

Good News Community Initiated and Managed Centre for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children i Malawi: The Secret behind the Success

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Malawi has high HIV prevalence (12%) and AIDS related mortality. This has led to loss of many prime age adults who have left behind orphans. There are about 1 million OVC in Malawi. The large number of OVC has overwhelmed the extended family system causing its failure to cope. This prompted the need to look at other community care systems. Through a study which was conducted in 2009, we identified, reviewed, and documented best practices in OVC care and support for mitigation of AIDS related impacts. The study assessed various community initiated and managed interventions and identified success factors, sustainability, challenges, and potential for replication and scaling up.

We used FGD with community providers, and Life stories with OVC beneficiaries. We focused on success factors, interventions, benefits to OVC, sustainability, and future aspirations.

The community initiated and managed residential child care centre was established in 1999, driven by the need to respond to problem of large number of orphans in the area that had no food, shelter, or clothing. Community members contributed money and other resources to construct the structures. 12 OVC were enrolled in 1999. By 2009, 107 OVC were residing at the centre, being provided with food, accommodation, basic healthcare, and education. Income and food were raised through farming and smallscale businesses. Community Volunteers take turns to provide care to the children. As a result:

1. From 1999 to 2009, no child had died at the centre
2. Most former children of the centre had completed secondary school, or were doing small-scale businesses, or were seeking employment. Most were able to fend for themselves
3. Acquired maize milling machine

Success was based on volunteerism, commitment and self sacrifice to save lives. Good leadership also played a part.

Challenges

1. Persistent drought. They now rent wetlands for winter cropping
2. Problems to market produce in the area
3. Inadequate resources which limit number that can be enrolled

Lessons Learned

1. The need to widely share experience for the benefit of other communities
2. With strong leadership, there is potential for communities to initiate and develop activities to solve local problems
3. Transparency and accountability of community leaders builds trust among volunteers and others