



STORIES of HOPE

NAMIBIA

Strengthening Faith-Based Initiatives



These children benefit from PEPFAR-supported services at the Bernhard Nordkamp Centre run by Catholic AIDS Action.

The synergy between faith-based initiatives and Namibian government programs has been, and will continue to be, a key to the successful national response to HIV/AIDS.



In 1998, the late Archbishop Bonifatius Hausiku of Namibia's Roman Catholic Church stood in front of TV cameras and proclaimed to his congregation, "AIDS is a disease, not a sin." The statement came as a shock to many but was a turning point in Namibia's fight against HIV/AIDS. The archbishop then announced the launch of Catholic AIDS Action, a support group for orphans and vulnerable children.

Two years later, Catholic AIDS Action, with support from an international non-governmental organization, had built a national network of organizations providing home-based care and other services to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. In partnership with the Namibian government, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) helped the network grow to include local faith-based organizations such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rhenish Church, Apostolic Faith Mission, Catholic Health Services, Lutheran Medical Services, Church Alliance for Orphans, Lifeline-Childline, Philippi Trust and the Evangelical Lutheran Church AIDS Programme.

In collaboration with the Namibian government and with Emergency Plan support, Family Health International helped to strengthen these and other faith-based initiatives through technical assistance and training in program management, finances, and monitoring and evaluation. Services provided by the network of faith-based organizations include HIV counseling and testing services; support groups; antiretroviral treatment; prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission programs; care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; and training for counselors for both government-managed and community-based programs.

Importantly, faith-based organizations are increasingly addressing the underlying community issues that amplify the epidemic's impact, including alcohol abuse, domestic violence and inadequate nutrition for vulnerable community members. The synergy between faith-based initiatives and Namibian government programs has been, and will continue to be, a key to the successful national response to HIV/AIDS.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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