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NEW YORK, -- Orphan Support Africa received a \$2,124,992 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help local community groups that provide critical care to some of the world's most vulnerable children in Malawi and southern Tanzania.

Especially in the last decade, both countries have experienced sharp increases in the number of orphans: Malawi will soon shoulder caring for the health and psychosocial needs of over one million orphans, nearly half of whom have been orphaned as a direct result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Michael Hill, executive director of Orphan Support Africa, called the three-year grant a unique opportunity to fortify local community groups' abilities to respond to the devastating effects of HIV-AIDS on some of its youngest victims.

"Community-based organizations are the first line of care for orphans and a primary defense against the further spread of this disease," said Hill. "Our approach seeks to significantly strengthen community responses to those most affected by this pandemic."

"It's tragic that millions of children in Sub-Saharan Africa have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS," said Dr. Nicholas Hellmann, director of HIV, TB and Reproductive Health at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Orphan Support Africa will help local communities ensure that these vulnerable children receive the care and support they deserve."

Orphan Support Africa (OSA) will use the grant to support existing community programs that offer comprehensive care to children, providing food, shelter, education, healthcare, recreation and psychosocial support. OSA will work with groups that demonstrate strong leadership and vision, sound fiscal management and long-term plans to meet the complete needs of orphans and other vulnerable children.

Each community-based organization (CBO) partnering with OSA will 'adopt', after two years, a neighboring CBO, creating a multiplier effect that will allow groups to share expertise, skills and access to resources. This will foster a stronger network of organizations dedicated to saving and improving the lives of Africa's youngest generation, eventually reducing the cost of caring for an orphan while improving the quality of care.

Each of the 20 OSA-partnered CBOs will care for between 500 and 3,000 children. Each of those 20 organizations will adopt its own CBO partner, lifting the optimal number of supported orphans and vulnerable children, at the conclusion of the three-year grant, to more than 40,000.

Additionally, the OSA program will be evaluated in real-time by a partnership with the Tulane University Orphans Studies Program (TOSP). TOSP will measure the impact of CBO services on vulnerable children and the effectiveness of various components of Orphan Support Africa's approach. These results will then be broadly disseminated to heighten awareness and quality of care for vulnerable children, as well as effect the reduction of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Through OSA's existing and expanding network of affiliates working in east Africa with OVC, best practices regarding OVC care and HIV prevention, once documented and shared, can lead to direct and measurable improvements in both areas. Real-time assessment is a unique tool that will keep the OSA model agile and able to address the fluctuating needs of community groups.

The goal of OSA is self-sufficiency for each CBO through development of low-cost services, diversification of income sources and enhancement of revenue through income-generating activities.

Orphan Support Africa is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that fosters effective and sustainable programs in Africa that improves the protection and well-being of orphans and vulnerable children, and nurtures these children to become self-reliant adults. OSA is based at 2095 West Broadway, Suite 302, NY, NY 10023 and in Malawi at PO Box 119 Zomba, Malawi. For more information, please visit www.orphansupportafrica.org, email info@orphansupportafrica.org, or call: NY, 212-595-0094/ 800-756-2055; Malawi , 011-265-1-524-185.