



The SEEP Network
HIV & AIDS and Microenterprise Development Working Group

Conference Synthesis

Learning the ABCs of OVCs

Conference Synthesis: Learning the ABCs of OVCs



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Introduction

AIDS is the leading cause of death worldwide for people aged 15-49. There are more than 33.2 million people living with HIV & AIDS, nearly 22.5 million of which live in sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 6,000 people die every day from AIDS.¹ The SEEP Network has started a cross-sectoral initiative to bring together microenterprise development and public health professionals to confront and combat the challenge of HIV & AIDS.

From September 24th to October 1st, 2008, the SEEP Network hosted the online conference *Learning the ABCs of OVCs* with guest speaker Saeed Bancie of Heifer International. The conference was a follow-up to a roundtable discussion moderated by the SEEP Network and Heifer International at the **Making Cents International Global Youth Enterprise Conference** in Washington, D.C. on September 16th, 2008. The roundtable focused on utilizing market-based approaches to design programming for youth and orphans impacted by HIV & AIDS, and the follow-up conference further explored this theme with the following key issues:

1. Adaptation of microenterprise development services to working with orphans and vulnerable children (*"A" is for Adaptation*)
2. Measuring the benefits and impact of this type of integrated programming (*"B" is for Benefits*)
3. The costs of this type of programming (*"C" is for Costs*)
4. Fostering livelihood development of OVCs through programming (*Learning the ABCs while Becoming the Breadwinners*)

The theme of OVC developed into an ongoing debate immediately following the introductory June conference on *Strategies for Microenterprise & HIV Programming*. Field practitioners from all over the world continued the dialogue in this second conference. The dialogue can be found on the SEEP Network website at http://communities.seepnetwork.org/me_hiv_conference/discussion.

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¹ Source: UNAIDS, November 27, 2007. See resources page for link to 2008 UNAIDS report.

Discussion Topics

During the June 2008 Microenterprise & HIV online conference and the subsequent roundtable discussion at the **Making Cents International Global Youth Enterprise Conference**, the subject of integrating HIV & AIDS and microenterprise development (MED) programming was discussed in depth.

This second online conference opened with the discussion "*A*" is for *Adaptation*, which further developed preceding dialogue by considering how microenterprise development programs can specifically adapt their services to respond to more vulnerable populations such as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) that are affected by HIV & AIDS. It also addressed the question of whether services should be targeted directly at or for OVCs or more widely to the community at large.

The second discussion, "*B*" is for *Benefits*, questioned what tools can be used to measure the impact and benefits of integrated programming and how these benefits can be sustainable while encouraging self-reliance among OVCs.

The third discussion, "*C*" is for *Costs*, approached the costs of integrated OVC programming for an MED program to explore how a business case can be made to convince MED programs of the necessity for integrated youth programming.

The final discussion, *Learning the ABCs While Becoming the Breadwinners* considered how integrated programming can best facilitate a positive working and learning environment in which the livelihood development of OVCs can be fostered.

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Synopsis of Comments

Regarding the issue of adaptation, comments and observations included:

- Local context is a key factor in determining appropriate ways to design programming for OVCs;
- Demonstrating the economic impact of HIV & AIDS is a crucial part of convincing MED programs to adapt their plans;
- In working with HIV & AIDS-infected entrepreneurs, it is important to recognize that their needs are different from other entrepreneurs and a system based only on incentives may not work. HIV & AIDS-infected entrepreneurs need to be provided with special health support. Specific to OVCs, the promotion of safe working environments that are free of stigma can be an indirect support service to assure the successful apprenticeship of OVCs;
- Programs that combine health services and MED should work to include stigma reduction activities, because for many HIV & AIDS-affected youth, the success of their enterprises depends on their acceptance by society;
- A multi-faceted and well-integrated approach is needed to address the needs of OVCs impacted by HIV & AIDS in a holistic and effective manner.

As for the question of effective targeting, the following points were made:

- Targeting is beneficial because in many areas HIV-affected OVCs are among the poorest of the poor and may be excluded from some support services;
- The use of appropriate language and terminology – i.e. avoiding labels that communities have an adverse reaction to – can reduce the stigma of OVC-targeted programming;²
- Direct targeting of OVCs may not be an effective method, depending on the local legal framework, stigma associated with HIV & AIDS, and entrepreneurial skills of the target population;
- An alternative to direct targeting is targeting caregivers or supporting businesses which employ OVCs, thus providing indirect support services and contributing to the development of a safe environment where youth can learn important skills.³

Concerning benefits of OVC programming, the participants raised these points:

- There is a need to clarify and define the level and type of support that OVCs receive;
- In addition to provision of shelter, food, and education, OVC programming can include health and nutrition and social inclusion programs;
- Different OVCs will require different levels of support, and it's important to identify the unique needs of each target group during the assessment phase of a program;
- Each organization must consider what kinds of support they can effectively provide and whether they can partner with other organizations that can offer complementary support.

² See resources page for link to UNESCO guidelines on language for HIV & AIDS-related materials.

³ The SEEP Network supports child rights and does not promote child labor. The comments made here represent the opinions expressed by field practitioners who contributed to the discussion and do not reflect the position of the SEEP Network.

In the discussion about livelihood development, there were a number of suggestions:

- Safe workplaces provide positive learning environments where children and youth can learn life skills, business skills, and technical skills from older employees;
- Some skills can be learned through work (technical skills) or alongside work (literacy or numeracy training);
- It is more effective to teach skills to youth in the context in which they use those skills;
- MED services for youth can be adapted according to age grouping, but there is some question as to what age is appropriate for the introduction of combined education and job training.

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Resources

Exchange Magazine (Royal Tropical Institute) – articles on orphans and vulnerable children: <http://www.kit.nl/smartsite.shtml?h=FAB&id=10488&IssueID=2&Year=2007>

Global Youth Enterprise Roundtable Presentation – The SEEP Network Guidelines for MED in HIV & AIDS-Impacted Communities:
http://communities.seepnetwork.org/sites/hamed/files/SEEP%20Guidelines%20for%20GYE_1.ppt

Homa Bay Orphans Livelihood Project (Heifer International):
<http://communities.seepnetwork.org/sites/hamed/files/Homa%20Bay%20Case%20Study.ppt>

Integrated Approaches to Assisting OVCs (Children of Faith, Jamaica):
<http://communities.seepnetwork.org/sites/hamed/files/Integrated%20approach%20to%20assist%20OVC.doc>

Children, Youth & Economic Strengthening Network: <http://www.cyesnetwork.org/>

Understanding and Challenging HIV Stigma: Toolkit for Action (ICRW):
<http://www.icrw.org/docs/2003-StigmaToolkit.pdf>

Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic – Executive Summary, July 2008 (UNAIDS):
http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2008/JC1511_GR08_ExecutiveSummary_en.pdf

UNESCO Guidelines on Language and Content in HIV & AIDS-related Materials:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001447/144725e.pdf>

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