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## **FHI/IMPACT Experience: Orphans and Vulnerable Children**

In the developing world, the AIDS epidemic has devastated families and created a bleak future for a generation of children. In the 88 countries most affected by the disease, more than 13 million children have been orphaned by AIDS; by 2010, the number is projected to reach 25 million. Also by 2010, 15 to 25 percent of all children under age 15 in 12 sub-Saharan African countries will be orphans due to the disease, and many will be infected themselves. In 2002 alone, more than 800,000 children became infected. Many more children who are not infected are made vulnerable by HIV, including those caring for ill parents, living in households headed by siblings or living in extreme poverty.

Although the majority of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) live with a surviving parent or extended family, many are cared for by a sick or dying parent, by elderly grandparents or by relatives struggling to provide for their own children. These children often suffer from poor nutrition, slow developmental growth, insufficient health care, inadequate shelter, a lack of emotional support and loss of educational opportunities. Numerous studies have found that families and communities will care for OVC if they have sufficient resources. But the growing number of OVC has strained traditional support networks, leaving many children to fend for themselves. Innovative responses are needed to help communities and governments mitigate the impact of AIDS on children and families.

Since 1999, the Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care (IMPACT) Project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed by Family Health International (FHI), has worked to improve the well-being of OVC and to decrease the burden of HIV/AIDS on children, families and communities. IMPACT collaborates with global and regional partners to build the capacity of government agencies and non-governmental that are family- and community-centered, comprehensive, and tailored to the specific community and national situation organizations (NGOs) to help families and communities care for OVC.

Because the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and their families is complex and cuts across all development sectors, USAID and FHI support programs. FHI's programs ensure that OVC and their families receive psychosocial support, socioeconomic assistance, human rights protection and medical care that includes: voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) and home-based care (HBC) services. To address the many development needs of OVC and their caretakers, IMPACT partners with organizations specializing in household economic security, food security and vocational development.

### **Global and Regional Activities**

Global and regional activities strengthen the links between OVC programs and HIV/AIDS care and support programs and provide opportunities to document and exchange skills, methodologies and experiences.

Through their participation in technical working groups, including the Global Network for Better Care, the Inter Agency Task Team and the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Task Force, IMPACT staff bring technical input and field perspectives to the development of global consensus on major thematic and technical areas related to OVC. Working HORIZONS, USAID and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), IMPACT is helping create practical ethical guidelines for gathering information from children and youth in the field. IMPACT is also involved in the Better Care Network's campaign to raise awareness of better care alternatives for children living outside the family setting. As part of a United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS working group, IMPACT helped develop OVC indicators, and as a member of the OVC Program Costing Tools Working Group, IMPACT is helping develop instruments for determining costs associated with OVC interventions. At the 2003 Global Partners Forum for Children Orphaned and Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in Geneva, IMPACT

staff provided input to the development of a strategic framework that outlines global-level actions for strengthening resource mobilization for OVC programs.

In partnership with UNICEF, USAID, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and Save the Children, IMPACT has co-sponsored several conferences in 2002, including the West and Central Africa Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Regional Conference, the Southern and East Africa Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Regional Conference and the first-ever Africa-wide Conference for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS. In 2003, FHI hosted the Southern African Workshop on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Maseru, Lesotho to facilitate the scaling up national OVC responses and to enhance participating countries' capacity to formulate policies, conduct situation analyses, establish national consultative processes, design in-country organizational structures, and develop national action plans and strategic initiatives.

Also in 2003, IMPACT joined Save the Children UK and the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative in organizing a week-long media advocacy course attended by over 30 broadcast and print journalists from twelve east and southern African countries. The course provided journalists with a better understanding of the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS and updated guidelines for interviewing children.

Through demonstration projects in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, IMPACT is helping build capacity to treat children living with HIV/AIDS with antiretroviral therapy.

### **Country Activities**

**Cambodia** IMPACT and its partners work to reduce discrimination in AIDS-affected communities and to help families and children affected by chronic illness, including AIDS, support themselves and access community assistance. FHI assists Homeland, a Cambodian NGO, in providing care and support for OVC and home-based care for sick adults in the family. The project helps families with succession planning and supports school attendance, vocational training and income generation activities for orphans. Kien Kes Health Education Network, led by a highly respected Buddhist monk, receives IMPACT support to educate orphaned children. Also, a network of Kien Kes-trained community volunteers conduct home visits and provide support to families caring for OVC and PLHA. IMPACT works with HelpAge International to increase the ability of and alleviate economic hardship among older people caring for OVC and PLHA. IMPACT has help integrate OVC support into Catholic Relief Services' community-based HIV/AIDS program. In addition, IMPACT support allows the Nyemo Center in Phnom Penh to provide services to HIV-positive women and their children.

**Côte d'Ivoire** With support from IMPACT, Doctors of the World conducted behavior change communication interventions to prevent sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, among street children and incarcerated youth. Working with youth to develop its outreach strategies, Doctors of the World established youth centers, provided literacy and vocational courses, and trained peer educators. IMPACT provided technical support to HOPE Worldwide to include children in its PLHA activities. HOPE Worldwide established support groups for children and their families and mobilized community resources to help the most vulnerable households. To replicate this approach, community facilitators were trained to network with other organizations, communities and countries. IMPACT also worked with local partners in Côte d'Ivoire to establish a model comprehensive community care and support program for children and their families.

**Ghana** Queen Mothers Association members in Manya Krobo District are traditional leaders responsible for the welfare of women and children in their communities. By arbitrating domestic and community problems, the Queen Mothers play a key role in the care and support of those in need. IMPACT works with the Queen Mothers to increase their capacity to care for and support children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. IMPACT helped the Queen Mothers apply for food support from Catholic Relief Services, which has enabled the Queen Mothers to provide food assistance to 300 orphans. The Queen Mothers' efforts have led local leaders to become increasingly involved in supporting OVC in their communities.

**Haiti** IMPACT partner Maison Arc en Ciel offers comprehensive care and support to families with children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS at its training center and psycho-medical complex in Port-au-Prince. At this central location, mothers and other caretakers learn how to provide HBC to children living with HIV/AIDS. Basic health and psychological services are available through the center's professional staff, and social workers perform community outreach and conduct home visits to HIV-positive children. The center is working to develop family support groups and to open a community center.

**India** IMPACT currently works with 22 implementing partners in high-prevalence communities to address the needs of nearly 12,000 OVC. FHI works with two broad categories of children in India: children who are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and vulnerable children such as the children of commercial sex workers, street and working children, and adolescent girls in slums.

FHI/India provides intensive programmatic and technical support to integrated prevention and care projects. Key strategies for meeting the needs of OVC include: mobilizing and tapping community resources; using child participatory approaches; providing home-based care; training the caregivers of OVC; creating linkages to medical, psychosocial and economic support services; addressing stigma and discrimination by sensitizing community leaders; and reducing children's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS through life skills education, counseling, behavior change communication and linkages to support services. As part of its ongoing support of its partners providing OVC services, IMPACT is developing the following tools for use in India: a life skills toolkit for children; protocols for counseling, HIV testing and disclosure; child participatory methods for use in programs; and guidelines for formative research to develop behavior change communication strategies.

**Kenya** In the western and coastal provinces, IMPACT is integrating OVC interventions into comprehensive care strategies. Collaborating with the Society for Women Against AIDS in Kenya (SWAK) and others, IMPACT developed a memory project and provided legal aid training to help HIV-positive parents write wills and identify guardians for their children. In addition, this project provides psychosocial and financial support to OVC. To identify and incorporate children's needs within the HBC setting, IMPACT supported formative research by the International Community for the Relief of Starvation and Suffering and St. Mary's to develop psychosocial services training for volunteer staff. In the future, post-test club members and community health workers will collaborate to train HBC patients on how to disclose their status to their children, how to create "memory books" and the basics of succession planning. IMPACT is also working with the Coast General Provincial Hospital to introduce ARV therapy for adults and children.

**Malawi** IMPACT is helping local partners develop an integrated HBC and OVC program to be implemented in the central and southern regions, where 13 community-based and faith-based organizations will provide care and support to more than 5,000 chronically ill people and at least 10,000 children. Interventions include providing psychosocial and educational support, training volunteers and equipping them with HBC kits, and strengthening referral links with health facilities and service providers. The program will enhance the District AIDS Coordinating Committees' monitoring programs. Planned activities include creating forums to share lessons learned and carrying out research to evaluate the cost-effectiveness and impact of integrated HBC versus stand-alone HBC for OVC.

**Namibia** IMPACT has supported two national OVC conferences and provides continuous support to the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Permanent Task Force, which develops national policies and guidelines, lobbies for children's rights and provides coordination to the national OVC program. IMPACT also supports the AIDS Law Unit, a national advocacy group whose activities include operating legal clinics that help PLHA submit social security and insurance claims, challenge unprofessional practices, assure appropriate care for their children and draft wills.

With FHI support, Catholic AIDS Action (CAA) uses its home-based care volunteers to identify and provide psychosocial support to OVC. CAA also advocates for OVC acceptance into schools and for fee waivers, provides OVC with means for continued school attendance and monitors school attendance. Philippi Namibia and Lifeline/Childline run youth camps, teach listening skills to youth leaders, assist in setting up kids clubs in local communities, and present participatory dramas on the rights of children. Of the more than 14,000 OVC reached by these programs, at least 6,000 are supported by IMPACT. Several FHI partners are currently using FHI's newly developed OVC monitoring and evaluation toolkit in preparation for a national launch, and an OVC identification data system is in development.

**Nigeria** IMPACT spearheaded a comprehensive analysis on the status of OVC in six states. Representatives from community, state and national organizations and government ministries helped design, collect, analyze and disseminate the data. This wide participation inspired stakeholders to form the National Task Force on OVC and to strengthen state-level responses. IMPACT helped the National Task Force develop an OVC proposal to the Global Fund and provided technical assistance to the first National OVC Conference. IMPACT also provides technical and programmatic assistance to three indigenous NGOs that support OVC through state-level initiatives.

**Rwanda** Building on a successful PMTCT initiative, IMPACT is helping the Biryogo Center and Ruli Hospital integrate OVC services and support into their programs. The center and hospital provide ongoing counseling, support groups for pregnant women and new mothers living with HIV, nursery school for toddlers, home visits by social workers, psychosocial services for PLHA and crisis interventions for families in need.

**South Africa** IMPACT supports the National Department of Health's (NDOH) efforts to include OVC issues in its programs. IMPACT also provides the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund GOELAMA OVC program with human resources, grant systems and tracking, and management support to strengthen its technical capacity to address children's issues within HBC, to provide palliative care for children living with HIV, to mobilize communities, to offer psychosocial support, and to strategically design, monitor and evaluate OVC programs.

In addition, IMPACT has provided OVC technical and programmatic assistance to Hope Worldwide/South Africa since HWWSA started integrating OVC services into its existing program in Soweto in 2000. The successful Soweto model has been expanded to urban areas in four other provinces. As HWWSA expands, IMPACT is providing technical support for integrating OVC into the continuum of care and support, assistance with monitoring and evaluation, support in scaling up OVC/PMTCT/VCT activities while maintaining programmatic and technical quality, and technical assistance to HWWSA's capacity-building program for small NGOs.

**Tanzania** FHI is working with the Tanzania AIDS Commission, in partnership with USAID and UNICEF, to evaluate the progress of the OVC component of the country's national response to HIV/AIDS. The findings will be used to enhance and scale up OVC interventions.

**Uganda** Partnering with the Regional Centre for Quality of Health Care, Institute of Public Health at Makerere University, IMPACT helped establish the African Network for the Care of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS. The network advocates for better diagnosis of HIV/AIDS in children, as well as greater pediatric access to clinical care, including ART. It also facilitates links with organizations working in related areas and ensures that existing evidence-based guidelines for the clinical care of children living with HIV/AIDS are widely disseminated, adopted and implemented.

**Zambia** IMPACT and CARE International support the work of SCOPE, a Zambian organization that in 2002 helped local communities meet the basic needs of more than 137,000 OVC for household economic security, schooling, psychosocial support, legal protection and health care. SCOPE has trained 109 local committees in 12 districts in children's rights, advocacy, proposal writing, resource mobilization, business management, psychosocial counseling, record keeping, report writing and leadership. In addition, SCOPE has conducted 15 radio programs to provide information on OVC issues and available resources. Priority SCOPE activities include scaling-up psychosocial support, increasing access to education, and assessing the impact of grants on beneficiaries. IMPACT also provides technical and programmatic support to the family support units at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, the Arthur Davidson Pediatric Hospital in Ndola and the Livingstone General Hospital in Livingstone. Using a family-centered approach, the units provide care to children living with HIV/AIDS and host support groups for the parents and caregivers of HIV-positive children.

*For more information on these and other FHI programs, visit FHI's website ([www.fhi.org](http://www.fhi.org)), which features profiles of our country activities.*