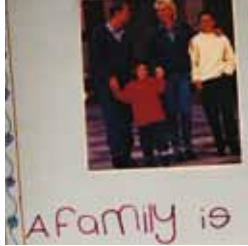


SEEN AND HEARD

INVOLVING CHILDREN IN RESPONSES TO HIV AND AIDS

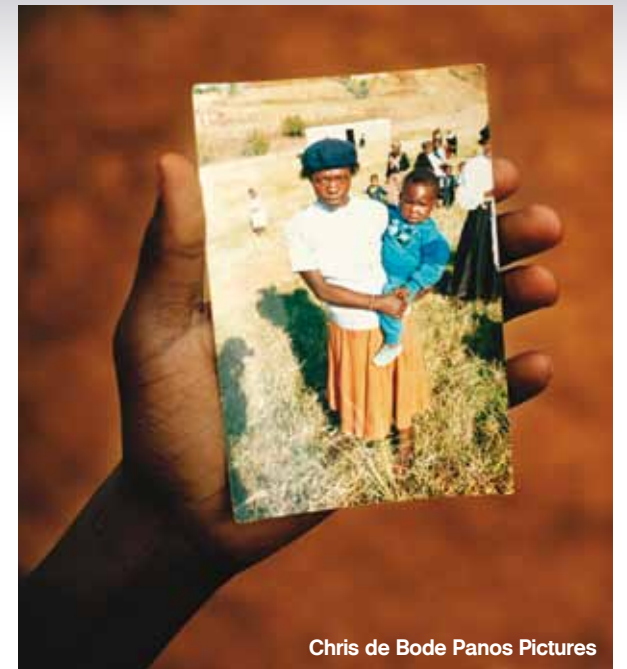


By Robin Vincent

One in seven people dying of HIV-related illness worldwide is a child under 15. In the context of HIV, children have distinct experiences and needs. They have particular treatment needs, and require appropriate and accessible information and services. Yet their needs are often ignored.

Seen and Heard, a special report by Panos London, looks at the involvement of children, including young children, in responses to HIV and Aids and examines issues around children's participation.

Children need to be able to express their views and priorities effectively and they can be supported through a range of appropriate media and communication approaches. The report (and related video and radio programmes) draws on the experiences of people living in communities affected by poverty and HIV and Aids, and



highlights examples of initiatives that successfully involve children.

Key points

The specific needs and communication styles of children of different ages need to be recognised and accommodated in responses to HIV and Aids. Methods that support children to express themselves and communicate effectively need to be documented and more widely shared.

There is a need to build on the documented success in involving children in decisions that affect their lives, to give them the tools and space to participate effectively in responses to HIV and Aids. The different ‘childhoods’ and experiences of HIV and Aids, poverty, and of participation for girls and boys of different ages need to be better understood as the starting point for interventions with children.

Meaningful involvement of children in responses to HIV and Aids requires significant

investment of time and resources over the long term.

There is a need to address barriers preventing children’s involvement, such as scarce time and resources and differences of confidence and power between children. Efforts to involve children also need to be sensitive to the household and community context, and engage communities in addressing harmful local cultural norms and practices.

To assess its effectiveness, the scope and quality of children’s participation in HIV and Aids initiatives need to be clearly defined – including in relation to differences of age, gender and diversity.

Child- and youth-led organisations and networks need to be supported, both to further children’s ability to secure their rights and to support children’s public engagement and social awareness.

You can download a free copy or buy a copy from www.panos.org.uk

