

Tanzania Social Work Partnership Launches Training to Support Orphans, Vulnerable Children

Twinning Center partners at Tanzania's Institute of Social Work and the University of Illinois at Chicago's Jane Addams College of Social Work/Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center held their first training course in Dar es Salaam March 19-23.

Nearly 2.5 million Tanzanian children have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS and the number is expected to reach 4 million by 2010 if effective prevention and treatment measures are not implemented.

Titled "Equipped to Care: Building Skills to Assist Vulnerable Children and Families Affected by HIV/AIDS," the course attracted some 40 district social welfare officers and social workers employed by NGOs throughout Tanzania. Participants focused on topics such as leadership, case management, and other skills needed to improve the lives of orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

The workshop was followed by a one-day symposium and media briefing designed to call attention to the 2.5 million Tanzanian children orphaned or made vulnerable by the AIDS pandemic.

"This collaboration provides social workers and other caregivers with a vital opportunity to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to better support orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV and AIDS," says Institute of Social Work Principal Dr. Hossea Rwegoshora.

Children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS are likely to experience isolation, stigma, limited educational opportunities, malnutrition, and a general lack of care and support. Community-based social workers and allied care providers can be instrumental in efforts to fill these gaps, yet the existing welfare system is severely overstretched with trained social workers assigned to only one-third of the country's 126 districts.