

An introduction to family-centred services for children affected by HIV and AIDS

Linda Richter

Abstract

Family-centred services in the context of HIV/AIDS acknowledge a broad view of a "family system" and ideally include comprehensive treatment and care, community agencies and coordinated case management. The importance of family-centred care for children affected by HIV/AIDS has been recognized for some time. There is a clear confluence of changing social realities and the needs of children in families affected by HIV and AIDS, but a change of paradigm in rendering services to children through families, in both high-prevalence and concentrated epidemic settings, has been slow to emerge. Despite a wide variety of model approaches, interventions, whether medical or psychosocial, still tend to target individuals rather than families. It has become clear that an individualistic approach to children affected by HIV and AIDS leads to confusion and misdirection of the global, national and local response. The almost exclusive focus on orphans, defined initially as a child who had lost one or both parents to AIDS, has occluded appreciation of the broader impact on children exposed to risk in other ways and the impact of the epidemic on families, communities and services for children. In addition, it led to narrowly focused, small-scale social welfare and case management approaches with little impact on government action, global and national policy, integration with health and education interventions, and increased funding. National social protection programmes that strengthen families are now established in several countries hard hit by AIDS, and large-scale pilots are underway in others. These efforts are supported by international and national development agencies, increasingly by governments and, more recently, by UNAIDS and the global AIDS community. There is no doubt that this is the beginning of a road and that there is still a long way to go, including basic research on families, family interventions, and effectiveness and costs of family-centred approaches. It is also clear that many of the institutions that are intended to serve families sometimes fail and frequently even combat non-traditional families.

Supplement: Family-centred services for children affected by HIV and AIDS Susan Kippax and Shirin Heidari. Guest editor: Linda Richter <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1758-2652-13-S2-info.pdf>

(Published: 23 June 2010)

doi:10.1186/1758-2652-13-S2-S1

Cite this article as: Richter L: An introduction to family-centred services for children affected by HIV and AIDS. *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 2010, 13(Suppl 2):S1.

Full text:

PubMed Centralen: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2890970/>