

### Meeting the Needs of Orphans through Psychosocial Services.

Swaziland is one of the countries that have been hit hardest by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The prevalence rate is currently 42% of a population of one million. It is projected that orphans and vulnerable children will reach an alarming 120,000 by the year 2010. The needs of children have not been given a high priority and have been overlooked in the past by service providers. Children have not been adequately prepared to cope with the loss of a parent. Skillshare International has strengthened its partnerships with psychosocial support organisations by placing a development worker, funded by our PPA with DFID, as a Psychosocial Adviser with SHAPE to support the establishment of a psychosocial unit.

SHAPE is an organisation that aims to educate young people about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health and population issues. Prior to the placement of Pernille Hansen, the Psychosocial Adviser, SHAPE did not have a programme on psychosocial support. The development worker has strengthened the capacity of SHAPE to undertake psychosocial support programmes; raise awareness on the needs of orphans and vulnerable children; develop strategies and implement psychosocial support programme for SHAPE and also fundraise for psychosocial activities.



**Pernille with her counterpart,  
Tsini Mkhashwa, a Psychosocial  
Support Assistant**

To date, Pernille has:

- Successfully established a psychosocial programme within SHAPE;
- Reviewed training manuals to adapt child and youth centred approaches that enable teachers, parents and youth to apply coping strategies for survival and appropriate care and social development;
- Secured funding from PACT – USAID (\$300,000.00) to pilot a project targeting 12 schools and communities on psychosocial support.

The placement of a Psychosocial Adviser has also strengthened networks of organisations working in the sector. They now have a strong network and share their experiences on how to deal with difficult situations. As Pernille is a qualified psychologist, other partner organisations refer patients to her for individual counselling. With the growing number of patients requiring a one-to-one service, Pernille has worked with the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) to start a project of mapping out all mental health professionals in the country; they are currently establishing an association of mental health professionals in Swaziland. Pernille also sits on the National Technical Advisory Committee on Psychosocial Support of Swaziland. Skillshare International has recognised the need to support initiatives that aim to reduce and manage the impact of HIV.