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Children in Lesotho

**CASE STUDY**

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Community-Based Organizations in **Lesotho** Provide Essential Services to Orphans and Vulnerable Children

**Challenge**

The number of orphans in Lesotho is rapidly increasing. Among countries with HIV prevalence greater than 1 percent, Lesotho has the largest percentage of children who have lost one or both parents. The Lesotho Orphans and Vulnerable Children Situation Analysis report was completed in 2011. The analysis estimated that there are 1,072,974 children under the age of 18 in the country. Of these, 33.8% (362,665) are orphans. The total number of double orphans (children who have lost both parents) is estimated to be 23.6 percent or 253,222 children. 10 to 13 percent, or approximately 125,000, are characterized as vulnerable children.

Socio-economic challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Lesotho include high rates of school drop-out due to lack of funds to pay school fees or the need to stay home to care for a sick parent or to take care of siblings. Households with OVC have low agricultural productivity and low purchasing power. As a result, OVC and their families are at risk of inadequate access to food and malnutrition.

Poverty, cultural practices, and taboos that are deeply rooted in the rural communities make it difficult to fully address certain issues, like stigma, negatively impacting OVC care and support. The weakening of traditional support structures and widespread poverty in the country has shifted the care of children to

*Launched in 2010, the USAID-funded Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project (BLC) strengthens government, parastatal, and civil society entities to effectively address the challenges of the HIV and AIDS epidemic.*

*Throughout the Southern Africa region and with specific activities in six countries, BLC provides technical assistance in leadership, management, and governance as well as organizational development in three key program areas: 1) care and support for orphans and vulnerable children; 2) HIV prevention; and 3) community-based care.*

public and nongovernmental institutions, volunteer caregivers, community-based support groups, and non-relative guardians. OVC are increasingly vulnerable to depression, HIV infection, rape, abuse, and abandonment. Many OVC lack positive role models and the essential psychosocial support required to develop into responsible, productive adults. Fear and confusion surrounding HIV and AIDS has resulted in increased infection rates and teenage pregnancy among OVC. According to UNAIDS, an estimated 28,000 children under the age of 15 were HIV positive as of 2009. The enormous cohort of children who lack adequate supervision, parenting, education, or support requires a concerted effort to address their needs.

### **Initiative: BLC Small Grant Program with Civil Society Organizations**

BLC's activities in Lesotho focus on capacity building and technical assistance to government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations, and local-level support groups to improve coordination and expand delivery of essential services to OVC and their caregivers. The project is collaborating with the Ministry of Social Development and other government institutions to support CSOs, including community- and faith-based organizations, to improve the quality of community-based care and support services for OVC and their caregivers.

A central component of work with CSOs is the small grant program launched by BLC in 2011. In addition to financial assistance to support the delivery of essential services, BLC is strengthening the CSOs' management and technical skills in order to leave a legacy of resilient organizations capable of attending to the evolving needs of OVC, their caregivers, and the communities in the future. Through the implementation of tailored capacity building plans, the CSOs will have the tools, knowledge, and experience to: provide high-quality services at the community level; partner with and support the government at community and district levels; work within existing community structures to strengthen the overall community response to OVC; provide referrals to health care and other service providers; and continue to serve as advocates for the needs of OVC in Lesotho. Through the delivery of services (or referral to appropriate services), the CSOs are building the capacity of the OVC and their caregivers to improve their own livelihoods and protect OVC rights.

## **Interventions and Results to Date**

As of the end of 2012, BLC had awarded small grants to 12 CSOs working in the BLC project's five focus districts of Quthing, Mohale's Hoek, Qacha's Nek, Mokhotlong, and Thaba Tseka.

### **Centre for Impacting Lives (CIL)**

Mohale's Hoek

HIV and AIDS and community health outreach programs for youth; community-based care; informal family and household strengthening efforts; and women's empowerment activities. CIL recently sent 20 youth from Mohale's Hoek to the Bethel Business and Community Development Centre, a vocational training center with certificate courses in cooking, hospitality, solar power, mechanics, and computer technology.

### **Lesotho Network of AIDS Service Organizations (LENASO)**

Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek

Worked with five support groups (4 in Quthing; 1 in Mohale's Hoek). Support groups received: capacity building training (e.g., data management, psychosocial support); and economic strengthening (loans and savings programs for support group members. OVC received: school uniforms; psychosocial support services, including the organization of children's clubs; referral for health care services (e.g., hygiene kits); and protection and legal services (e.g., birth registration, birth certificates).

### **Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (LENEPWHA)**

Qacha's Nek

Worked with six support groups. Caregivers received training in psychosocial support, health care referral, and nutrition. Legal-related support, school uniforms and supplies, health care referral, and psychosocial support were provided to OVCs.

### **Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)**

Qacha's Nek

Area teachers, church members, and OVC caregivers were trained in: children's rights, child abuse, sexual offences, and gender equality. Area teachers and community volunteers also received training in psychosocial support. Community leaders were trained

in child protection topics and psychosocial support. OVCs received training in basic life skills, including keyhole gardens, nutrition and hygiene, HIV and AIDS, sewing and knitting. Activities to promote the registration of births and preparation of wills were also conducted. Community-based groups were trained in data collection and reporting, and referral of OVC for a variety of services (e.g., child abuse, schooling, HIV-related services).

### **Society of Women and AIDS in Africa-Lesotho (SWAALES)**

Mohale's Hoek

Psychosocial support; nutritional support (including cooking demonstrations, distribution of gardening equipment, food preservation techniques, establishing communal gardens); home-based care (including follow-up of women on PMTCT treatment); health referral for caregivers and OVC; awareness raising about children's rights; establishment of community children's clubs; and training in handicrafts for income-generation purposes.

### **Lesotho Society of Mentally Handicapped Persons (LSMHP)**

Mohale's Hoek

Caregivers trained in psychosocial support, identifying and reporting abuse, health care referral, and recordkeeping/data management. OVC trained in basic life skills, including protection from sexual abuse, HIV and AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections. OVC also received protection and legal services, and referral for health care services.

### **Help Lesotho**

Thaba Tseka

Food security and nutrition, psychosocial support, education, and health. Recent activities have focused on increasing the capacity of grandmothers to produce food through the building of keyhole gardens, and increasing OVC and caregivers' knowledge of life-skills, basic health, HIV, and children's rights.

### **Caritas Lesotho**

Thaba Tseka

Food security and nutrition; psychosocial support; education; health referral and hygiene/sanitation; and human rights. Recent activities include: household monitoring of constructed keyhole gardens; training OVC and caregivers on homestead gardening and

conducting demonstrations on the construction of keyhole gardens; health care referrals for eligible OVC; training OVC and caregivers on psychosocial as well as legal protection; training representatives of the psychosocial clubs on different support services; registration of new beneficiaries; and support for the most vulnerable OVC to receive vocational training in various trades (e.g., carpentry, bricklaying, plastering)

### **Phelisanang Bophelong HIV Support Centre**

Thaba-Tseka

Food security; health referral; legal and psychosocial support; and economic strengthening. Recent activities include training OVC in: life skills; and economic strengthening (e.g., handicrafts). Several OVC households received donations of seeds. Support groups for OVC (youth groups) and caregivers were formed. The project also followed up on the status of income-generating activities.

### **Grow**

Mokhotlong

Psychosocial support; protection and legal aid services; food security and nutrition by increasing and diversifying the food production capacity of at least 500 OVC households; economic strengthening; and health referral. Shelter and education services are also provided, as necessary. Grow has recently conducted workshops on building keyhole gardens and handicrafts. It has also conducted visits to schools and communities to sensitize people to Lesotho's Child Protection and Welfare Act. Grow has likewise organized savings and loan groups. Child protection services include registration for birth certificates.

### **Serumula Development Association**

Mohale's Hoek

Works with 50 community support groups and 25 primary schools in food security and agriculture. Recent activities include training support group representatives in keyhole gardening and economic strengthening (e.g., candle making).

### **World Vision**

Quthing

51 home visitors are trained to provide a range of services to 2,000 OVC, including: psychosocial support; food security and nutrition; shelter services; education; referral for health services; and economic strengthening. Recent activities include: training teachers and peer educators in

psychosocial support; provision of seeds and food security training for OVC households; and referral of OVC for health care and legal aid services.

Over the five-year project period, BLC aims to reach a total of 68,150 orphans and their caregivers with essential services. As of the end of September 2012, the 12 CSOs have reached 38,578 OVC and caregivers in the five focus districts, representing 82% of the cumulative target of 47,000 OVCs by the end of BLC's second year of implementation.

The following narrative and graphic provide detailed information on the number of beneficiaries and services provided by the CSOs:

- 22,689 (59%) beneficiaries received psychosocial support, including life skills education, and counseling for both OVC and their caregivers through home visits, children's clubs, and referral to health facilities and district child welfare officers.
- 9,392 (24%) beneficiaries received protection and legal services through community-based organizations and support groups. The services included: an orientation on the child protection law; legal aid services; facilitation of birth registration and parents' death certificates; and mediation and referral of cases related to property grabbing and sexual abuses to the Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU).
- 5,309 (14%) OVC received education support, including provision of scholastic materials, school uniforms, books, and other necessities for school.
- Two of the sub-grantees (CIL and Caritas) provided vocational training for 50 out-of-school youth. Of these, 20 have already graduated, and nine have secured employment. The vocational training covered hospitality, solar power, mechanics, and bricklaying.
- 11,463 (30%) OVC and caregivers received food and nutrition services, including nutrition education, construction of keyhole gardens, and provision of vegetable seeds.

In addition to services provided directly to OVC and their caregivers, CSOs are building the capacity of community-based support groups. For example,

the Serumula Development Association trained 25 support groups to initiate and manage income-generating activities, such as candle making. CCJP, Grow, and PB trained support groups in savings and internal lending so that they may gain access to micro-financing.

BLC will continue to work with existing sub-grantees. Through a competitive process, the project will attract new partners to continually expand the delivery of essential services throughout the five focus districts and simultaneously build grantees' organizational capacity so that they may attract other sources of funding and sustain their services.

## Distribution of Individuals Reached by Service Provided

### Economic Strengthening

110

### Shelter and Caregiving

1,464

### Health Care Referral

3,351

### Education / Vocational Training

5,309

### Protection and Legal Aid Services

9,397

### Food and Nutritional Services

11,463

### Psychosocial, Social or Spiritual Support

22,689

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