

Final Report: Young AIDS migrants in southern Africa: dissemination

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Introduction

Research, funded by DFID, was undertaken in 2001 to explore children's migration within the context of AIDS, to examine the impacts of this and develop appropriate policy responses (ESCOR contract R7896). Based on the external reviewer's comments on the research report and requests for further information from policy-makers, institutional support providers and local communities, further dissemination activities have been undertaken with further support from DFID (SSR contract R7896A). It was felt that there was a need to develop specific recommendations on how the project's findings could be translated into actions, that this could be achieved by enabling participants, policy makers and practitioners to devise effective and policy-relevant strategies. Return visits were made to the original research communities in Malawi and Lesotho. The end product arising from these visits has been the production of a training manual intended for use by practitioners, both locally and internationally.

The following is an outline of the activities and methods, which culminated in the development of the training manual.

PLA Workshops with children

Workshops were held at each of the four primary schools where the original research was conducted, with approximately 10-20 children at each school. Groups were kept small because of the nature of the tasks involved but feedback was also undertaken within the wider school community. Some of the children who took part in the original research participated here, but in the urban schools (where most participants had since left school) they were joined by others who had also experienced migration.

The first workshop began with an explanation of the key findings of the research, in particular the problems associated with migration that children had highlighted. The children were then divided into smaller groups and asked to rank the problems in order of importance to their migration experiences. They were also given the opportunity of adding any problems that had not arisen out of the research. The whole group then looked at each rank and listened to the children explaining why they had chosen their order. The whole group then amalgamated their ranks and

devised one over all order and represented this on a poster to display at the policy workshops. Interestingly, some local differences emerged here with the Lesotho children emphasising educational issues as the most important problems with migration, while the Malawi children placed more emphasis on conflicts within the home environment.

The second part of this workshop involved taking the top three or four problems and giving one each to every small group. The children were then asked to think through how their issue might be solved and who would be the best support providers. Each group also developed this into a poster format for the policy workshops. The children felt that governments and NGOs should take a leading role in facilitating and easing migration experiences.

The second day of workshops focused more on developing solutions to the problems and two scenarios were constructed from the most highly ranked problems. The children developed and rehearsed short dramas, which illustrated the difficulties and ended by asking their audience what the most appropriate solutions would be. When they felt confident, the dramas were video taped and played back to them and their permission gained to use them at the policy workshops. In two of the schools the children performed the dramas to their peers who then engaged in discussion regarding the solutions. In the other two schools the children planned to perform at school assemblies later in the week. Unfortunately, due to the difficulties of setting up community meetings and time constraints on children, it was not possible for them to perform at the community meetings as originally planned.

Dissemination workshops with communities

Dissemination workshops were subsequently held in each of the four communities with interested parties, which in some cases included community workers and guardians who participated in the original research. Due to time constraints and village commitments/ meeting schedules this proved problematic in two cases. In urban Lesotho meetings are held very rarely and a workshop could only be arranged with the village chief and local community workers, although they promised to incorporate the research findings into their next meeting. In rural Lesotho the meeting was rescheduled several times due to other events, including a food aid visit and government visit, and finally the chief promised to pass on the findings at a later date. In Malawi, in contrast, the meetings were well attended and people demonstrated a

lot of interest in the research. At one of the meetings the workshop was followed by dramas performed by youth from the local anti-AIDS club.

All of the communities responded very well to the opportunity to hear the findings and provide comments on the research. Each workshop began in the same way as the children's workshops with a discussion of the research findings. Following this the community were asked to suggest possible solutions to each of the issues raised. The solutions were written up as posters and permission was gained to use them in the policy workshops and training manual. The communities suggested that they themselves should be supporting Young AIDS migrants and their families in terms of providing psychosocial support and assisting integration but felt that governments and NGOs need to assist by addressing underlying issues of poverty. Building centres for the care of orphans was frequently raised as one possible solution.

Dissemination and policy workshop for NGOs and government

A policy workshop was held in each country with invitations extended to all organisations and government departments who had expressed an interest in the research. The posters and workshop materials produced by children and their communities were displayed and copies of publications and the report were made available. The workshops were well attended and participants included representatives of government ministries, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and bilateral donors. The workshop began with a presentation of the research and the findings, incorporating the feedback already received. This included showing the videos of the children's dramas with time for questions and discussion at the end. Following this the group divided into three working groups to think through the policy implications and recommendations. The aim here was to develop strategies to feed into the training manual to provide practical solutions to the difficulties faced by children and their families when they are involved in AIDS-related migration. The groups focused on the three areas for policy recommendation highlighted in the original research report (empowering children, enabling households, and questioning communities) and fed back their analysis to the whole group for further discussion. A number of key issues and methods were raised which proved very helpful in developing the training manual.

Production of training manual

On return to the UK, a web-based training manual has been produced for use by those involved in working to support AIDS-affected children (a draft is submitted with

this report). This is principally based on the research findings and incorporates feedback from all the dissemination workshops. In particular, some of the suggestions made by community members and service providers have been included. The manual is divided into 6 modules, which seek to enable NGO staff to train community workers on issues surrounding children's AIDS-related migration in southern Africa (and beyond). The modules are:

- Raising awareness of the links between AIDS and migration
- Preparing children
- Decision-making
- Adapting to new situations
- Education
- Poverty

The draft manual has been distributed to various NGO staff and local academics for comments following which it will be disseminated through appropriate web-based databases such as ELDIS and ID21. It is expected that the manual will be available online by 28th February.