young volunteers from communities participate in peer education. Sweden, together with the Netherlands and Ireland jointly support the project. Sida's contribution is SEK 30 million over 5 years.

IFRC Regional Office, Harare, Tel: +263 47 203 15

Children in Residential Care

The Stockholm University, Department of Social Works, has organised the conference on Children in Residential Care, May 12-15, 2003 in Stockholm. The aim of the conference is to discuss how to prevent children from ending up in institutions. The conference will analyse trends, look into changes, preventive policy and programmes, and identify mechanisms for improvements. The increasing number of orphans as result of HIV/AIDS will be a vibrant theme during the conference.

Sida has contributed SEK 4.9 million for pre-conference meetings and ensured the participation of delegates from Sweden's partner countries in development cooperation.

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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