

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹



We have a unique presence and reach within communities. We have unique structures and programmes that are already in place. We are available. We are reliable. And we are sustainable. We were there long before AIDS came and we will still be there when AIDS goes away.²

1. BACKGROUND

While most partners in providing health care in sub-Saharan Africa agree that religious entities play an important role in providing health services, there is little comprehensive data about the scope and scale of their contribution, beyond data held by particular religious entities about their own health related work. In addition not much is known, beyond claims and often repeated statements, about the ways in which such health care is different from services provided in the public health system.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of this study was to provide a description of the contribution of faith based organisations (FBOs), institutions, and networks to the health of vulnerable populations in resource-poor areas of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA); and to identify key areas for investment that would accelerate, scale up and sustain access to effective services, and/or encourage policy and resource advocacy among and in African countries.

There were two main parts to the objectives:

- 1) To give an *overview for SSA* of the coverage, role, and core health related activities of religious entities, including major networks, vis a vis public and other private sector health services delivery, and their relationship to government and to each other.
- 2) To give more detailed information for three country case studies in Mali, Uganda and Zambia:
 - a) describing the capacity of faith based organisations to deliver health services and impact on health behaviour; the financial and/or material support they receive and how they are perceived by stakeholders;
 - b) characterizing key faith based networks and describing how they work;
 - c) describing *how* faith based organisations collaborate with each other and with governments.

¹ Schmid B, Thomas E, Olivier J and Cochrane JR. 2008. *The contribution of religious entities to health in sub-Saharan Africa*. Study funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Unpublished report. ARHAP.

² Canon Gideon Byamugisha on the contribution faith based organisations can make in responding to HIV and AIDS in: WHO, "Faith-based groups: Vital partners in the battle against AIDS". *The "3 x 5" Target Newsletter*, July/August 2004. P3. http://www.who.int/3by5/mediacentre/en/3by5newsletter_0204.pdf