

Advocacy work on children by local organisations and their challenges



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1. Background

- HIV/AIDS prevalence of 23% within the population of 1.8 million.
- It affects mostly the productive age of 15 to 49
- 180,000 orphaned children (UNAIDS, 2004)
- Apr. 100,000 have lost parents due to HIV and AIDS
- The number of orphans has doubled to 360,000 (Census, 2006)

2. Advocacy work on children in Lesotho

2.1 Legal and Policy Frameworks

- Review of the Child Protection Act of 1980 - drafting of Child Protection and Welfare Bill
- Unfortunately the Bill has been in draft since 2004.
- NGOs, agencies working with children & some Gvt. depts – continuing to lobby parliament to urgently pass the Bill
- National OVC Policy of 2005 and Strategic Plan (2006-2011)
- National AIDS Policy and Plan extensively cover OVC issues
- Sexual offenses Act (2003).



2.2 Institutions and Programmes Targeting Children

- ❑ Child and Gender Protection Unit within police dept.
- ❑ National OVC Coordinating Committee and District Child Protection Teams (DCPT)
- ❑ Child Help Line to respond to issues of abuse.
- ❑ Registration of OVC by Government
- ❑ Lesotho Child Grant Programme - piloting to begin in September 2008.



3. Advocacy Work by Touch Roots Africa (TRA)

- ❑ Founded in 2004 and started operations in 2006.
- ❑ Builds capacity of NGOs and CBOs
- ❑ Promotes integrated & holistic approach to OVC care & support (HIV, food security, psychosocial support (PSS), child protection)
- ❑ Support CBOs on organizational development, advocacy and M&E.
- ❑ Funding Sources: Firelight Foundation, Steven Lewis Foundation, Food & Agricultural Organisation, National AIDS Commission.

3. Advocacy Work by Touch Roots Africa (TRA) cont.

- ❑ Works in partnership with Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), Catholic Relief Services and National University of Lesotho.
- ❑ Assist communities to establish of Child Welfare Forums (CWF) and Child Focus Groups (CFG).
- ❑ Train community groups including children on psychosocial and child protection
- ❑ Sensitise communities and CBOs on the rights and responsibilities of children.
- ❑ Provide mentoring & technical support after training

Child Focus Group





3. Advocacy Work by Touch Roots Africa (TRA) cont.

- Sensitises communities about legal and policy frameworks, services for children and guides them on how to access the services.
- Promote linkages between communities and service providers
- Promote linkages between communities and local/district authorities

Community Discussions on Child Protection Issues





4. TRA Achievements So Far

- Reached **178** groups with psychosocial support training
- **131** groups including teachers and community leaders with child protection training and advocacy
- **22** groups with basic organisational development.
- No. children supported by above groups is **4,450**.
- **52** groups of children established and trained on child protection & psychosocial support



4. TRA achievements so far cont.

- ❑ Followed-up and mentored **86** groups
- ❑ Found that amongst others, At least **150** children have been able to access Ministry of Education bursaries
- ❑ At least **90** cases of child abuse have been handled and referred to relevant service providers.
- ❑ Communities are able to report and refer cases
- ❑ Communities are able to register OVC for support
- ❑ Chiefs and counselors are supportive to communities even in the cases of abuse



5. Challenges of Local Organisations' Advocacy Work

- ❑ Limited understanding of the concept of “advocacy”
- ❑ Inadequate awareness of child protection and PSS among service providers, policy makers and donors
- ❑ Inability to access funds by CBOs
- ❑ Complex and stringent conditions by donors
- ❑ Inability to attract qualified and competent human resource
- ❑ Inability to acquire necessary equipment for programmes.
- ❑ Easily diverted from their agendas by donors

6. Advocacy Issues that Need Strengthening

- ❑ Adoption of policy and legislation that would afford people with disabilities recognition and protection
- ❑ Access to HIV information by visually impaired, deaf, and mentally disabled.
- ❑ Institutions that serve OVC need to cater for children with disabilities who currently suffer double tragedy
- ❑ Provision of incentives for CBOs to motivate them
- ❑ Advocacy skills for CBOs to influence policy, legal frameworks and practice
- ❑ Direct institutional and technical support to CBOs



6. Advocacy Issues that Need Strengthening cont.

- ❑ Mainstreaming of psychosocial support in all services for children
- ❑ Caring for caregivers and CBOs/support groups to prevent burnout
- ❑ Strengthening of protection of children's rights
- ❑ Strengthening of coordination in OVC work
- ❑ Improving responsiveness by service providers
- ❑ Strengthening advocacy for the passing of the Child Protection and Welfare Bill.