

## Community-based programmes deliver meaningful change

The Foundation François-Xavier Bagnoud, through its NGO of the same name (FXB), has developed community-based modules that are delivering low-cost solutions to care for families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Over the past 15 years, FXB's module has evolved into a single package of services: individual and group income-generating activities, school support, medical care and psychosocial counselling.

For 80% of families in Rwanda and Uganda – approximately 3,000 people – that have participated in the programme since 2000, the module approach has achieved meaningful change.

### Aiming towards sustainable development

FXB is driven by the conviction that the inextricable link between health and human rights is a key to sustainable development. Each module reaches 80 to 100 families, headed by HIV-positive widows, widowers or orphans, and 350 to 400 children, many in foster family situations.

The cost over the three years is about € 100,000. Modules are designed to enable beneficiaries to be financially self-sustaining within three years, at which point they are phased out and new modules are launched.

### In-kind assistance offers a rescuing hand

Social workers meet with each household to decide which income-generating activity (IGA) is most suitable, given the experience and strength of the household head. Beneficiaries have the final say in choosing their project. This sense of ownership motivates them to continue and expand their projects.

Money is not given directly to beneficiaries. FXB provides in-kind support, such as livestock, training and materials. This is a grant, as vulnerable households rarely have the resources to pay back a loan. Such in-kind assistance is a rescuing hand to those drowning in poverty and despair. The only condition is that households be self-sufficient in three years.

FXB encourages the weakest beneficiaries to form groups and create joint income-generating ventures. Eight to 10 beneficiaries in the same area receive training, in-kind assistance or start-up funding. Through weekly meetings, the groups manage their projects and decide how to divide and/or invest returns. Examples include pig breeding, vegetable growing and artisan crafts.

### Supporting schools

Primary education in Rwanda and Uganda is universal and free. However, many schools cannot operate on the minimal budget provided by the government. After a household enrolls in a module, FXB pays school fees for all of the children.

FXB gives in-kind contributions directly to the school. As IGAs expand and savings accumulate, families begin contributing to the cost. By the end of the three-year programme, households pay the full cost of tuition and school materials.

### Medical care is critical

Guardians living with HIV/AIDS desperately need treatment for opportunistic infections so they can continue supporting their families.



Association François-Xavier Bagnoud

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**Being a leading innovator and pioneer in the fight against HIV/AIDS, FXB works with the conviction that the inextricable link between health and human rights is a key to sustainable development. The mission of FXB is to fight AIDS and support the world's orphans and vulnerable children left in the wake of the AIDS pandemic by advocating for their needs and by providing direct support to families and communities that care for them. The strategies implemented by FXB in the field vary according to the social, cultural, economic and political scenarios present in these countries and particular locales where the programmes are implemented. From prevention and treatment to basic education, nutrition support and community development, all strategies are aimed at reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS and advocating for those who have neither the voice nor the power to affect change: namely the children, especially all orphans and vulnerable children. FXB seeks to identify and apply practical solutions to the social, economic and health problems caused by the AIDS pandemic.**

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FXB works through a local clinic to pay for primary-care costs for participating households. FXB social workers and counsellors advise individuals to get tested regularly and to monitor their HIV/AIDS status and apply for treatment.

Beneficiaries receive free ARV treatment paid for by governments or other organisations. Their ownership in the programme instills a sense of responsibility, making them ideal candidates for successful adherence to ARV treatment.

### Counselling involves the community

Social workers and counsellors work closely with household heads and children, advising on everything from sexual health to feelings of isolation from the community. Because most of FXB field staff are women, beneficiaries – 98% women – feel more confident to ask questions about HIV prevention and family planning.

Counselling sessions reach youth during and after school. Groups of teenagers meet regularly in FXB offices. FXB engages the wider community in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and caring for affected families. FXB Rwanda uses anti-AIDS club meetings where HIV-positive and HIV-negative individuals meet to provide information about HIV/AIDS and to prevent and fight stigmatisation.

### Meaningful change

After 15 years of work, community assessments, interviews and field tests, the concept of FXB's modules has evolved. However, it is constantly being improved and adapted. This standardised and scaled-up service package cuts costs down to about € 200 per child, including overhead and all other expenses.

The module approach delivers meaningful change. FXB operates 10 modules, five in Rwanda and five in Uganda. The goal is to multiply the number of modules to serve as many families as possible. Hundreds are on waiting lists.