THE GOVERNMENT AND HIV/AIDS

The challenge lies in implementing policy

SONIA GEISE and HELEN WENIENS of the HIV/AIDS Programme, Children's Unity Trust (CUT) examine the government's response to the care and support of children in the context of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

What I mean, when I say children, is not only those of my age but those who have lost their lives or who are living with the disease, who are orphans, who are destitute and vulnerable. What is the action that we can take to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among children? What is the action that we can take to care for children who have or are affected by the disease? What is the action that we can take to protect the rights of children who have been affected by the disease?

In South Africa, children are among the most vulnerable and affected groups in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Children are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS compared to adults. According to the UNAIDS Report on the global HIV epidemic in 2018, while children account for only 1% of the adult population, they account for 3.1% of new HIV infections and 2.2% of new AIDS cases. Children are more vulnerable to the disease because of their young age, their immune systems are still developing, and they are more likely to experience trauma and stress.

The government has acknowledged the importance of addressing the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS. In its National AIDS Response Plan (NARP) 2018-2022, the government has emphasized the need to prioritize the care and support of children affected by HIV/AIDS. The NARP aims to provide a comprehensive response to the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS, including access to treatment, care, and support services, and to promote their well-being and development.

However, despite these efforts, there are still significant gaps in the provision of care and support for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Access to treatment and care is limited in many parts of the country, and there is a lack of coordination between different levels of government and between government and civil society organizations. There is also a lack of data on the number of children affected by HIV/AIDS, which makes it difficult to plan and allocate resources effectively.

The government needs to take urgent action to address these challenges. It needs to invest more resources in care and support programs for children affected by HIV/AIDS, and to strengthen coordination between different levels of government and between government and civil society organizations. It also needs to improve data collection and monitoring to better understand the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS and to ensure that care and support programs are effective.

Table 1: Overview of Department of Social Development and Department of Health responsibilities in relation to the care and support of children affected by HIV/AIDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Health</th>
<th>Department of Social Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides medical care</td>
<td>Provides social support programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes antiretroviral therapy</td>
<td>Includes case management and support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on health outcomes</td>
<td>Focuses on social outcomes</td>
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The Department of Health is responsible for providing medical care and treatment to children affected by HIV/AIDS, while the Department of Social Development is responsible for providing social support programs and case management services. While both departments have important roles to play, there is a need for better coordination between them to ensure that children receive comprehensive care and support.

The government needs to take urgent action to address these challenges. It needs to invest more resources in care and support programs for children affected by HIV/AIDS, and to strengthen coordination between different levels of government and between government and civil society organizations. It also needs to improve data collection and monitoring to better understand the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS and to ensure that care and support programs are effective.

In conclusion, while the government has made significant progress in addressing the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS, there is still much work to be done. The government needs to take urgent action to ensure that children affected by HIV/AIDS receive the care and support they need to thrive.

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Care and support and a social development function: some pros and cons of a government "doing it all"

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