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PRESS RELEASE

Twinning Center Opens Meeting of Social Work Partners Addressing Care for Orphans, Vulnerable Populations

PEPFAR-supported Partnerships in Tanzania, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Nigeria Are Building Capacity to Assist Children, Families Affected by HIV

WASHINGTON, DC, and DAR es SALAAM, TANZANIA, August 5, 2009 — HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partners whose focus is improving care and support for orphans and other vulnerable populations in Botswana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania kicked off a strategic development meeting today in Dar es Salaam. In addition to local partners and their US counterparts, representatives from Tanzania's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, local NGOs involved in Para-Social Worker training efforts, HRSA, USAID-Tanzania, CDC-Tanzania, and Twinning Center staff are also participating in the event.

Partners in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania have developed and are implementing training programs designed to give community-based professionals and volunteer caregivers are armed with key social work skills that can aid in their efforts to help children cope with illness and the loss of family members. These "Para-Social Workers" are trained community members whose role is to assess a vulnerable child's needs and strengths then create a care plan that helps ensure his or her physical, emotional, and developmental needs are met, linking the child to existing services and support.

In Tanzania, Twinning Center partners at the Institute of Social Work and Jane Addams College of Social Work (University of Illinois-Chicago) have already trained more than 900 community caregivers, 75 District Social Workers, 75 Para-Social Worker Supervisors, and 40 Master Trainers. Addis Ababa University School of Social Work — which is partnering with the Tanzania Institute of Social Work and Jane Addams College of Social Work to implement the program in Ethiopia — will launch its Para-Social Worker training program July 10. In Nigeria, partners from Federal School of Social Work in Enugu and the Department of Social Work at the University of Nigeria-Nsukka are working with a consortium of US-based organizations led by Hunter College School of Social Work. They will conduct pilot trainings in Enugu on July 10 and Abuja on July 17. Partners from the Gaborone-based Marang Child Care Trust — a network that supports some 86 NGOs working with vulnerable children — hope to learn from the Para-Social Worker model and replicate it in Botswana. The work of these HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partners is made possible with the support of the American people through the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Key objectives of the three-day workshop include sharing ideas and best practices on Para-Social Work program implementation; developing a common understanding of related terminology, principles, and challenges — including workforce development, recruitment and retention, qualifications, compensation, and quality assurance; and charting a plan of action that will effectively guide future program development and expansion.

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