

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

Background Paper: Global Commitments

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The Technical Consultation and third Global Partners Forum on Orphans and Vulnerable Children in London represent a significant opportunity to advance the response for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Over the years, key global commitments have been made for children and HIV/AIDS. As background for the introductory session of the Technical Consultation, this brief paper reviews the global HIV/AIDS commitments most relevant for children. These commitments help to frame all ensuing discussions, reminding us where we have come from, where we are going and most importantly, what it will take to get there.

“We commit ourselves 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 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.”¹

The growing commitment to Universal Access is part of a long historical movement to expand HIV/AIDS programmes and to support countries to put in place a comprehensive range of effective services and support. The Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS first placed the HIV/AIDS epidemic prominently on the global agenda. In addition, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS first drew global attention to children affected by HIV/AIDS and set measurable goals for their protection. These goals were reaffirmed at the 2002 World Summit for Children. Countries working with their partners resolved to:

Develop and implement by 2005 national plans to protect the rights of orphans and vulnerable children, including maintaining a supportive environment without stigma or discrimination; ensuring equal access to essential services such as education, health, psychosocial support among others; and, protecting these children from abuse, exploitation and other rights violations.²

Five years after adoption of the Declaration of Commitment, notable progress has been made in expanding the global HIV/AIDS response. Leadership and resources for HIV/AIDS have increased significantly. There are more people and organizations involved in responding to HIV/AIDS than ever before. Globally, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS who have access to treatment exceeds one million and continues to rise. Progress for orphans and vulnerable

¹ 2005 World Summit Outcome United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005

² United Nations General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, Article 65, 2001

children has been less dramatic, but thousands of communities and civil society organizations are providing children with care and support and highly affected countries are developing national responses for children affected by HIV/AIDS. The Framework for protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children has been endorsed by international agencies, civil society organizations and increasing number of governments.

Yet, throughout this period, the epidemic has continued to spread and increasing numbers of children are vulnerable to, infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Globally more than 15 million children under the age of 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS. That number is expected to rise to 25 million in 2010. An estimated 2.3 million children are living with HIV. Many millions more have been made more vulnerable as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Country, regional and global consultations have begun to identify a number of common barriers that impede scale up of prevention, treatment, care and support services. An issues paper for the Global Steering Committee on Scaling Towards Universal Access considers these obstacles to fall into four main categories: (1) inadequate financing for scaled up AIDS responses, (2) human resource capacity and health, social and education systems constraints; (3) affordable commodities and low cost technologies and (4) human rights violations, stigma, discrimination and gender inequity.³ Governments, international agencies, civil society partners and others are working to reduce these obstacles.

UNAIDS estimates that USD \$6.4 billion will be required to respond to children affected by HIV/AIDS between 2006-2008. This represents 12 per cent of total resources required globally for HIV/AIDS. Resources for children have increased with a growing number of governments, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland, earmarking funds specifically for children, but much more is needed.

From a political perspective, all of the barriers identified will be better addressed if the epidemic and children affected by HIV/AIDS are fully integrated within broader national economic frameworks, development agendas and national AIDS strategies. A key recommendation of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination is to better align and integrate HIV/AIDS responses with national processes.⁴ Recognizing the vicious cycle of poverty and HIV/AIDS, effort is growing to fully integrate HIV/AIDS into national poverty reduction strategies. A joint initiative of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, UNDP and UNAIDS Secretariat has begun the process of identifying existing planning and mainstreaming tools and preparing workshops. These workshops aim to provide countries with appropriate guidance, material, training and support to better integrate HIV/AIDS into the Poverty Reduction Strategy paper process.

The issues of children and HIV/AIDS are often neglected on national development and HIV/AIDS agendas and even in global HIV/AIDS response initiatives. Where HIV/AIDS strategies are directed specifically towards children affected by AIDS, they often run parallel to national AIDS programs and isolated from broader national agendas. Examples include:

³ Global Steering Committee on Scaling UP Towards Universal Access, Issues Paper, Meeting of 9-10 January 2006

⁴ UNAIDS, Implementation of the Global Task Team Recommendations, Update Paper, 25 August 2005

- A review of Poverty Reduction Strategies conducted by the World Bank and UNICEF found that children were barely mentioned, even when HIV/AIDS was an integral part of the strategy.
- Children are not yet visible within the Universal Access Initiative. A quick search of the Universal Access documentation to date will find little or no mention of children affected by HIV/AIDS.
- The Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning (RAAAP) process and other national government planning processes are making significant strides in developing and resourcing action plans for children affected by AIDS. However, in most of the countries, these processes are not yet a fully integrated part of the national HIV/AIDS framework and are completely separate from poverty reduction strategies.

As global bodies, regions and countries begin developing specific targets and plans for achieving Universal Access, there is a critical window for the Global Partners Forum, other leaders and individuals and organizations working for children to ensure that the issues of children vulnerable to, infected and affected by HIV/AIDS are prominent. Innovative ways must be found to bring national leaders and economists together with medical professionals, social workers, educators and affected children and young people themselves to ensure that children are brought fully into the HIV/AIDS response and development agenda.