



TEARFUND
CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

Reaching out?

Donor approaches to faith-based organisations in the response to HIV/AIDS



*'FBOs are among the most viable institutions at both local and national levels and have developed experience in addressing the multi-dimensional impact of AIDS and its particular impact on children. Yet most faith-based responses are small scale and remain undocumented. It is difficult to measure their cumulative impact compared to the more visible project responses of development agencies. Consequently, FBO HIV/AIDS activities remain under-supported.'*¹

National governments and local communities must have the capacity and resources to respond to HIV/AIDS. Better use of existing resources is needed to ensure this. A number of major donor agencies and governments are showing increased interest in the response to HIV/AIDS by faith-based organisations (FBOs). This reflects a widespread acceptance that FBOs play a positive role in development. Through their local experience and their ability to mobilise the church and other community groups, FBOs can play a key role in any response to HIV/AIDS. In particular, they may be critical in providing support to those affected, and in ensuring that policy initiatives reflect reality. There is a great need for partnerships between FBOs and other organisations; this would ensure that groups operating at local level receive resources, maximise the impact of these resources and are effectively supported in their responses, ideally through national governments.

Introduction

HIV/AIDS as Tearfund's priority

Tearfund is a Christian relief and development agency working through local partners to bring help and hope to communities in need around the world. Tearfund currently works with more than 450 partner organisations in around 70 countries. Tearfund has identified HIV/AIDS as its highest priority. More than 120 of Tearfund's partner organisations currently focus on responding to HIV/AIDS.

Tearfund believes that coordinated local initiatives are a key response to HIV/AIDS. Significantly improved responses to HIV/AIDS are possible through increased support and resources for national governments and local community groups in the South.

Tearfund is very encouraged that the UK government is putting HIV/AIDS at the top of its international agenda – as announced in the UK's Call to Action on HIV/AIDS. As the UK government sets out priorities for its presidencies of the G8 and EU in 2005, Tearfund welcomes the emphasis on both HIV/AIDS and on Africa.

This briefing paper summarises the complexity of the impact of HIV/AIDS, especially on children; highlights the responses by FBOs to those affected by HIV/AIDS; analyses current responses by donors to FBOs in the context of HIV/AIDS; and makes recommendations for DFID and other donors to ensure that those working effectively at local level are provided with appropriate support. The focus is on organisations with a Christian basis of faith. However, it is acknowledged that FBOs with other faith bases also carry out valuable work.

The impact of HIV/AIDS

Devastating for all affected, particularly children

Recent studies² indicate that:

- An estimated 42 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. There were more than 5 million new infections in 2003.
- Almost 12 million people aged 15–24 are living with HIV/AIDS; 60 per cent of them are women.
- In some parts of Africa, more than a third of adults are HIV positive.
- Although half of AIDS cases are currently found in Africa, the incidence is growing in India and China, with the threat that huge numbers of people could become infected.
- The vast majority of young people have no idea how HIV/AIDS is transmitted or how to protect themselves from the disease.
- It is predicted that a total of 25 million children will have lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS by 2010.
- Eighty per cent of all the world's children orphaned by HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa.

HIV/AIDS and poverty are inextricably linked. Poor people are more likely to become infected, and the effects will be greater for them. In terms of its impact, HIV/AIDS contributes still further to poverty.

The sickness and loss of life associated with AIDS have major implications for the family, and the wider community, especially as the most affected age group are those aged 20–45 who are key to providing livelihoods and parenting to their families. The household economy is weakened as sick people are unable to work, and others have to spend time and money providing care. Productive assets, such as tools and livestock, may be sold off. Older people may have to return to the roles of parent and provider. Alternatively, these responsibilities pass to older siblings who then become vulnerable. For example, orphaned teenage girls may turn to sex work in a desperate attempt to feed their siblings, so exposing themselves to HIV infection.

A focus on children is one way of understanding the wider impact of HIV/AIDS on communities and society as a whole. Children are key to a society's economic, social and family structures, and evidence suggests that HIV/AIDS has a particularly strong effect on children and young people. HIV/AIDS devastates every part of society and the vast majority of children feel its effects, whether they are from HIV/AIDS-affected families or not. For example, education and health systems are weakened as HIV positive teachers, nurses and other staff are unable to work. Health services are overwhelmed by HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, there is declining food consumption among the children of families who take in orphans and increased poverty in general due to economic slowdown.

Therefore the impact of HIV/AIDS over the next decade will be devastating on all aspects of development in many countries, especially in Africa. The unprecedented crisis of children affected by HIV/AIDS will require radically scaled-up national and community

responses for the foreseeable future³. The scale of the AIDS epidemic in Africa makes its repercussions qualitatively different from those in other parts of the world⁴.

A critical role

Faith-based organisations and HIV/AIDS

In a recent study across six countries (Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda) Foster identified the key role played by faith-based organisations in supporting orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. More than 9,000 volunteers working out of 686 FBOs supported more than 150,000 orphans and vulnerable children. This was mostly through community-based initiatives combining elements of spiritual, material, educational and psychosocial support⁵.

In communities which are facing desperate situations as a result of AIDS and where most people have some kind of spiritual belief, the input of FBOs is critical. This has been found to be especially true of Christian organisations in Africa. Households affected by AIDS-related sickness and bereavement, or with orphans and vulnerable children, value the combination of practical, emotional and spiritual support. The activities of an FBO may provide a means to bring affected people together when otherwise they would be isolated.

Beyond the local level, FBOs play an important role in coordinating and representing the responses of sub-national and national faith communities, such as dioceses and the national Anglican Church in a country. Such bodies may make an invaluable contribution to assessing the efficacy of policy decisions as they draw upon the realities faced by their local-level associates.

Whilst many FBOs, particularly church congregations, are very active in caring for those affected by HIV/AIDS, they are reticent about tackling issues linked to prevention⁶. They may be reluctant to speak about sexual practice. Significantly, the teaching and practice of the church may reinforce traditional patriarchal attitudes towards gender. This may contribute to increased HIV infection amongst women, as men hold that they have a right to determine sexual behaviour, and women are socialised to be submissive and not negotiate safer practice.

Foster concluded that: 'FBOs are among the most viable institutions at both local and national levels and have developed experience in addressing the multi-dimensional impact of AIDS and its particular impact on children. Yet most faith-based responses are small scale and remain undocumented. It is difficult to measure their cumulative impact compared to the more visible project responses of development agencies. Consequently, FBO HIV/AIDS activities remain under-supported.'

So, FBOs play a critical role in providing support to those affected by AIDS. Their strength comes from their connectiveness to local issues. But the very fact that they are local organisations, and thus generally low profile, means that they receive little or no external technical or financial support and of necessity rely on their own skills and material resources. This is not sustainable. To maintain and expand this role, and share it

for adaptation elsewhere, they need to be given practical resources and strengthened organisational capacity.

Vision and reality

Current donor positions relating to FBOs' response to those affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly children

In the international response to HIV/AIDS there is a clear and, to some extent, acknowledged 'disconnect' between widely accepted policies, principles and frameworks on the one hand, and action on the other. This is true with regard to support for FBOs. Major donor agencies and governments have struggled with how to access and support the response to HIV/AIDS at local level; they see provision for FBOs as a key means to fund community-level responses. However, appropriate resources are not reaching FBOs, or they do not have capacity to use the funding provided.

US-based donors have been the most active in supporting FBOs in the response to HIV/AIDS. The US government has a long history of supporting FBOs in development initiatives. USAID is currently far ahead of other donors in its commitment of resources to child-focused community-based responses to HIV/AIDS. While DfID has committed over £270 million between 2002-2003 for combating AIDS globally, it currently makes no specific allocation for orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). Conversely, the US administration is the only country to have specifically allocated resources to OVC. The Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief proposes to provide \$15 billion in bilateral payments to 14 countries, of which 10 per cent is allocated to OVC. USAID is also involved in building the capacity of FBOs and other community-based organisations to respond to HIV/AIDS.

The World Bank has sought to increase significantly their responses in Africa through supporting and scaling-up funding to community initiatives as part of the Multi-country AIDS Programme (MAP), which started in 2002. To date the Bank has committed approximately US\$ 866 million of the US\$ 1 billion of MAP funding to 24 countries. For example, the amount committed to the Ethiopia MAP was US\$ 60 million. National AIDS Councils of governments receive MAP funds under a grant agreement that defines which funds are to be allocated for community-based organisations such as FBOs. The World Bank expects that about 50 per cent of MAP funds will be channelled to civil society groups. However, disbursement from national to local level has often moved slowly due to administrative bottlenecks and a lack of strong relationships between community-based groups and national government bodies. Although it is not clear what proportion of current MAP funding is going to FBOs, the World Bank is keen to build the capacity of FBOs in Africa to receive funding through a series of ongoing regional workshops.

In 2003 DFID awarded the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA) £3.5 million, through Christian Aid, for a church-based programme to combat HIV/AIDS in South Africa, Lesotho, Mozambique and Namibia. This represents the largest donation from the UK government to a single faith-based community⁷.

The Irish government, through Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), has developed the NGO HAPS Scheme. Tearfund has received support through this programme to scale up the capacity of the wide range of faith-based grassroots organisations within the network of Tearfund partners involved with communities affected by HIV/AIDS across Africa and Asia. DCI recognise that such organisations are in a very good position to galvanise communities to respond to the needs of the pandemic. DCI has a number of programmes responding to orphans and other children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa where the intention is that national government, NGOs and FBOs will implement schemes.

Although donors are recognising the value of FBOs in the response to HIV/AIDS, trends in donor funding may lead to reduced funding. Increasingly, donors are moving from sectoral approaches to providing funding through direct budget support to selected national governments with the sectoral spend determined by the national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). DFID projects that, by 2006, 70 per cent of its development assistance to Africa will be via this mechanism. This may lead to a reduction in direct funding to non-governmental agencies. It also means that unless the PRSP prioritises HIV/AIDS and acknowledges the role that FBOs play, FBOs may be overlooked in receiving a share of funds originating from direct budget support.

Donor responses to HIV/AIDS are currently focused on Africa where Christian churches are among the most significant organisations at the local level in many rural and urban areas. This has influenced the discussion around supporting FBOs in the response to HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is of growing significance in South and South-East Asia. Here, the faith context is very different, with the Christian church being very much in the minority. However, in some areas of Asia and the former Soviet Union, church congregations are among the most significant groups in responding to the needs of communities affected by HIV/AIDS.

As donors appreciate the current role of FBOs and actively seek effective local-level implementers for other responses, there are growing tensions. FBOs are comfortable with their focus on providing spiritual and pastoral support, home care and basic health services in their local communities. They are, however, often reluctant to take on additional roles that donors would have them perform: scaling up current initiatives; addressing stigma and discrimination; carrying out preventative education to bring about behaviour change; and providing health services including the provision of anti-retroviral therapy. FBOs are concerned they may be overloaded – and distracted from roles where they have an established competence.

Conclusions

Implications for DFID and other donors in the response to HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is having a devastating effect on many parts of Africa. Huge populations in Asia are under threat. The impact will continue to be felt for decades. Coordinated local initiatives are a key response to HIV/AIDS. FBOs have played a critical role for those affected by HIV/AIDS, especially children, through providing a combination of practical, emotional and spiritual support.

Major donor agencies and governments have struggled with the question of how to access and support the response to HIV/AIDS at local level. They see provision for FBOs as a key means to fund community-level responses. However, this intent has not always been followed through in terms of FBOs receiving appropriate support. Trends in donor funding may threaten the level of support available from some donors for non-governmental agencies, including FBOs and other community-based organisations.

Donors are seeking FBOs to take on additional responsibilities. Some FBOs are concerned this will mean that they are overloaded with new activities and distracted from roles where they have an established competence.

Tearfund, with its Southern-based partners, proposes a major piece of research in 2004 which will reflect on the current experience and learning of partner organisations in responding to HIV/AIDS through their projects and programmes. This will seek to develop an appropriate framework for how donors might fund and support FBOs and other community-based organisations responding to children affected by HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

- In the formation and implementation of its new HIV/AIDS strategy, DFID should work with other donors to ensure that appropriate support and finance is made available on a long-term basis to those working effectively at local level.
- In particular, DFID and other donors increasing the provision of aid through direct budget support should review the potential impact of this approach on the vital role played by FBOs and other local-level agencies in response to HIV/AIDS.
- Donors should deepen their understanding of the opportunities and limitations for FBOs, and of what the most appropriate roles for them might be.

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- 1 Foster G (2004) *Study of the response by faith-based organisations to orphans and vulnerable children*, UNICEF and World Conference of Religions for peace, January 2004, page 2
 - 2 UNICEF (2003) *Africa's Orphaned Generations*, December 2003; UNAIDS and WHO (2003) *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2003 ; UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO (2002) *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*
 - 3 USAID, UNAIDS and UNICEF (2002) *Children on the Brink : Strategies to support children isolated by HIV/AIDS*
 - 4 Foster G (2004) *Study of the response by faith-based organisations to orphans and vulnerable children*, UNICEF and World Conference of Religions for peace, January 2004
 - 5 Foster G (2004) *Study of the response by faith-based organisations to orphans and vulnerable children*, UNICEF and World Conference of Religions for peace, January 2004, page 2
 - 6 Christian Aid (2003) *Dying to Learn: Young People, HIV and the Churches*
 - 7 Church of England (2004) *Telling the Story: Being Positive about HIV/AIDS*, A Report by the Mission and Public Affairs Council, February 2004

Tearfund HIV/AIDS Briefing Paper 1
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Tearfund briefing papers provide a summary of our latest
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Tearfund is an evangelical Christian relief and development
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communities in need around the world.



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