

## **Providing Basic Education to HIV/AIDS Orphans in Zambia**



**"This is the heart of the matter. Education is a way forward, a way of breaking the cycle, a way towards greater safety, and a way towards a future. Education is not mere subtraction ... education is about the addition of hope to a hard and difficult life."**

**And for over 50,000 children in Zambia, "at the heart of the process of education is the radio: a radio that needs no batteries, a radio that can be wound up and which beams in programmes ... literacy, numeracy, the awareness of AIDS. Each subject, in its own way, a source of power."**

(Simon Barnes *The Times* December 3, 2005)

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region of the world that is most affected by HIV & AIDS. An estimated 25.8 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2005 and approximately 3.1 million new infections occurred during that year. In just the past year the epidemic has claimed the lives of an estimated 2.4 million people in this region. AIDS has orphaned more than twelve million children. (Source: *avert.org*)

Zambia has found peace but not prosperity, and is today one of the poorest and least developed nations on earth, and has a crippling national debt. Around two-thirds of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. (Source: *AVERT.ORG*) Zambia's problems have since the mid 1980s been compounded by one of the world's most devastating HIV and AIDS epidemics. The statistics alone are shocking:

- One in every six adults is living with HIV
- 89,000 people died of AIDS in 2003<sup>1</sup>
- Life expectancy at birth has fallen below 40 years as AIDS has hit those in their most productive years, disintegrating families
- 630,000 children are AIDS orphans.

In Zambia, the education sector has suffered a heavy toll due to HIV/AIDS resulting in many orphans and school dropouts in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, the number of school-aged orphans who were not in school in Zambia was estimated at 400,000. By 1998 this number had doubled to 800,000, a figure that is expected to rise to 1.2 million by the year 2010<sup>2</sup>. Many more vulnerable children cannot afford to attend school because of poverty, prolonged stay at home to care for sick parents and guardians, engagement in income generating activities, etc.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Zambia Quality Education Services Through Technology (QUESTT) Project***

*The Zambia QUESTT Project aims to improve the quality of basic education delivery systems and to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on children's educational experiences (both in and out of government schools). To accomplish these objectives, QUESTT is leading several initiatives to improve teacher practice through the integration of Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) in government schools and technology-based interventions. These interventions include the use of video and cell phone communication for both in-service and pre-service teacher support. The project supports the Ministry of Education in providing quality education to the most vulnerable children in Zambia, particularly orphans, through IRI programs incorporating life skills education. QUESTT also partners with community radio stations and local and international NGOs to sensitize communities and support IES' "Learning Plus" initiative to address factors that hinder vulnerable children from learning effectively. QUESTT also works with partners to support volunteer teachers and communities with HIV/AIDS information and training on awareness, prevention, and access to Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) and treatment through the "Taonga Cares" initiative.*

For more information on this and related projects, contact Sera Kariuki at [skariuki@edc.org](mailto:skariuki@edc.org)



<sup>1</sup> *Interactive methodologies Manual for HIV/AIDS Prevention in Zambian schools – Ministry of Education, 2003*

<sup>2</sup> *Impact Assessment of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector in Zambia, SAIPAC, 2004*

<sup>3</sup> *HIV/AIDS Guidelines for Educators, Ministry of Education, 2003*