



U.S. Agency for
International
Development

Bureau for
Global Health

SUCCESS STORIES

HIV/AIDS

Building Community-Based Partnerships to Support AIDS Orphans and Vulnerable Children

JULIET, A 21-YEAR-OLD ZAMBIAN, lost both her parents to AIDS and is now looking after 11 of her younger brothers and sisters. The plight of Juliet and her siblings is not unique. By the year 2010, one out of four children in Zambia will be orphaned. As the growing number of children who lose their parents to AIDS overwhelms fragile social safety nets, many believe that strengthening community-based efforts is the only hope for building effective, sustainable support systems for children who are now orphans, for those who will become orphans, and for other children affected by AIDS.

One such effort, the Strengthening Community Partnerships for the Empowerment of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (SCOPE-OVC), is doing just that. This highly successful multi-sectoral project, implemented by CARE/Zambia with support from Family Health International and funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development, reached 137,521 orphans and other vulnerable children with life-sustaining care and support services last year alone.

Working to keep siblings together and children within their extended families and communities, SCOPE develops district- and community-level capacity and resources to respond to the many needs of orphans and vulnerable children. The project maintains a focused strategy of partnership building and networking to sustain old linkages and to build new ones to community-based organizations, churches, schools, and other institutions that provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children. A grants program distributed more than \$450,000 in 2002 to enable national, district, and community partners to do more work in community mobilization, psychosocial support, advocacy, food security, economic strengthening, and increased access to education and health care.

Fortunately, Juliet has benefited from the SCOPE project. The Masaiti Orphans and Widows Support Group, a SCOPE partner, has helped her buy agricultural inputs for the family's food security. Juliet writes, "Thank you so much, you have done a great job. Without you we would not have had the type of [maize] crop we have now. We also have a good crop of Chinese cabbage, which we are using to feed the young ones that were left in our hands by the late parents. Now we will have something to eat."

Dongo is a 15-year-old AIDS orphan who attended a SCOPE-supported psychosocial support camp. He reports, "Before I came to camp I was moody, short-tempered, unfriendly and had a lot of fears. After being exposed to activities such as games, singing and dancing, praise and worship, and teachings about love, I became a different person. For me the camp was good and I learnt about HIV/AIDS...."

"Communities have always had to deal with vulnerable children and orphans. Our responsibility is to figure out from the communities what they need and how we can support and strengthen their traditional ways of caring for orphans and vulnerable children."

—Sara Bowsky,
Family Health International

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