



Taking Care of Children Orphaned by HIV/AIDS

Challenge

Namibia has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world. As the numbers of adults succumbing to the disease increases, a growing number of orphans and vulnerable children are left to the care of relatives or, with growing frequency, left to fend for themselves. Many AIDS orphans live in poverty and lack the means to attend school. Without an education, they have little or no chance of ever escaping destitution. The sense of hopelessness, as well as the existence of economic pressures to provide sex in exchange for food, place these children at high risk of becoming infected themselves and being conduits to further the epidemic's spread.



Photo: Carol Culler/USAID

The number of orphans and vulnerable children in Namibia is growing.

"I am often referred to as the Mother of the Nation but I am sure that you will agree that even as a mother I would not be able to cope with all these children. And that is why you are here and why I am relying on you to help me in this endeavor."

– First Lady Mrs. Kovambo Nujoma.

Results

With USAID support, over 6,000 orphans have received access to education, psycho-social counseling, and other home-based support during 2003. Plans for 2004 include an expansion in the number of children reached as well as support for the establishment of a national trust fund designed to strengthen Namibia's ability to sustain their care.

Initiative

Namibia's government is one of the first to develop and implement national policies and procedures related to care of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, as set out in the Lusaka Guiding Principles and UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

USAID has supported the Namibian government's policy development efforts through assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare. This national level support is complemented by helping faith-based organizations and other non-governmental organizations at the local level. For instance, through Catholic AIDS Action's 'Schooled for Success' program, orphans are matched with trained volunteers who offer advocacy and other support to ensure school attendance and access to basic services.

