

Taking Care of Children Orphaned by HIV/AIDS



Photo: USAID/Carol Culler

With USAID support, over 6,000 orphans have received access to education, counseling, and other home-based support during 2003.

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.

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. USAID has supported policy development efforts in Namibia through assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare. This support is complemented by helping faith-based organizations and other NGOs at the local level.

One such program is Catholic AIDS Action's 'Schooled for Success' program which matches orphans with trained volunteers who offer advocacy and other support to ensure school attendance. 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.

Photo & Caption