Let’s support each other!

A case study report on livelihoods and life skills activities of five Zambian organisations
Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction – How to Use this Case Study Report

Do you work for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Zambia or another country? And is your organisation engaged in social protection, HIV prevention and reproductive health, and/or livelihood and practical skills activities for youths? Then this case study report will be a source of inspiration, and will assist you in strengthening your organisation’s approach.

Practical suggestions
This case study report presents promising practices of integration of livelihood and life skills activities of five Zambian NGOs. It gives practical suggestions about how to teach youths to make healthy and informed decisions and how to economically empower youths. The five cases illustrate the integrated approach of livelihood and life skills activities in practice and the outcomes for youths, in order to inspire organisations that work with youths to develop comprehensive programmes.

Importance of integrated programmes
Especially for young people who live in high HIV prevalence and poor resource settings, youth targeted programmes that integrate livelihood and life skills activities are essential. Integrated programmes respond to the daily challenges of youths. Poverty levels and unemployment rates in Zambia are high. HIV is highly related to poverty, and poverty influences behaviours of young people. Youths can be trained in how to make healthy informed decisions, but within countries with high poverty rates, this does not make sense if they are not also economically empowered. This publication, therefore, presents inspirational examples of programmes that integrate livelihood and life skills activities.

Some facts about youths in Zambia

- HIV prevalence rate among youths aged 15 to 24 years is estimated at 6.6%.\(^2\)
- HIV infection rates for young women (8.9%) are more than twice as high as those for young men (4.2%).\(^3\)
- Recent data show a significant decline of 25%\(^4\) in HIV prevalence among young people in Zambia and a change in sexual behaviour of youths. Fewer young men and women are sexually active at a young age, fewer youths have more than one partner, and condom use within this population increased.\(^5\) These are promising results, and show the importance of youth targeted programmes.

The case studies
This publication presents highly informative case studies. Qualitative data was generated through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with 36 HIV positive and HIV negative youths, 13 programme coordinators and staff, and 10 parents/caretakers. The activities and programmes of the following Zambian NGOs are incorporated in the publication: HODI Kitwe, Women for Change (WfC), Catholic Diocese of Ndola (CDN), HODI Namwala, and People’s Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia (PPHPZ). Promising practices from the programme of The Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+) are presented in Chapter 2.

Structure of this report
The core of this publication is Chapter 4, which presents five case studies of Zambian organisations, including their integrated approaches, the effects for youths, and the multiplier effects of their methods. Some useful background information on social protection and HIV prevention, including definitions, is given in Chapter 2, followed by a practical account of elements that are crucial for the development, implementation and evaluation of comprehensive programmes for youths, in Chapter 3.

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\(^1\) UNDP 2011, Poverty levels and unemployment rates among youths in Zambia.
\(^2\) UNAIDS 2011, Securing the future today. Synthesis of strategic information on HIV and young people.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) UNAIDS 2010, Young people are leading the HIV prevention revolution. Outlook breaking news report.
\(^5\) Ibid.
2. **Background – Social Protection and HIV Prevention**

The integrated activities that are presented in this case study report can be seen as part of the social protection approach. Social protection is a critical enabler for successful HIV prevention and treatment outcomes. UNAIDS has identified social protection as a strategic priority in the global HIV response, because it can help to reduce susceptibility and vulnerability to HIV, overcome barriers to access to treatment, and mitigate the impact of HIV on household poverty and social exclusion.  

**Social protection**

Social protection is defined as ‘all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups’.  

A comprehensive approach to social protection includes the following four, overlapping objectives:

- **protection** – providing relief from deprivation;
- **prevention** – averting poverty and deprivation;
- **promotion** – enhancing incomes and capabilities and promote livelihoods; and
- **transformation** – addressing concerns of social equity and exclusion.

HIV sensitive social protection measures include:

- financial protection for HIV affected individuals and households, through transfers of cash, food and other transfers;
- access to affordable quality services for those who are at risk, affected or HIV positive, including treatment, health and education services through, for example, school fees exemption; and
- social protection policies, legislation and regulations designed to meet the needs and uphold the rights of the most vulnerable and socially excluded people, including those affected by HIV.

To be most effective, these three measures should be viewed as interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The various forms of social protection, including cash transfers, microcredit and finance and livelihood support, can strengthen the response to HIV in the areas of prevention, treatment, care, and support.  

The programmes in this report are mostly related, but not limited, to preventative and promotional social protection, including financial protection and access to services.

**Life skills**

This term refers to a large group of psychosocial and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help them lead a healthy and productive life. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions and actions toward others as well as actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health.

**Livelihood skills**

This term refers to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals. Livelihood skills relate to income generation and may include technical/vocational skills (e.g. carpentry, sewing, computer programming), job seeking

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6 UNAIDS 2011, HIV and Social Protection guidance note
9 UNICEF 2011
skills such as interviewing, business management skills, entrepreneurial skills, and skills to manage money.\textsuperscript{10}

**Youths**
The joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA definition of youth is the group aged 15 to 24. This report uses the similar age span for youths.

\textsuperscript{10} UNICEF 2011

Does your organisation intend to implement activities that include life skills and livelihoods components? And is the aim to contribute to the strengthening of HIV prevention and the improvement of youths’ positions economically and socially? Then bear in mind the following crucial elements.

- **Make sure that you use accurate messages based on evidence.** Too many youth programmes use only abstinence messages and do not address issues such as gender and power.
- **Offer life skills training programmes that relate to youths’ interests and needs.** In different contexts youths experience different problems.
- **Train youths in groups.** They learn from their peers, are likely to motivate each other, and give each other psychosocial support.
- **Organise exchange visits.** These help youths to see commonalities and differences between their own situation and that of others, and to put their experiences into a broader perspective. The Zambian organisations PPHPZ and WfC found that youths are better able to come up with creative activities when they exchange experiences with others, both in terms of livelihood and life skills activities.
- **Encourage youths to reach out to their peers.** WfC encourages the trained youths to pass on their vocational skills and psychosocial life skills to at least three others. The youth support group supported by the organisation HODI Namwala gives drama performances for in-school youths.
- **Counselling is a professional skill and must be done by trained people.** Psychosocial training requires a flexible approach. Sometimes you can plan to have a group session, but you end up counselling youths individually, because the situation requires this.
- **Encourage youths, schools and families to be self-supporting and ensure good nutrition, for instance by growing vegetables, chicken rearing, and goat keeping.** People living with HIV in the support centres of CDN grow vegetables in their small demonstration gardens. The parents’ support group empowered by HODI Kitwe grows vegetables for nutrition and income generation.
- **Encourage youths to start a business to generate income.** Examples are growing vegetables for nutrition and income generation, selling art crafts or clothes, tailoring, and carpentry. You can support them in the following ways:
  - Train youths in vocational and entrepreneurial skills. CDN, WfC and PPHPZ offer training programmes in vocational and entrepreneurial skills and refer youths to centres for skills training.
  - Make sure youths can choose the vocational skills training they believe in, to ensure ownership and continued enthusiasm. WfC found that this prevents drop-outs and increases sustainability.
  - Start with a needs assessment, to identify location specific business opportunities. CDN calls this the ‘social market research approach’.
  - Make sure there is a market to sell the items. HODI Namwala linked the youth support group to a secondary school, where they can sell their vegetables.
  - Link up with microfinance institutions. The Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+) did so before, and now plans to connect their youths to these institutions for loans and financial support.
  - Set up saving schemes. Youths connected to PPHPZ invest money in a fund and use this to run small businesses as a group. Profits flow back to the fund. A similar type of saving scheme has been set up by CDN. Ownership of the group combined with entrepreneurial knowledge is indispensable.

`‘In youth friendly corners we discuss problems from our slum communities. Issues related to HIV and AIDS, early marriages, child abuse. Especially girls are most vulnerable in our community. If we don’t talk about these issues we end up being miserable. And it is helpful so much, because I can apply what I learn in my daily life.’ (Vera, 22)`

`‘A business should have viability in the community. It is important that the needs come from the people, but they should be guided’. (Timothy, Monitoring and Evaluation officer CDN)`
Lessons learned from Zambian organisations
During the development, implementation and evaluation phases of youth programmes in which livelihood and life skills activities are integrated, the Zambian organisations presented in this publication learned some valuable lessons. The overviews in this report are helpful to organisations working with youths in social protection programmes, in the development, implementation, and evaluation phases.

Suggestions when you develop a programme:
Be clear about the content of your message
• Accurate messaging based on evidence related to the context and structural factors that influence youths’ behaviour, is essential.

Prioritise youth and community ownership
• Start with a needs assessment. NZP+ holds group discussions with youths to identify needs, HODI Kitwe conducts questionnaires within the community.
• Youth involvement and ownership is key. PPHPZP youths have formed a platform and design their programmes themselves. They discuss with PPHPZ what type of support is needed. Youths design annual and quarterly plans, PPHPZ coordinates and facilitates the planned activities.

Do not forget the most remote places
• Organisations should reach out to the most remote places, where the needs for programmes with livelihood and life skills activities are high. ‘Go to the grassroots and talk to them, in the local language. Only then you can change their minds, the situation where you are going to be, the environment. Everybody can bring something. The reason why we are growing, is because we embrace everyone.’ (David, 23 years)

Suggestions when you implement a programme:
Meet regularly with the groups at a safe place
• Regular meetings, preferably once a week, keep youths active, increases linking and learning and enable youths to encourage each other. NZP+ trains the youths at the office. Here they feel more comfortable than in the compounds, where stigma is still high.

Train youths in groups, for more ownership and responsibility
• HODI experienced that youths who work in groups encourage each other to actively participate. The NZP+ KWAZI youth group finds that ‘acting as a group makes our message to the community stronger’. But, make sure that the groups are not too big:
  • CDN prefers small groups, because this enables an individual, tailor-made approach for each person. PPHPZ youths prefer groups of 12-18 youths, so they know everyone and can follow-up on youths personally. And find out what the best composition is for the group:
• NZP+ finds that in a homogenous group youths more freely share issues. CDN works with mixed groups of adults and youths, and finds that they can learn from each other.

Make linkages with other institutions for sustainability
• NGOs collaborate with local governments, health centres and other organisations. ‘If we are not there, people should be able to proceed with the programme activities’ (Caroline, programme coordinator HODI Kitwe).
• Networking with other youth organisations is important for sharing knowledge and creating more impact.

Share best practices for optimal learning
• Organise exchange visits, in-country and, if possible, with organisations and groups in other countries. This increases learning and motivation.

Create incentives
• Incentives can stimulate business activities. CDN supported a group of women with a business in chicken rearing. When they had 1,000 chicken, CDN supported them with another 250, to show their appreciation and as an incentive to further expand the business.

Suggestions when you evaluate a programme:
Ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation
• HODI Kitwe continuously identifies gaps in the programme through observations, surveys among samples of parents and youths, and information from meetings.
• School and home visits and meetings with other stakeholders in the programme ensure that your knowledge of the programme’s activities and outcomes are up-to-date, and that you can intervene if necessary.
• WFC has an independent consultancy department and Monitoring & Evaluation unit that did an impact assessment after the first group of youths were trained in practical life skills. This guaranteed objective results. Organisations can also hire a consultant.

Quantity participation
• Record how many youths participated in activities so you know the reach of the programme.
More reading

- Do you want to learn more about crucial elements when designing your programme? Then read the Planning and Support Tool on http://www.stopaidsnow.org/downloads_category/recent_san_products_prevention.

- Do you want to learn more about evaluating your programme activities on outcome level, and about measuring the actual change in the lives of young people? Then read the monitoring and evaluation workbook Are You On The Right Track? – Six Steps to Measure the Effects of Your Programme Activities on http://www.stopaidsnow.org/downloads_category/recent_san_products_prevention.
4. Case studies –
Five Promising Practices of Programmes with Livelihoods and Life Skills Activities

4.1. Let’s help each other – HODI Kitwe

In Zambia’s Kitwe district, thousands of vulnerable youths attend school at a regular basis, while before they were often absent. And their parents have small businesses to support them. Thanks to the integrated approach of life skills and livelihood activities of HODI Kitwe, youths are empowered to build a future for themselves.

With a holistic programme including educational activities HODI Kitwe supports the most vulnerable children and youths in the Kitwe district of Zambia. HODI’s programme reduces youths’ vulnerability, and enables them to make informed decisions about their future. Moreover, to improve the livelihoods of families, parents/caretakers and schools initiated income generating activities.

The integrated approach
School support
HODI supports over 7,000 vulnerable youths, often affected by HIV, in attending school. The organisation provides them with school books, pens, pencils, uniforms, and shoes, and – depending on the circumstances – pays half or all of the tuition fees. This support is combined with regular life skills sessions, in groups and individually. The sessions focus on sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, and youths’ self esteem and confidence.

Twanfuwne Club (Let’s help each other)
HODI continuously identifies gaps in the programme, through questionnaires among beneficiaries and observations. It turned out that there was a need for livelihood activities. Youths did not perform well in school, because of lack of secure income. HODI counselled the youths’ parents and caretakers. The idea was that they should acknowledge the importance of school and take their responsibility to care for their children, instead of letting them help with the parents’ work. As a result, a group of 22 parents and caretakers set up the Twanfuwne Club (meaning ‘Let’s help each other’). They cultivate land and use the vegetables for nutrition and income generation. The group meets on a weekly basis to motivate and support each other. This is a good example of social protection that moves beyond material support to wider family support. One of the schools also started cultivating land to give food to the most vulnerable children and to have additional income.

Youths that graduate are encouraged to continue studying. Those interested in becoming teachers are referred to a course and supported in terms of tuition and boarding, examination and support fees. HODI also organises career events for youths who are close to graduation.

Collaboration is key
HODI collaborates with the Zambian Ministry of Education and with other organisations in case of referrals for further education. HODI also works with School Based Committees, consisting of a head teacher, contact teacher, grade teachers, a social worker, a nurse, and a church representative, particularly for identification of the most vulnerable youths and for monitoring and evaluation.

“You can help the children to go to school, but they also need to eat. So that’s why we are exploring the possibilities of income generating activities’ (Caroline, programme coordinator Hodi Kitwe)

Margaret from the Twanfuwne Club cultivating land
Effects for youths

Importance of linkages and broad support
HODI’s programme shows that we need to link youths and their families with wider support beyond material support, to access education, to strengthen their economic situation, and to address issues of rights to education and rights to life skills. Moreover, it is important to tackle barriers in order to reduce risk and vulnerability that are often outside an individual’s control.

Social protection, in the form of education support and livelihoods support, can help families, as it mitigates the household level impact of HIV by reducing poverty. This in turn supports prevention efforts by keeping children in school and less likely to work outside the home. In otherwise drop out, are more likely to attend and finish school.

Youths that participate in HODI’s programme, who would otherwise drop out, are more likely to attend and finish school and less likely to work outside the home. In combination with psychosocial life skills sessions and encouragement and support from their guidance teachers they can build a new future. Three sixteen years old youths mentioned that they dare to dream of a good future again, of becoming a doctor or an accountant. These same youths reported that, because they receive uniforms and shoes, they now have the same appearance as their peers and do not feel social inequality in school.

Improved health and economic situation
The livelihoods activities that are used for nutrition and income generation increase youths’ health and their economic situation. Enrolment in study programmes and career events that are organised, enable youths to work towards formal employment and become economically independent.

Strengthen community structure
One of HODI’s founding principles is that all development should start from the community, to increase ownership and responsibility. The parents’ group was empowered by HODI and came up with income generating activities themselves. The community structure is strengthened as parents now work together to support their children. HODI set up a structure to make sure that youths can transfer from primary to secondary school, but the youths themselves have to take responsibility for ensuring that they do not drop out in this process. They themselves are responsible for arranging a recommendation letter from the primary school to hand over to the new secondary school.

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4.2. A platform for youth – People’s Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia

The programmes of People’s Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia (PPHPZ) empower vulnerable youths to make informed decisions and earn a living. Its approach includes income generation activities, saving schemes, and life skills training programmes. Thus youths, their families and communities regain hope and manage to build a new future.

Livelihood activities: Lloyd making art craft

PPHPZ supports poor urban communities to plan and implement their own solutions to the challenges they meet in life. PPHPZ aims to empower youths in the age of 15 to 30 years to secure a living and make informed decisions. The approach is one of holistic and youth-initiated development, with the emphasis on learning by
doing. Youths are given a platform to respond to issues affecting them. Youths themselves develop structures to mobilise their peers for life skills trainings and livelihood activities.

The integrated approach

Life skills training

PPHPZ youths participate in life skills training programmes, which are about gender relations, basic health and more specific about HIV and AIDS, for instance the importance of counselling and testing. Youths gain communication and assertiveness skills and some of them are trained for peer education.

Events and meeting points

As agents of change, youths organise events in which HIV education is combined with sports activities. This is an effective tool to mobilise youths, as an event attracts hundreds of youths, creates HIV awareness, and stimulates physical fitness. PPHPZ youths furthermore organise World Cafés and Youth Friendly Corners, where youths can interact and discuss issues that are important for them, such as early marriages, alcohol and drug abuse.

Youths selling art craft

Vocational training

These life skills training programmes and other activities are combined with training in vocational skills for livelihood improvement. Skills training includes carpentry, gardening, pottery and constructing, and also entrepreneurship training.

Saving schemes to improve well-being

Youths form saving schemes, for initiating projects to improve their wellbeing. Youths save small amounts on a daily basis and as a group set the rules for making use of this revolving fund. Projects that were started by youths include art crafts, pottery, running a restaurant, and making necklaces and handbags. PPHPZ intensifies the activities that the youths are doing, as they arrange materials if necessary and search for markets to increase the incomes. Saving schemes meetings are also used to empower each other and exchange information on issues like positive living and behaviour change.

Effects for youths

The PPHPZ youths are from poor communities with a lot of unemployment, crime, and alcohol and drug abuse. Youths reported that they regained hope and managed to leave their sometimes hopeless situation.

Empowered to make decisions, prevent risky behaviour

Through the life skills training and other activities, youths gain knowledge and are empowered to make informed decisions. Youths indicated how it helped them to live a healthy life, and not indulge in risky behaviour. A young woman (22 years old), for instance, indicated that she gave up drinking alcohol as a result of the training, which improved her health.

Increased economic independence

But making informed decisions also requires some level of independence. Through vocational skills training and gaining financial skills, youths can start up a small business.

‘I now know how to make decisions, how to take care of myself, I know how to do things in a right way. And because of this business that we are doing, I am even able to support my niece to go to school. So it has really helped me and my family.’ (Vera, 22)

‘In my group, Pure Image, we contribute 500 Kwacha [0.09 USD] each day. The savings are managed at group level. When I have a business idea, I go to my colleagues. If we saved enough money they lend it to me, with conditions we set together. With the money I can start this business. I feel empowered. Instead of just sitting at home, I am able to get an income. [...] I also learned that if I want to change my life, I have to set the first step myself. At the same time, we work together with our friends and encourage each other, and we reach a higher level together.’ (David, 23)
and become economically independent. In cooperation with their peers, youths develop their own response and take their lives in their own hands. They themselves are agents of change, increasing the impact of the activities.

**Multiplier effect – sharing knowledge, addressing knowledge gap**

The youths reach out to the community and support their families. Vera, 22 years old, reported that the income generating activities enabled her to financially support her nieces to go to school. Youths share knowledge with their peers and so address the gaps that exist in information dissemination about sex and health between parents and their children. This also reduces the risk to receive false information from unaware friends.

Want to know more, or get in touch with PPHPZ? Visit [http://phpz.blogspot.nl/](http://phpz.blogspot.nl/) or contact: [phpz@peoplesprocess.org.zm](mailto:phpz@peoplesprocess.org.zm)

4.3. **Live a better life – Women for Change**

In rural areas of Zambia, vulnerable youths learn a profession, develop life skills such as communication, learn about sexual health, and know how to obtain nutritious food. Moreover, training helps them to abstain from risky behaviour, including drug abuse. Thus Women for Change (WfC) socially and economically empowers youths and their communities, with a special focus on girls and women.

WfC is a Zambian gender focused NGO working with and empowering communities, especially women and children in rural areas. WfC has a life skills empowerment programme for youths. Every year, 20 vulnerable youths, most affected by HIV, often orphaned and without education, are identified for sponsorship. They are referred to the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), a national institution with centres all over Zambia, for a one year course on vocational skills, life skills and entrepreneurship. The rationale is that livelihood empowerment is needed to enable the most vulnerable youths to put what they have learnt into action, and be able to actually live a healthy life. In all practical life skills programmes, there is a compulsory component on psychosocial life skills and HIV and AIDS.

**The integrated approach**

*Life skills and vocational training, also for girls!*

In the training centres, youths participate in (psychosocial) life skills training programmes. These focus on HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights, assertiveness, communication skills, and decision making skills. The youths also learn **vocational skills**, such as bricklaying, fabrication, carpentry, gardening, tailoring, and catering.

They are trained in entrepreneurship so they have the right information to sustain themselves economically. WfC makes sure that girls also participate in the training programmes that are traditionally for boys, such as carpentry, brick laying, and metal fabrication. Youths participate in a gender training to gain insight in equal opportunities for girls and boys, and for the girls to improve their assertiveness. To enable youths to pass on their knowledge to their peers, they participate in training of trainers workshops.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

So far, 89 youths have completed the course, and 20 youths are being trained. To continuously monitor the activities, WfC staff visit the institutions every month. WfC is always in contact with the lecturers, to see if the youths’ demands are met. If not, an evaluation will take place to identify the gaps.

**Effects for youths**

Keeping youths in school and keeping them from resorting to coping strategies that may make them susceptible to HIV infection, supports prevention efforts. WfC conducted an impact assessment to identify the impacts of the first year of training, the successes and challenges, and the lessons learned, on behalf of future training programmes.

*‘They learn what is going on in the world around them, instead of being isolated. They are coming out of their shells, they mingle with other people and are more assertive. They take on a different outlook on life. So the whole idea of psychosocial life skills coupled with exposure does improve their lives.’ (Tendayi, programme officer child and youth development WfC)*

*‘They learn about sexual and reproductive health, that is the beginning of this all. Then we think: when they are back home, don’t they need to have life skills in addition? Let’s give them life skills. And if they are now equipped with information about HIV they need to have vocational skills to enable them to actually live this better life.’ (Norman, programme coordinator WfC)*
Youth start with small businesses

Entrepreneurship is an important component of the course. In the context of few employment opportunities, youths can embark on their vocational skills and start a business. Most youths now earn their income with small businesses. A programme success is that 8% of the youths even managed to find formal employment after the course. All but one student completed the course.

Vocational and social skills prevent youth from risky behaviour

The programme is beneficial to youths and the broader community. Youths learn vocational skills and social life skills which were hard to learn elsewhere since they are not educated. The training programmes keep the youths from risky behaviour, such as drug abuse, unsafe sex, and stealing, which are often a reality in the extreme poor communities where they are from.

Increased economic and food security

Youths are able to generate income and engage other people in their activities. Thus they have improved economic security as well as food security, since they are able to obtain nutritious food for themselves and their family.

Increased access to information and ARVs

Through WfC’s linkages with service institutes, youths have access to information and antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). As part of the training, youths attend conferences in Zambia and abroad. This positively affects their self-awareness, self-esteem, and creativeness.

Multiplier effect – sharing skills with peers and community

WfC stimulates a multiplier effect. Youths are expected to share the money they earn with their family and the broader community, and to apply the vocational skills in the community. Youths’ services are brought into the communities, and they help people by, for instance, constructing houses and making furniture. The community benefits from increased proximity of services and lower costs. Furthermore, it is part of the youths’ contract that they pass on the skills to at least three of their peers, so the programme achieves the maximum impact.

Want to know more, or get in touch with WfC?
Visit www.wfc.org.zm or contact: wfc@zamnet.zm

4.4. A new start – Catholic Diocese of Ndola

Many Zambian youths with HIV are able to start a new life, since the Catholic Diocese of Ndola (CDN) offers them vocational and life skills training, and provides them with psychosocial counselling. Thus youths and their families are empowered.

CDN is a Catholic organisation in the Ndola district of Zambia. CDN supports people living with HIV to start a business. The organisation provides livelihoods and life skills training and psychosocial counselling in three centres in the Copperbelt Region. Youths and adults with HIV are identified from CDN’s Home Based Care programme. When they are recovered from being ill, they have to start up their life again and need economic strengthening.

The integrated approach

Training to start a business

CDN’s approach focuses on holistic development and ownership. HIV infected adults and youths are supported to become independent and start a business via life skills and livelihoods training programmes. Vocational skills training includes gardening, knitting and sewing, soya and ‘mealie’ meal production, which is mainly made from maize or corn and eaten as a staple, and chicken rearing. For gardening they use small demonstration gardens that are set up with an enclosure of stones and filled with soil. These show that even without a piece of land, people can grow their own food. In entrepreneurship training, persons with HIV learn about profits and loans and how to run a business. They also learn (psychosocial) life skills that increase their knowledge about living with HIV, their self-esteem, self-confidence, and assertiveness. Moreover, CDN offers literacy classes, and paralegal courses for advice about property rights, child abuse, and domestic violence. These training programmes are open to the community and increase empowerment.
Support group starts saving scheme
In the Ndola Twataka Centre, 12 people formed a support group. With income generating activities they earn money. They sell chicken, eggs, ‘mealie’ meals and vegetables at the local market. Thirty percent of the net profits are for the group members themselves, the other 70% are invested in the centre and training programmes.

CDN linked the group to a microfinance institution, so they can set up a group saving scheme. All group members will contribute some seed money and are as a group responsible for definition of rules and responsibilities. This will further increase their ownership.

Effects for youths
Earning an income
With regard to economic empowerment, people with HIV earn their own income as a group. Ultimately, the idea is that they will set up their own business individually. Geoffrey, for example, explained that he learned to continuously look for new opportunities. He sells eggs and sees opportunities in chicken rearing. He is now able to wisely invest in this new income generating activity. Access to microfinance support will help people living with HIV to independently operate small businesses.

Improved health, increased access to services and treatment
The comprehensive – life skills and livelihoods – programme resulted in benefits for health as well. By reducing the economic burden of illness and improving antiretroviral therapy tolerance, food interventions can increase treatment access, acceptance and adherence to treatment, thereby enhancing outcomes. Here we see the link of social protection and treatment. Through vocational skills training, people with HIV learned to grow their own nutritious food. In life skills sessions they learned, for instance, how to correctly use antiretroviral drugs. Access to medication is increased through weekly clinic days.

Increased self-esteem
People with HIV also reported that they built their self-esteem and regained self confidence through psychosocial counselling and training and interaction with their peers.

Multiplier effect – door to door education and public demonstrations
All these benefits for people living with HIV have an effect on their families and community. Economic empowerment impacts their family in terms of food and education support. The centre is open for community members to access treatment at the weekly clinic day and get demonstrations of how to grow vegetables at home. Some people with HIV in the centre are peer educators, they reach community members with door-to-door education sessions or sensitisation at markets and other public spaces. This works well, since they are the ‘living examples of people living with HIV that recovered and are successful now’ (Gilbert, livelihoods coordinating officer CDN).

4.5. Youth Empowerment! – HODI Namwala

Sustainable agriculture activities and life skills training encourage vulnerable youths to gain an income and make healthy choices. HODI Namwala offers training programmes inside and outside schools in rural areas of Zambia. Also the communities are empowered by this initiative.

HODI Namwala aims to increase youths’ livelihood security and their ability to make healthy informed choices, through income generation and education. Life skills training is combined with training in sustainable agriculture. The rationale is that good nutrition and income are imperative for the good health of people living with HIV, for HIV prevention, and for livelihood security.
The integrated approach

A mix of methods to deliver life skill training
HODI strengthens life skills for in-school and out-of-school youths. Several times a year, HODI facilitates life skills sessions in schools, in cooperation with rural health centres. These focus on HIV prevention and treatment, stigma and discrimination, and healthy behaviour. The target group for the sessions are youths aged 12 to 16, often single or double orphaned and vulnerable, but the sessions are also open for community members. Education methods include movies, discussions, personal testimonies of people living with HIV, quizzes to assess their knowledge level, and drama performances performed by youth support groups, who are also supported by HODI.

Training of peer educators
HODI supports about 64 support groups, both youths and adults, both HIV positive and negative. Through life skills training, HODI builds capacity of youth support groups. The Kabulamwando Youths Anti-AIDS Group consists of 15 youths aged 18 to 26. This support group is trained by HODI, or referred for training, on HIV and health, and on assertiveness and communication skills. The youths in the support group are trained to become peer educators. They perform drama sessions to educate youths in-school or the broader community at national events such as World AIDS Day and Youths Day.

Training in entrepreneurship and vocational training
In Namwala, HIV prevalence and poverty levels are high. Therefore, empowerment also requires livelihoods support. Youths in the support groups are encouraged to start up a business as a group and are trained in entrepreneurship. The youth support group earns income through several activities. HODI hires them for drama performances, with which they earn 300,000 ZMK (56 USD). This is partly invested in their business. The youths are furthermore trained in vocational skills. The Kabulamwando Youths Anti-AIDS Group grows vegetables, for instance cabbage, tomatoes, and impwa (a small eggplant), and they keep goats and rear chicken.

Strengthen market linkages
HODI helps the support groups in establishing and strengthening market linkages. The abovementioned group mainly sells to a nearby high school and at the market in Namwala. The group just started growing vegetables and soon had already about 1,820 crops to sell.

Effects for youths

Increased knowledge and skills to grow vegetables
On an annual basis, HODI reaches over 7,000 youths, with other community members as indirect beneficiaries. Youths are educated on how to make informed decisions to stay healthy. They gain knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and health in general. With training in agriculture, they can grow their own vegetables for nutrition and earn a living. Youths argued that working in groups empowered them because they feel supported by each other.

Youths are empowered
HODI encourages ownership in its activities. Youths from the Kabulamwando Youths Anti-AIDS Group explained that they feel responsible for sharing their knowledge with others. They interact in groups, with their peers, and, as one of them explained, instead of hanging around they now have a purpose in their lives. With regard to economic empowerment, youths manage to earn a living with drama performances and gardening.

Multiplier effect – benefits for the wider community
The wider community benefits from these activities as well. They are welcome at education sessions in schools, and the community and especially the youths are educated through the drama performances.

Want to know more, or get in touch with HODI in Namwala?
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