

Community-based AIDS prevention and care in Africa : building on local initiatives.

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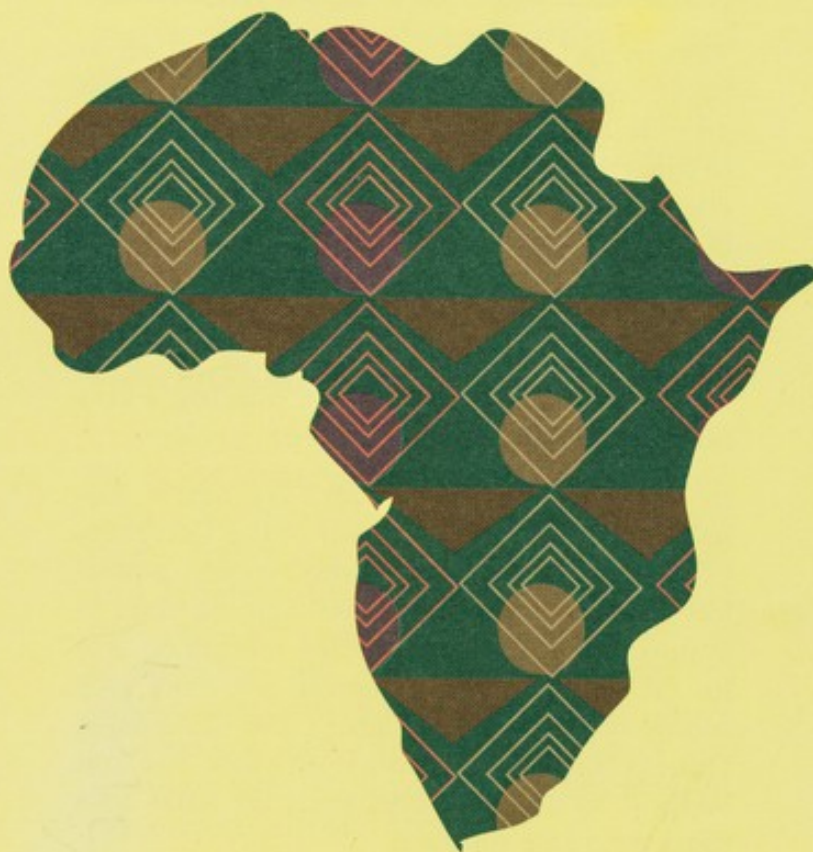
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**Community-Based
AIDS Prevention
and Care in Africa**



Building on Local Initiatives



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world most severely affected by the global HIV and AIDS epidemic. Responding to this growing crisis requires the development of innovative efforts to prevent the further spread of HIV. Simultaneously and urgently, attention must also focus on the growing need of communities in Africa to care for those already infected and the capacity of these communities to support the survivors in AIDS-affected families. To date, however, most efforts for AIDS prevention have not been integrated with care and, therefore, have not benefitted from mutual strengthening and reinforcement.

With the support of the Wellcome Foundation Limited's "Positive Action" Programme, the Population Council has undertaken a three-year project entitled "Community-Based AIDS Prevention and Care in Africa: Building on Local Initiatives." This project is underway in five countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The ultimate goal of the project is to understand the essential components of effective community-based efforts for AIDS prevention and the care of persons living with HIV infection.

In the first year of the project, the Council enhanced its understanding of the mechanisms of local initiatives and elements of successful programmes through surveys and interviews of staff from prevention and care programmes in each country. This was followed by the selection of eight examples for further study and documentation.

As part of the process of developing the eight case studies, the Population Council and the Positive Action Programme are holding a workshop in Berlin, one day prior to the opening of the IXth International Conference on AIDS. The workshop will bring together representatives from the eight projects along with donors, representatives of government and nongovernmental organisations, technical

assistance agencies, and national and international AIDS prevention programmes. Participants will review the inextricable links between AIDS prevention and care and explore the range of efforts of practitioners in Africa dealing directly with the consequences of AIDS. The practical exchange of information and experience will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss how best to build upon local initiatives for AIDS prevention and care. These efforts provide the foundation for the next steps of the project.

During the second and third years, the project will: 1) work with existing AIDS prevention and care programmes to explore how operations research could make these efforts more effective; 2) facilitate a "mentor" relationship between well-established national level or nongovernmental AIDS prevention programmes and new, local level initiatives in order to share lessons learned; and 3) document these programmes in order to disseminate their experiences to other individuals, institutions, and governments involved in AIDS programme development.



MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

As the HIV and AIDS epidemic continues to expand to various corners of the globe, every sector of society needs to be responsive. Within sub-Saharan Africa, local community-based initiatives have emerged as a powerful force in the effort to contain the epidemic. Diverse groups across the continent are reaching out to people living with HIV and AIDS through a variety of innovative programmes. They strive to strengthen AIDS prevention and care through advocacy for and by people living with HIV and AIDS, target educational initiatives to specific groups, improve access to health care services, and provide AIDS counselling and home-based care for families and community members.

Local initiatives include efforts by community groups and by government institutions, often working closely with a variety of international agencies. Although their methods differ, all are characterised by their dedication to a set of shared social values that guide their organisational mission to address the needs, advance the cause, and defend the human rights of people living with AIDS.

To document the experience of local initiatives, the Population Council is preparing a series of eight case studies from five African countries severely affected by the AIDS epidemic. The case studies represent four basic themes relevant to development of integrated approaches to HIV and AIDS prevention and care: the role of counselling; examples of home and community care; reorganization of traditional institutions within the community to provide AIDS prevention services; and the impact of the changing socioeconomic environment of HIV and AIDS on women and children. These programmes present a range of interventions by communities responding to the AIDS crisis and offer important lessons not only applicable in Africa, but in other parts of the world as well.

*Dr. Colette Deblot
Nairobi, Kenya*



THE FOUR THEMES

The Role of Counselling in HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care Programmes

The single most important function of counselling is to provide the individual and his/her partner or family, within an environment of privacy and respect, the time and opportunity to come to terms with their health status and to support them to make needed behaviour changes. Case studies will describe the counselling programmes of the Zambian Ministry of Labour and Social Security and The Know AIDS Society (KAS) of Kenya.

An Exploration of Home and Community-Based Care

Efforts to prevent disease progression through early detection must incorporate mechanisms for the care of those with the illness, allocate resources to support the needed interventions, and ensure that no one is refused care. One issue that arises in considering alternatives for care is the shift from in-patient hospital care to home care. While this strategy results in increased efficacy and savings at the institutional and/or government level, at the same time it represents a redistribution of costs to the communities and the immediate unit of care, usually the family. The primary health care model of the Uganda National AIDS Control Programme (UNACP) and the "People in the Fight Against AIDS" programmes (or WAMATA from the Kiswahili acronym) are explored in this context.

The Reorganisation of Traditional Institutions within the Community to Meet the Need for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care

Throughout Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, many people still rely on traditional healers for provision of some types of health care. Traditional healers are geographically and functionally well situated to help in preventing transmission of HIV and AIDS and in providing care. A case study will examine the community-based HIV and AIDS prevention and care programme of the Zimbabwean National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA).

To date most AIDS prevention campaigns have carried the message that casual sex carries the greatest risk of infection and that faithfulness is the best prophylactic. Thus, women who are faithful to one partner believe they are safe when, in fact, their partner's behaviour outside the home may place them at considerable risk. The work of the "Women of Kilimanjaro United against AIDS" (KIWAKKUKI from the Kiswahili) to

address this risk by promoting and supporting traditional African mechanisms for educating young people will be examined.

The Impact of a Changing Socioeconomic Environment of HIV and AIDS on Women and Children

The deteriorating economic situation in many African countries brought about by structural adjustment policies, drought, civil unrest, urban migration and unemployment, among others, is exacerbated by AIDS. Young women in Africa today not only face the growing feminisation of poverty but they now constitute the major risk group for HIV infection.

Women and families affected by AIDS turn to traditional, informal support networks that provide assistance to individuals and families in situations of illness or death. In AIDS-affected households, a member who is either ill or has died forces the families to reallocate household resources and labour that s/he can now no longer provide. The need for extended families to provide for the growing number of orphans is also placing extra burdens on scarce resources.

In Kenya, the Voluntary Women's Rehabilitation Institute (VOWRI) of the University of Nairobi focuses on young women whose low economic status, coupled with the need to support children and family members, has forced them to use commercial sex work as a source of support. In Zambia, the Children in Distress (CINDI) programme provides care and support to children orphaned by AIDS and those who care for them.




Where Do We Go From Here?

Among the important lessons we are learning from the development of the case studies are the need to adopt multiple approaches and to involve locally-based initiatives in bringing about attitudinal and behavioural change at the

community level. With their flexibility, diversity, and base within the community, local organisations must be recognized as important partners of governments and donors alike in the global response to the AIDS epidemic.

Over the next two to three years, the Community-Based AIDS Prevention and Care in Africa project, as part of its action-oriented research, will seek to:

- Encourage community organisations and their local initiatives to review and expand their participation in the National AIDS Programme;
- Make available seed money and technical assistance to these local organisations to strengthen management capacity and improve service delivery, and support collaboration with other similar efforts; and
- Fund larger and more established NGOs to work with newer, community-based organisations as mentors to strengthen the capacity of the smaller initiatives.



For more information about the Community-Based AIDS Prevention and Care in Africa: Building on Local Initiatives project or to request copies of the case studies, please contact:

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Publications can also be requested from:

The Robert H. Ebert Program
on Critical Issues in Reproductive
Health and Population
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The Population Council, an international, nonprofit organisation established in 1952, undertakes social and health science programmes and research relevant to developing countries and conducts biomedical research to develop and improve contraceptive technology. The Council provides advice and technical assistance to governments, international agencies, and nongovernmental organisations, and it disseminates information on population issues through publications, conferences, seminars and workshops.

The Wellcome Foundation Limited is an international pharmaceutical company dedicated to the discovery and marketing of products which promote human health and quality of life. The company has been at the centre of the medical response to HIV and AIDS since its development in the mid 1980s of zidovudine (AZT) for the management of HIV infection.

Through its "Positive Action" programme, Wellcome is committing funds, expertise, and facilities in support of its fundamental belief that its activities in the field of HIV and AIDS should go beyond the traditional roles and responsibilities of commercial organisations. Positive Action comprises a series of different initiatives, each focusing on a different area where there is most need. There are currently five main initiatives: HIV Community Support, Children and Young People, Developing Country, The Workplace and Information, and Policy. For more information about the Positive Action programmes, write to:

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