

# EWIEPID

Photo: Caroline Turyatemba



Photos: Monique Boivin

*Above: Vice Chairperson of EWIEPID Anyolitho Sally moves ahead to face the challenges of the future with determination.*

*Left: A child supported by EWIEPID.*

**The AIM-funded survey found 1,736 orphans in the area—four times higher than the 420 that EWIEPID members thought.**

Yellow and blue maps festoon the office walls of EWIEPID, the Erussi Women Initiative to Eliminate Poverty, Ignorance and Disease. The maps, 82 in all, look decorative, but they serve a serious purpose. Each map depicts one village in Erussi sub-county, in the Nebbi district of northwestern Uganda. Symbols denote the villages' physical and demographic characteristics: trees, water sources, houses, whether a household is headed by a male or female, and if an orphan or vulnerable child is living there.

The EWIEPID office, which is located in the town of Nebbi, is home base for an exhaustive mapping effort. Founded in 1998 by a small group of rural women, EWIEPID strives to better the lives of people affected by HIV/AIDS. The seven-year grassroots mapping project has mobilized more than 200 villagers as data collectors and volunteer counselors. It has evolved into a contin-

uing campaign in the 82 villages to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and improve the care and feeding of orphans and vulnerable children.

The initiative was born of a cautious instinct. EWIEPID's founders did not want to leap into a HIV/AIDS-related program before they systematically determined the most critical needs of their community. So they surveyed 238 people, asking questions and translating the answers into a map. That yielded some tentative answers but only sparse information about the circumstances of orphans and vulnerable children.

Recently, with AIM assistance, EWIEPID has been able to undertake a far more comprehensive data-collecting and mapping survey. The community-based organization recruited 41 residents in Erussi and trained them in data collection. The trainees formed two-



*EWIEPID Chairperson Omega Rose demonstrates the usefulness of community mapping as a method for identifying needs and strategizing about how to provide services to the surrounding villages.*

person teams, which mapped each of four villages. Going from household to household—the number per village typically ranged from 40 to 100—the surveyors asked how many orphans and vulnerable children lived in each one.

The pre-survey estimate of 420 as the number of children orphaned, including those made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, proved to be far too low. In 2004 they found that the count was more than four times higher in Russi sub-county: 1,736.

One of EWEIPID's activities was to furnish school uniforms to the children, but they abandoned the project when they recognized that it was creating a climate of dependency among their guardians. It would be better, EWEIPID decided, to develop the guardians' potential to help the children. In that spirit, the organization's volunteers have trained about 440 guardians in counseling methods and income-generating activities.

Another thrust of the volunteers' work has been raising the villagers' awareness of HIV/AIDS and promoting testing for it. With

<b>AIM'S ROLE</b>	<b>Provided funding, technical assistance, and capacity building</b>
<b>TOTAL GRANT</b>	<b>Ush 45,128,700</b>
<b>CONTRACT PERIOD</b>	<b>June 2003 to December 2005</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY AIM</b>	<b>Orphans and vulnerable children Home-based care Targeted population prevention</b>

its 164 volunteers in 82 villages, EWIEPID has a network in place to disseminate information, provide counseling, and influence a sub-counties behavior as it related to HIV/AIDS, the organization's leaders say.

They have embarked on a search for funds to continue their activities since the contract with AIM ended in December 2005. They are determined to continue as many of their activities as possible, says the group's chairperson, Omega Rose. "We are going to work very hard," she says. "We will scale down and stay alive until more funding comes along." ■