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SUCCESS STORY: TANZANIA

Trust Fund Is Established to Assist Children Affected by AIDS

USAID awareness-raising campaign works with government officials to answer the needs of children orphaned by AIDS



POLICY Project Chuck Pili

The Iringa Yatima Trust Fund is helping orphans like these attend primary schools in Iringa Urban District.

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IN 2000, THE HONORABLE MONICA MBEGA, who represents Iringa Urban District, found herself caring for 13 orphans—the children and grandchildren of her own brothers and sisters who had died of HIV/AIDS. “If a member of parliament has financial difficulty meeting the needs of orphans,” she wondered, “what about ordinary people and minimum wage earners?”

Her concern for Tanzania’s orphans increased when she became a member of the Tanzanian Parliamentarians’ AIDS Coalition (TAPAC). In February 2004, Ms. Mbega became one of the first members of Tanzania’s Parliament to address the issue of access to education for orphans by raising almost \$35,000 in a fund-raising walk to establish a trust fund to assist more than 3,000 AIDS orphans attend schools in her district.

The POLICY Project, funded by USAID, supported the establishment of the Coalition in August 2001. TAPAC works to ensure that national strategies and financial plans address the epidemic and foster a supportive environment for community-based organizations to address HIV/AIDS.

Over the past three years, TAPAC members have been provided with awareness-raising seminars covering sexually transmitted diseases, orphans and vulnerable children, HIV counseling and testing, stigma and discrimination, and the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. In an interview with POLICY after her fund-raising walk, Ms. Mbega noted that her attendance at these seminars helped plant the idea of a trust fund.

In particular, she was distressed to learn that of the 4,400 primary-school age orphans in Iringa District, only one-quarter of them were receiving assistance from area nongovernmental or community-based organizations. While the Tanzanian government had decided to waive fees for primary schools, students still needed help with uniforms, books, pencils, crayons, and other daily needs. The Iringa Yatima Trust Fund was established to bridge these gaps.

Under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the trust provided 2,232 uniforms for students at eight primary schools. Another 1,755 uniforms will be available by March 2005, and nearly all Iringa Urban District primary schools are expected to be provided uniforms by June. With Emergency Plan funding, orphans continue their studies in private secondary schools.

In an interview in the *Sunday Observer* after her fund-raising walk, Ms. Mbega said, “Before the eruption of HIV/AIDS, Tanzania had few orphans. Those who existed were in the good hands of their relatives. Now, with the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS cases, orphans are becoming a national concern.”