

WHAT HAS WORKED: Inter-faith Collaboration and Coordination

Presentation during the
International Symposium
on Children
August 2008, Mexico City

by: Zebib Kavuma
African Council of Religious Leaders-
Religions for Peace



Why Faith-based Communities

- Over 90% of Africans belong to a specific faith with 2 million churches, mosques and traditional gatherings covering the continent
- All the main religious traditions have strong warrants for caring and providing support for the most vulnerable
- Possess moral authority and have tradition of speaking out on issues of concern – provide spiritual encouragement and compassionate care
- Potential to mobilize care for the 2.5 million children living with HIV (2007) and the estimated 16 million who will be orphaned by 2010
- Institutional infrastructure/channels of communication with wide reach from local to pan-African structures

Why Inter-faith Collaboration?

- Multi-faith action for a common vision will achieve the greatest impact for OVC and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS than any other single delivery mechanism
- The power of influence and change is profound when senior religious leaders of different faith come together for a common cause
- Platform for interfaith dialogue, advocacy and action to deal with issues of common concern



ACRL-R/P: Who are we?

- pan-African multi-religious body
- consists of senior religious leaders drawn from each of Africa's main religious traditions
- advances African multi-religious cooperation in support of peace and sustainable human development
- aims to transform conflict, promote human rights and good governance, combat HIV/AIDS and its impact on children and families, and overcome poverty
- engages religious communities nationally and regionally to build, equip, and network Inter-religious Councils (IRCs) at all levels

What are Inter-religious Councils?

- ACRL-RfP uses its network of national IRCs in Africa to engage religious leaders and their communities in multi-religious collaboration and coordination
- IRCs are umbrella bodies that bring together leaders of different religions for common cause and common action
- IRCs are independent, self-led and respect the differences within religious communities
- The work of the IRCs is implemented through Religious Coordinating Bodies (RCBs) that represent the faith communities at national level to coordinate activities and represent their interests

Why IRCs?

- **Credibility** – built and led by religious communities themselves
- **Powerful reach** – large numbers through its member communities
- **Efficiency** – utilize existing resources and structures
- **Coordination** – linkages at local, national and regional levels
- **Accessibility** – structures facilitate partnerships between religious communities and public institutions

Models of Success

ACRL-RfP is working successfully in several African countries with IRCs in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Liberia ...

- Senior religious leaders are committed and speak with one voice, they are involved in resource mobilization
- Well functioning operational and financial systems in place
- Recognition by the government and other development partners including donors
- Permanent members of national HIV/AIDS commissions/ committees/ alliances
- Recognition and acceptance by the communities they serve

Reaching the Community

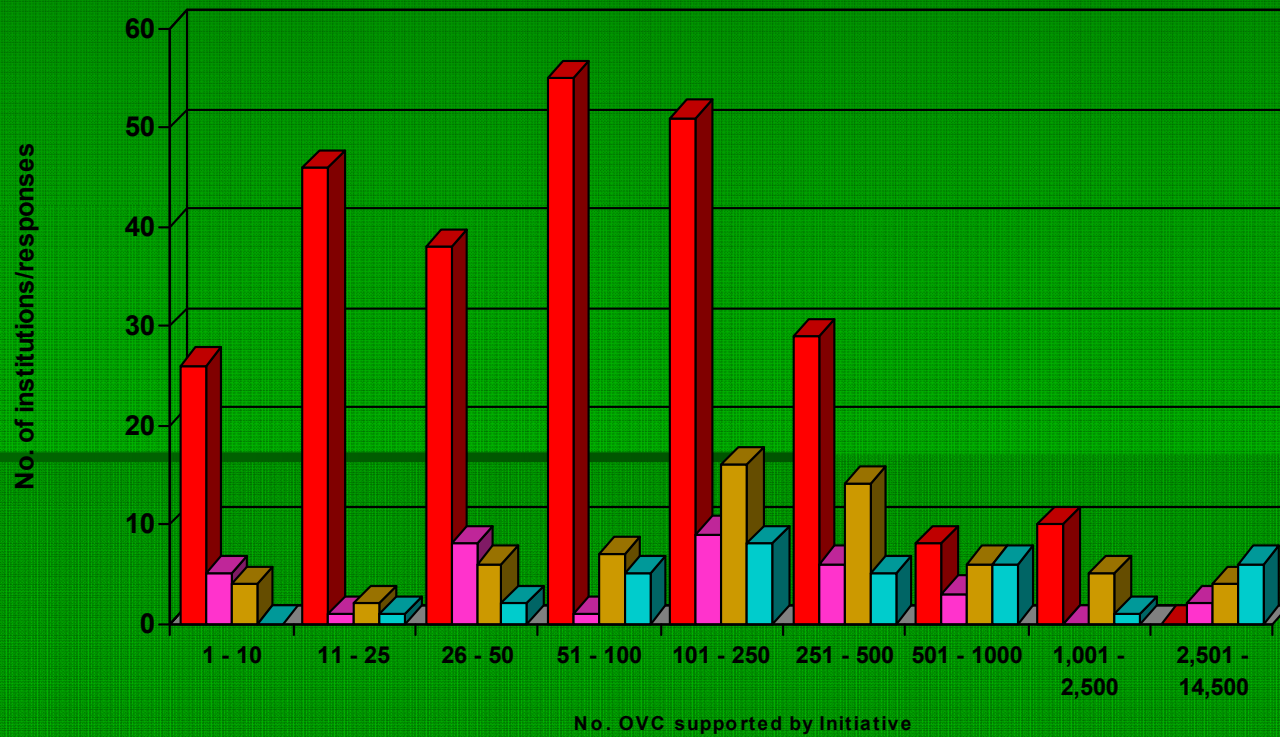
- Each RCB serves as a mechanism to further mobilize and equip the participating religious communities to maximize their collective capacity to respond to the AIDS pandemic
- RCBs have direct access to local congregations and faith-based community organizations that provide services and care for OVC and supervise the allocation of resources and provide training to enable the groups expand
- The approach is community-based and provides families and local communities the resources they need to care for their children



Reaching OVC through Congregations

- IRCs utilize RCBs to identify and provide OVC scale-up grants to congregations and monitor their activities
- RCBs set up systems of accurate reporting, monitoring and evaluation
- IRCs are responsible for overall coordination, capacity building of congregational program staff, M&E and reporting

Size of Initiatives by Type of FBO



■ Congregation ■ CBO ■ RCB ■ NGO

Main Activities of Congregations

- HIV awareness and prevention programs for young people
- Education (school fees, uniforms, books)
- Counseling and visitations
- Nutrition through school feeding programs
- Basic health care
- Income generating activities
- Day Care for OVC
- Community Schools



Results...



Lessons Learnt

- Religious communities represent extensive, well-organized and viable networks for local community organizations in Africa, and yet they are under-utilized in responding to the needs of children affected by AIDS
- Engaging with known permanent entity
- Most congregations have strong governance and financial systems
- Need for better documentation of the work of congregations
- Rapid granting mechanism when working through congregations
- Congregations use volunteers who are committed

Lessons Learnt

- Donors need to recognize and consistently utilize existing faith-based structures and work with RCBs in Africa to ensure that support reaches the appropriate communities
- FBOs need to continue to establish committee/task force to guide the development of OVC and HIV/AIDS initiatives
- FBOs at all levels need to increase the participation of women, children, youth and people living with HIV/AIDS in program development and implementation

Challenges

- Limited evidence-base on FBO functioning successfully (i.e. effective referral mechanisms)
- Competition amongst FBOs to access external funding
- High turn over of staff in RCBs
- Congregations lack capacity in project management including effective reporting on activities
- Volunteer attrition rate is high
- Ensuring resources go where they are most needed and have the greatest impact on the lives of OVC in a manner that is scalable and sustainable

"There can be no keener
revelation of a society's soul
than the way in which it
treats its children"

Nelson Mandela

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION!*