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## **DAI CONDUCTS REVIEW OF ABBOTT LABORATORIES PROGRAM FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

*-- Key Learnings Shared at the XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok --*

Bangkok, Thailand, July 12, 2004 — Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), an international economic development firm, announced that it has completed a comprehensive review of the Abbott Laboratories Fund initiative *Step Forward*, a program to improve the lives of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) affected by HIV/AIDS in developing countries.

“Independent and thorough evaluations of corporate philanthropy efforts are essential to ensuring that the company is meeting its chosen objectives,” said Joan Parker, the team leader for this review and Senior Vice President for Organizational Learning at DAI. “We found that the Step Forward initiative set a new standard for truly child-centered programs, engaging children in planning, service delivery and advocacy.”

Abbott engaged DAI to review the value of the Step Forward program to date and help set criteria for the program moving forward.

DAI worked with a team of outside experts and identified standards for what is state-of-the-art in their respective fields, such as antiretroviral treatment or voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), prior to undertaking the review. The DAI team found that in many cases Step Forward exceeded these standards. In undertaking the review of each program, the DAI team was granted full access to all program participants, including the teams that were implementing the programs locally.

“Identifying key learnings will be of value not only to Abbott, but to other organizations implementing OVC programs,” said Jeff Richardson, Executive Director of Abbott Laboratories Fund’s Step Forward program. “DAI’s review and feedback will be useful in helping Abbott identify areas where we can continue to make a unique contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS.”

The Step Forward program addresses specific community needs through four critical activities: education, health services and infrastructure, VCT, and the provision of basic needs. In 2003, the Step Forward program provided services to more than 140,000 OVC in Tanzania, India, Romania and Burkina Faso. These programs are being implemented through three international partners – Axios, Baylor College of Medicine and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance – as well as local governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

“What we found most inspiring was the amount of ownership that was experienced by the local partners,” said Parker. “The flexibility and structure of the funding allowed them to make decisions that would ensure that the programs had maximum impact in the communities they were serving.”

***Key Report Findings:***

- Working with the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative and the Romanian government in Constanta, Romania, the Step Forward program created a comprehensive state-of-the-art HIV clinic and produced a reduction in pediatric AIDS mortality rates (down from 15% to 3%). This model demonstrates that pediatric treatment in a resource-limited setting is possible. This model is being replicated in other countries including Botswana and Uganda, and soon in Mexico.
- The Step Forward program in India has mobilized existing civil society organizations in successful efforts to reduce the stigma of HIV/AIDS and increase support and care for OVC. The efforts have demonstrated that foster care, for example, is possible when communities develop culturally sensitive responses that both overcome stigma and address the economic concerns around caring for a foster child. The work has produced models for community response that have proved cost-effective, sustainable and self-replicating.
- Another state-of-the-art program cited in the report was the greater and easier access to VCT that was accomplished by integrating and decentralizing VCT services into local health facilities in Tanzania and Burkina Faso. “This localization and integration of services removed tremendous barriers to many who would otherwise not seek testing,” said Parker. “It also linked those tested directly with care services within the health system. A key to the success of the programs was the partnership established with national and local governments.”
- Step Forward initiatives excelled in establishing child-centered programs for the support of OVC. “Not only did the initiatives stay focused on direct assistance to children,” said Parker, “they went much further, involving children themselves in planning, service delivery and advocacy.”

- In some programs, the DAI team cited the ability to monitor program impact as a challenge. “In a few cases, we found that local partners had difficulty capturing and documenting results,” said Parker. “We also noted that some of the programs had not anticipated their success and the subsequent need to scale-up and sustain or grow funding to meet demand.”

“DAI reviewed the work of Step Forward in light of Abbott’s goal of developing innovative and replicable models that could make an enduring impact,” said Parker. “The real value of a review like this is in helping to identify those strengths to build upon in the years to come.”

## **ABOUT DAI**

DAI is an international consulting firm founded in 1970 to help business, government and civil society around the world solve economic development problems. Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, the company employs more than 1,100 people worldwide and maintains a global network of approximately 16,000 individual associates and 150 institutional collaborators.