

USAID provides a ray of hope for vulnerable children in Tanzania

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IN just a span of seven months (march to September 2006) some 16,000 most vulnerable children in Tabora and Kagera Regions have started to make a real difference in their lives, thanks to the Jali Watoto (Care for Children) Initiative, a project supported by the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project -- which began in March, this year -- is being implemented in Tanzania by Pact Tanzania in collaboration with the Tanzania government's Social Welfare Department with a view to contributing to the government's National Plan of Action for most vulnerable children in difficult circumstances.

Pact is a networked global organi-

zation that builds the capacity of local leaders and organizations to meet pressing social needs in dozens of countries around the world. Its work is firmly rooted in the belief that local communities must be the driving force in ending poverty and injustice.

Although donors are responding to the problem, the USAID has been particularly responsive to the situation, contributing around \$10m (about 10bn/-) alone this year through PEPFAR, for orphans and vulnerable children.

"All children deserve to be valued. They deserve to be happy, healthy and educated and we feel that our work with the government and NGOs will make this dream a reality," says Pact Tanzania Country Director, Mr Dan Craun Selka, in an interview with THISDAY.

He says the Jali Watoto programme is just one of the donor funded programmes that is contributing to the implementation of the Tanzania gov-

ernment's National Plan of Action for most vulnerable children.

This programme and all of the contributions made by civil society organizations are funded by the USAID and Global Fund to support local government authorities and community leaders in providing hope to the children of Tanzania, explains Mr Selka, adding: "Our programmes are implemented in partnership with government, so that the orphan support activities will be sustainable and far reaching."

Asked why Pact Tanzania projects were success stories unlike most non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the PACT Tanzania boss says Pact takes its role of grant manager very seriously.

"Under all of Pact's donor-funded programmes, all sub-grantees undergo an extensive evaluation and assessment to ensure that they are spending and utilizing the money in strict compliance with the donor rules," he explains.

Mr Selka says Pact Tanzania provides technical assistance and mentor-

ing to the NGOs to help them achieve this, adding that as NGOs are able to provide the services they proposed, additional funds can be made available.

He mimes no words when he clarifies that if there is any suspect behaviour or the funds are not spent correctly, then the sub-grants are terminated and the money withdrawn.

To prove Mr Selka's determination to check mismanagement of funds by NGOs, Pact Tanzania has facilitated a Financial Management Training Workshop for Executive Management Teams of Facilitating Partners: under Jali Watoto Initiative and Anti Stigma Campaign being held at the Oceanic Bay Hotel in Bagamoyo from November 6 through November 10, this year.

Dr Mussa Assad, a senior lecturer with the Faculty of Commerce and Management of the University of Dar es Salaam, told workshop participants that financial management in NGOs was aimed at helping managers to make

effective and efficient use of resources to achieve objectives and fulfill commitments to stakeholders, including donors.

He said financial management in NGOs is also designed to make managers to be more accountable to donors and other stakeholders and to gain the respect and confidence of funding agencies, partners and beneficiaries.

"It also gives the NGOs advantage in competition for increasingly scarce resources and it helps NGOs prepare themselves for long term financial sustainability," Dr Assad told the executive managers from various NGOs implementing the Jali Watoto Initiative in Kagera and Tabora Regions.

They were from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) Hujawa operating in Bukoba Rural and Biharamulo Districts in Kagera Region and Saidia Wazee Tanzania (SAWATA) run by ELCT in Karagwe District, Kagera Region.

Other participants came from the

guardians as well," says Mr Ndyabanabo. Mr Yusto Muchuruza, Managing Director for KADETFU, says his NGO has taken care of 1,904 children under the Jali Watoto programme by providing them health insurance, training facilities and accommodation.

And Fr Taurine Muchunguzi of the ELCT in Kagera Region says the first challenge when the Jali Watoto programme was introduced in March was to identify the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, a task which was followed by provisions of the needs, including health insurance cards and school requirements.

"Already some 3,000 children have benefited from the Jali Watoto programme. They have been provided with school uniforms, health care cards and other basic needs," says Fr Muchunguzi.

Under Pact Tanzania's Jali Watoto programme, the future for orphans and most vulnerable children is that of optimism and hope.

ensuring that the children receive all the services they require, that they are offered emotional and psychological support to help them determine their future in a way that promotes optimism and hope.

She says part of that consolidation was the training this week in managing the financial resources offered to the NGOs' managers as the guardians of the future of most vulnerable children in their districts.

Mr Justus Ndyabanabo, project coordinator for KDEF, says under the Jali Watoto Initiative, some 342 primary school and secondary school pupils have been given school fees, some 101 have been assisted to get their birth certificates and four orphans have received legal aid to recover inheritance property left by their parents.

"The assistance being given by Pact Tanzania with the support of USAID has tremendously lessened the burden of looking after vulnerable children being shouldered by parents and

of NGOs and government sectors, implementing services.

"We had to support the establishment of the national database for MVC (Most Vulnerable Children), we had to run a stigma campaign in addition to all this, training over 2,600 young people in anti-stigma approaches and linking this campaign in with the identification of MVC and providing them with services," she explains.

"You would think then that the idea of reaching 18,000 children in that timeframe would not be possible.

However, with your support and only because of your commitment, your hard work and your ability to respond, I am delighted to report that we achieved something remarkable; we have reached over 16,000 children and started to make a real difference in their lives," she told the workshop participants.

Ms Calder says the challenge ahead is to go on consolidating that work,

children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, but the most vulnerable children.

She says the project will cover 20 districts out of the total 121 districts in Tanzania, starting with Biharamulo, Karagwe, Bukoba Rural Districts in Kagera Region, and Igunga and Nzege Districts in Tabora Region.

"For these first five districts, starting in March we were given the challenge to reach 18,000 children with at least one essential service by the end of September, this year. Normally, this target would be for one year or 12 months, instead of what we had; seven months," says Ms Calder.

She adds: "During that time, we also had to support the districts to identify the children for whom, education, health and NGO services were to be provided."

The OVC Programme Manager says during that time, the project also had to establish the coordinating group

Karagwe District Education Fund (KDEF), the Kagera Development and Credit Revolving Fund (KADEFU), the Rulenge Diocesan Development Office (RUDDO) in Biharamulo District, the Youth Advisory Development Council (YADEC) in Nzege District, Tabora Region and Tabora NGOs Cluster in Nzege and Igunga Districts.

The Pact Tanzania Programme Manager for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), Ms Jane Calder, says Tanzania is facing an enormous and critical situation--with relatively high HIV prevalence rate and a long-standing pandemic, estimated at 2 million orphans at present, and expected to increase to 4 million by 2010.

She says started in March, this year, the Jali Watoto is a three-year programme supporting the Department of Social Welfare to implement the National Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children--and not just