

## Orphans and vulnerable children on their own...

- ▶ An estimated 50 000 children under the age of 18 have been orphaned by AIDS or are defined as 'vulnerable' because they have an HIV/AIDS-infected parent.
- ▶ HIV-positive mothers have an average of four children. These children will need alternative support systems when their parent dies. Fathers, generally, play a limited role in providing homes for them.
- ▶ Jamaica has a long-standing tradition of informal 'adoption' systems, whereby grandparents, other family members and neighbours support children in the absence or illness of parents. HIV/AIDS is stretching this support network to its limits.
- ▶ A child's vulnerability increases when a parent becomes infected with HIV due to a lack of stability in the family, including the loss of income.
- ▶ Qualitative studies show that these children are at higher risk of school absenteeism, working or living on the street, abusing drugs, becoming the victims or perpetrators of crime and abuse, and committing suicide.

## Make it happen...

National priorities support caregivers, community-based care and social networks, such as counselling and outreach, financial assistance, income-generating activities and HIV/AIDS training.

### Community-based support for orphans and vulnerable children

The National AIDS Committee (NAC), in collaboration with community-based organizations, now realizes that most families that take children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS adjust reasonably well with a relatively small amount of financial assistance. Through limited assistance programmes, orphans and vulnerable children receive support for school-related expenses, such as school fees, uniforms and books. This type of care and support makes children feel more secure and enables them to succeed in their day-to-day activities.

In addition to the direct support offered to children, the National AIDS Committee and its partners provide limited assistance for training, as well as start-up expenses for small income-generating activities.

- ▶ US\$3000 would support the education (school uniforms, books and fees) of three children for a whole school year.
- ▶ US\$3000 could help an adult caregiver who is supporting children infected or affected by AIDS to set up a sewing business or a small chicken farming operation.

In-kind contributions: training in income-generating activities would be welcome.

For more information contact: Coordinator, Verity Rushton, National AIDS Committee, at [info@nacjamaica.com](mailto:info@nacjamaica.com).

### Education and livelihood development for orphans, vulnerable children and their caretakers

Jamaica AIDS Support (JAS), a local nongovernmental organization, provides livelihood development, training and income-generating activities to persons living with HIV/AIDS as a fundamental way to help children affected by the virus. For example, Life's Work is a Jamaica AIDS Support project whereby persons living with HIV/AIDS make candles, greeting cards and soaps to sell in Jamaican gift stores.

- ▶ For US\$20 000 per year, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS who are employed in the Life's Work projects could double from 26 to 52.

In-kind contributions: materials, training and marketing advice would be welcome, as well as opportunities to display and sell products.

For more information contact: Support Services Director, Novlet Reid, at [info@jamaicaaidssupport.com](mailto:info@jamaicaaidssupport.com).

### Counselling and outreach

Children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS often face a host of challenges, including psychological difficulties.

The Centre for HIV/AIDS Research, Education and Services (CHARES) currently has programmes for HIV-positive children, as well as informal assistance for children affected by HIV/AIDS. The Centre is expanding its outreach efforts for orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS in difficult situations, such as those who are taking care of their parents and are absent from school, or who find themselves in abusive or violent environments.

- ▶ US\$20 000 per year could offer more than 4000 orphans and vulnerable children counselling and outreach services, including child advocacy work, child placement and service referral.

In-kind contributions: technical assistance and the secondment of human resources personnel, including child specialists, child advocacy workers and volunteers, would be welcome.

For more information contact: Programme Director, Hope Ramsay, CHARES, at [ramsayhope@hotmail.com](mailto:ramsayhope@hotmail.com).