

Thursday, September 10, 2009

U.S. group lists benefits of capacity building for social workers

From Folasade Folarin, Abuja

GOING by the number of people affected by HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, it has been estimated that the number of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Nigeria would be well over 1.5 million by next year.

Giving the estimate recently in Abuja at a training workshop for social workers, Dr. Armanda Gibbons of the American International Health Alliance (AIHA), said that Nigeria has a problem of many OVC and that it was pertinent to give the group of people comprehensive care and treatment.

Funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in collaboration with the Centre of Disease Control (CDC) in Nigeria, the five-day training was aimed at ensuring that those, "who have been identified as OVC get services that will improve their well being and prevent the abuse and neglect of these people."

Declaring the workshop open, Barrister Grace Ezezika of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, said that there were already about 1.8 million OVCs in Nigeria but that the Federal Government had programmes and policies on ground to facilitate the care and support of the group of people.

She urged Nigerians to partner with the government to help curtail the increase of the group in Nigeria.

Dr. Olatunde Olusesi, one of the coordinators, said the essence of the programme was to help develop skills aimed at assisting vulnerable children and their households and to upgrade the knowledge and skills of individuals providing care and support to children who have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS and their families or caregivers.

The pilot training was conducted by the HIV/AIDS Twinning Centre with partners at the Federal School of Social Work in Enugu and the Department of Social Work at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka and their U.S. counterpart from Hunter College School of Social Work, Howard University School of Social Work, the Nigerian Social Workers Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Association of Black Social Workers. It would be replicated in all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria.