

UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development

**TECHNICAL CONSULTATION OF GLOBAL PARTNERS FORUM ON
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS**

**Ensuring an Effective Response:
Monitoring and Evaluating Programmes for Children Affected by AIDS**

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[This session is focussed on how national governments and implementing organizations can respond effectively to the needs of children affected by AIDS. This background paper (and session) does not cover the monitoring needs of children with HIV or AIDS nor the children who are exposed to maternal HIV infection.]

Why do we need to monitor and evaluate?

In 2005, 2.6 million adults died due to AIDS¹. An estimated 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS². Millions of additional children are living with HIV-infected parents who might be ill or need care themselves. Although we can make estimates of the vast number of children who are orphaned or vulnerable due to AIDS, it is more difficult to quantify the impact of HIV on communities and the effect of parental deaths, parental illness and the related stigma on children.

The 2001 UN Declaration of Commitment for HIV/AIDS stated clearly the need to build and strengthen governmental, family and community capacities to provide a supportive environment for orphans and girls and boys infected and affected by HIV/AIDS³. Governments and donors have more recently committed themselves to assuring “Universal Access” to prevention, treatment, care and support services by 2010⁴. Specifically they agreed to:

Developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it, including through increased resources, and working towards the elimination of stigma and discrimination, enhanced access to affordable medicines and the reduction of vulnerability of persons affected by HIV/AIDS and other health issues, in particular orphaned and vulnerable children and older persons; (UN Resolution 60, 2005, page 15)

¹ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update 2005*, UNAIDS, Geneva, 2004.

² UNAIDS, UNICEF and USAID. *Children on the Brink 2004: A joint report of new orphan estimates and a framework for action*. USAID. Washington, DC, 2004.

³ UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS Declaration of Commitment.

⁴ UK Government. The Gleneagles Communiqué 2005. Gleneagles Summit, 8 July 2005.
http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/PostG8_Gleneagles_Communique.0.pdf and UN Resolution 60
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/487/60/PDF/N0548760.pdf?OpenElement>

Yet virtually no data exist to see whether we are meeting these goals⁵. In 2000, 2001 and 2002 participants at meetings in Southern Africa emphasized the need to improve the understanding of the response for children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS. These requests were filled in part with national level indicators. But much more still needs to be done at the community level and to coordinate national level measurements. To ensure an appropriate response for children affected by AIDS and to meet these goals systematic monitoring must be in place. This paper briefly reviews some of the key challenges to measuring the response to children affected by AIDS and proposes recommendations for overcoming those challenges.

To ensure that all children's rights are met, governments need to know which children require protection and support and which interventions are most efficient and effective for delivering that support. The process of setting up a monitoring and evaluation system will prompt governments to consider their objectives and targets for interventions, develop strategic plans to achieve their goals, and take action to address any weaknesses or change strategies as appropriate. Governments can then make educated choices for facilitating community-based organizations and scaling-up appropriate interventions. Information from monitoring systems allows governments to monitor the situation at a national level, but more importantly, provides critical information to the organization implementing the intervention.

Community-based organizations (CBOs), Non-government organizations (NGOs), and Faith Based organizations (FBOs) play a key role in mitigating the impact of the epidemic on children and families. These organizations require monitoring data to quantify who and what services are provided and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency by which they deliver services. The effectiveness of the interventions and the resources required allow organizations to plan for additional funding needs and, ideally, provide evidence to governments and donors that children were reached and money was well-spent. To scale up interventions, have them run effectively, and to monitor the national response appropriate systems must exist at all levels (project, national and global).

Challenges to monitoring

Monitoring is critical to the success of a project, yet numerous challenges exist that make monitoring the situation of children in AIDS-affected communities problematic. Building an appropriate monitoring system, ensuring regular and appropriate evaluations, coordinating the monitoring systems between sectors, making data useful for national reporting, and defining the target population all create a complicated environment.

Capacity of organizations to monitor

CBOs provide some of the most effective and efficient responses to children affected by AIDS. Small local organizations know the community well and are uniquely qualified to provide the appropriate response to the most vulnerable children. However, many CBOs, FBOs or NGOs don't have the capacity – either human resources or skills – to set up a

⁵ See background paper "Making it Work: A progress report"

monitoring system for their intervention. This limits their ability to understand the reach or effectiveness of their intervention and challenges opportunities for scale-up.

Time and resources to evaluate

At the project level, time is often not available for reviewing monitoring data to find weaknesses in programmes. Evaluation is often overlooked as the urgency of programmes limits the chances to reflect on the data and consider how to improve the system and overcome the challenges. Information on cost-effectiveness of projects is also not possible to assess without evaluations.

Multi-sectoral nature of interventions

Children affected by AIDS are in need of multiple types of assistance from financial support for schooling, to psychosocial support while coping with a dying parent, to legal support for securing an inheritance. Measures of the effectiveness of programmes that provide this assistance vary as much as the services. The programmes that provide this assistance are in different sectors and will require different standards for reporting. For example cash grants for school support might require evidence from the school that the fees were paid, while counselling sessions might occur informally. Monitoring whether the school fees were paid might then be much simpler than collecting data on the number of counselling sessions that occurred.

Also the multi-sectoral nature of assistance to children affected by AIDS might result in some services being reported to the ministry of education and others to the ministry of social services. A national programme manager will need to work with multiple ministries to collect the data on the varying services for children affected by AIDS.

Combining data for national use

One of the most important challenges for national programme managers is how to combine data from multiple organizations, working in multiple sectors, with different populations to measure whether the needs of children are being met. These data inform national managers if the current response is meeting their nationally determined targets.

Compiling these data is also challenging because of the large potential for double counting. If more than one project assists one child the child is likely to be counted in both projects and thus the child will be “double counted” and programme managers will over estimate the reach of interventions.

Criteria for children in need of services

Good programming guidance emphasizes that children should not be singled out as orphaned or specifically affected by AIDS. Whether a child or family receives support must therefore be based on measurement of the child or family’s actual need. Organizations are faced with a complex and sensitive dilemma of determining which children should be targeted for which intervention – or which children have which needs. The target population will change over time. This complicates our ability to monitor the situation of children because the target population changes and limits the possibility of comparing data.

Tools to overcome barriers

Despite these complex challenges, a useful tool exists for monitoring national programmes for children affected by AIDS. Similar tools are needed for community level monitoring officers.

National indicators for monitoring

A significant effort has been made to identify indicators for monitoring the national response for children orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS. These are described in the indicator guide *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation for the National Response for Children Orphaned and Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS*⁶. The indicators cover the main strategies described in the *Framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS*⁷.

This guide suggests indicators that are specifically useful for national programme managers because they overcome the challenges of compiling project level data. Indicators based on survey results provide an alternative source of information about whether children's rights are being met beyond the data being collated from projects⁸.

Ten core indicators and seven additional indicators were identified in this guide to measure whether children's rights were being met. Fifteen of these seventeen indicators can be captured in routine, existing household surveys. Two of the indicators in this guide are requested for the UNGASS country reports which UNAIDS compiles every two years. Currently, only one of these indicators has been collected in a substantial number of countries.

Recommendations for improving current M&E efforts

Concrete steps should be taken at all levels to develop monitoring capacity, which will advance the performance of interventions, and eventually improve the well-being of vulnerable children.

It is recommended that **implementing organizations**:

- Learn from other organizations and build capacity by sharing monitoring techniques and tools and establish inter-project mentoring.
- Set aside time to systematically review and evaluate monitoring data to determine how to improve the effectiveness of interventions.

It is recommended that **national programme managers**:

- Provide guidance to community organizations on how to successfully monitor and evaluate their interventions (i.e. plan early, develop simple tools, respect confidentiality, ensure participation of stakeholders)

⁶ UNICEF et al, *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Response for Children Orphaned and Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS*. New York, February 2005.

⁷ UNICEF et al, *The Framework for the Protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS*, New York, July 2004.

⁸ Surveys in countries where the proportion of children orphaned is small (less than 8%) are likely to have too small a sample of children who are orphaned or vulnerable by AIDS to calculate robust indicators or measure trends.

- Build capacity within organizations to monitor interventions and provide reports on their project's achievements.
- Send national reports back to all organizations that submit data so organizations can see their contribution to the national response and learn what other organizations are doing
- Reduce the burden of monitoring on organizations by having donors agree on indicators and simple techniques for collecting data.
- Include the response for children affected by AIDS in National HIV M&E plans in line with the principle of One coordinated action framework, One national AIDS coordinating authority, and One national M&E system⁹. And ensure that these M&E activities are coordinated with larger national monitoring efforts.
- Check that (in appropriate countries) routine household surveys collect data on children affected by AIDS. This will ensure the quality of data collection, allow for analyses against other data collected in the survey (nutrition, sexual behaviour, household characteristics) and assure the data are collected on a routine basis.

It is recommended that **Global Partner Forum** participants through the Inter-agency Task Team for children affected by AIDS:

- Support the development of community level tools and guidance on how to monitor interventions for children.
- Disseminate guidelines on indicators for national level monitoring.
- Support the collection of data on OVC within existing household based surveys.
- Use data provided by countries for advocacy and to establish the evidence on effective interventions for children affected by AIDS

Conclusions

To ensure that children benefit from the important goal of Universal Access and meet the Declaration of Commitment, governments must ensure monitoring and evaluation takes place at all levels in the response for children affected by AIDS. The numerous challenges to establishing an effective monitoring system can be overcome with strong technical support to community organizations.

In summary we need to develop capacity, support good evaluation efforts, coordinate monitoring activities and share results, and ensure systematic high quality monitoring. In addition to the specific actions outlined above, this group strongly encourages the Global Partners Forum participants to *promote the building capacity among community level organization to monitor and evaluate their programmes*. This, in turn, will allow for better national monitoring and a better realization of the global goals.

⁹ UNAIDS. "Three Ones" Key Principles. Geneva. 2004.