



For Immediate Release

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Innovative Programs Improve Lives of Indian Children Affected by HIV/AIDS **-- Indian Model May Help Other Developing Countries Fight AIDS --**

NEW DELHI, India, Sept. 3, 2004 – Innovative programs developed in India are demonstrating that it is possible to quickly and effectively integrate services for children affected by HIV/AIDS (CAA) into established community-based organizations. More than 27,000 children and families affected by HIV/AIDS in Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh are benefiting from these programs, which are funded through the Abbott Laboratories Fund's Step Forward program and implemented in collaboration with the India HIV/AIDS Alliance (Alliance India). The number of children in India orphaned by AIDS is approaching two million, according to United Nations estimates.

“We are facing potentially the largest number of children affected by HIV/AIDS of any country in the world,” said Dr. Balwant Singh, director, Alliance India. “Thus, community-based programs that address the needs of these children are of paramount importance for India.”

Step Forward has supported Alliance India since 2001 to expand and intensify programs supporting community action on HIV/AIDS. These programs include support for medical care and treatment, nutrition, psychosocial support, education, prevention of HIV, income generation, social welfare and programs to reduce stigma and discrimination. The Abbott Laboratories Fund has contributed more than \$2.6 million since the program's inception.

“Step Forward has been effective in India because our partners have adopted a unique approach in which available resources are maximized,” said Jeff Richardson, executive director, Step Forward. “By tapping into existing organizations, rather than building new structures, Alliance India was able to move quickly in setting up their programs because the partners they selected had outstanding reputations and deep knowledge about their communities' needs and culture.”

Alliance India provides technical, programmatic and financial support to three leading partners: Vasavya Mahila Mandali (VMM), Palmyrah Workers Development Society and MAMTA. In turn, these lead partners work with 37 implementing NGOs in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and New Delhi to ensure effective, community-based care and support of children affected by AIDS and their families. This strategy in which established NGOs mentor smaller NGOs has resulted in the creation of a self-sustaining, community-based network. This model, which has been pioneered by Alliance India, may help other developing countries scale up services to meet the growing needs of children and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

The NGO network has pioneered unique, child-centered programs that have provided services to more than 27,000 individuals, including more than 5,500 children receiving educational support in the form of fees, uniforms and school supplies and more than 1,800 families being supported through various income generation activities.

Some examples of the Step Forward-supported programs pioneering new approaches to manage the growing number of children and families impacted by HIV/AIDS include:

Community Foster Care: Fostering of non-related children is rare throughout India and discrimination against CAA makes the prospect of fostering them less likely. Several NGOs in Andhra Pradesh have developed innovative activities to encourage fostering of children orphaned by AIDS, resulting in more than 100 orphans being adopted by their communities since 2002.

Children's Clubs: Several NGOs have set up support groups and clubs for CAA. VMM uses these clubs to collect information from children about their perceptions, needs and concerns. Children's clubs support CAA in coping with difficulties and offer peer-based counseling. Seventy-six clubs have now been set up in communities in the three states.

Community-Based Organizations for Street Children: VMM has set up five community-based organizations for street children that enable them to protect themselves against exploitation and help them to establish income-generating projects to reduce their dependency on street life and crime. This has been particularly effective in Vijayawada, where there are an estimated 45,000 street children, of whom, approximately 30,000 are orphans.

About Alliance India

Alliance India is part of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. The Alliance supports care, prevention and other initiatives to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS. Strategic priorities include home- and community-based care and support, CAA, positive and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA), focused prevention with key population groups, and community mobilization to facilitate ownership and sustainability of HIV/AIDS efforts. With offices in Delhi and Hyderabad, Alliance India and its 64 partners work in support of the National AIDS Control Programme in India and in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), the State AIDS Control Societies and other key stakeholders. For more information about the Alliance please visit www.aidsalliance.org.

About Step Forward and the Abbott Laboratories Fund

The Abbott Laboratories Fund's Step Forward program helps support orphans and children made vulnerable due to HIV/AIDS in India, Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Romania by contributing grants, product donations and the expertise of Abbott volunteers. Step Forward addresses specific community needs in four interrelated areas: health care services and infrastructure; voluntary HIV counseling and testing; education; and basic community needs, such as clean water. Step Forward works closely with governments and NGOs. For more information, please visit www.stepforwardforchildren.org.

The Abbott Laboratories Fund is a not-for-profit, philanthropic corporation established by Abbott Laboratories, a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals and medical products, including nutritionals, devices and diagnostics. The Fund provides support through cash grants to recipients with interests consistent with Abbott's basic philanthropic policies and objectives.

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