

Glen Williams (Series Editor and founder of Strategies for Hope)

Introduction: Glen Williams came to England in 1979, from Australia, to work for Oxfam. In 1989 he and his wife Alison started the Strategies for Hope series, with support from ActionAid, World in Need, DfID and NORAD. Working from an office in the loft of their home in East Oxford, they have been at the centre of Strategies for Hope for the past 20 years. Over one million copies of Strategies for Hope books and films have been produced and distributed so far. During the first 10 years of the project, Glen wrote or co-authored several Strategies for Hope books, but since 2000 his roles have been mainly those of editor, video producer, marketing and distribution manager and fundraiser. **Tony Williamson, Trustee, Strategies for Hope.**

Glen Williams: Thanks very much Tony, and good evening friends. I really can say friends because when I look around I recognise almost everyone here.

In 1989, when I first visited Zambia, I had no idea that my trip would be the start of something called 'Strategies for Hope'. ActionAid had asked me to write a small book about a home-based care programme for people living with HIV. The programme was run by a Salvation Army Hospital, located in a small place called Chikankata, in southern Zambia. It was in fact the first rural, home-based care programme for people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa.

The originator of that programme, Dr Ian Campbell - who is here with us this evening - was my first mentor in HIV care, support and prevention. And it was at Chikankata that the idea of the Strategies for Hope series was born. I clearly remember a conversation with Ian one evening, when we decided that, when I returned to the U.K., I would suggest to ActionAid a series of small books and videos about community-based responses to HIV, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

The title of the series, Strategies for Hope, emerged from a trip which Ian and I made to Lusaka, where we visited Dr Eric van Praag from the World Health Organization. Eric described how WHO had created an enormous problem for itself by adopting as the logo for its Global Programme on AIDS a drawing of a heart with a skull and crossbones in the centre. He was enormously embarrassed by this unfortunate image, and I can clearly remember him saying to us, with great urgency in his voice: "We want to move away from fear. We want to move towards hope."

After that meeting, I mulled over Eric's words, and came to two decisions. First, the title of the book about Chikankata's home-based care programme would be 'From Fear to Hope', and second, the title of the new series – if we could get funding for it - would be 'Strategies for Hope'.

While I was in Zambia, another Oxford-based writer, Janie Hampton, was in Uganda, documenting the work of another pioneering HIV programme – also for ActionAid. This was The AIDS Support Organisation - TASO - the first community-based HIV programme in East Africa. TASO was founded in 1987 by a remarkable Ugandan woman, Noerine Kaleeba, and a small group of friends, including Colin Williams – ActionAid's country director for Uganda. ActionAid had given TASO its first financial support. Janie's booklet, 'TASO: living positively with AIDS', was published as no. 2 in the Strategies for Hope series, and TASO grew rapidly into one of the largest and most influential community-based HIV programmes in Africa.

In January 1990, I visited Uganda with film director Jamey Hartzel - who is also here this evening - to start work on a film about TASO, which Jamey completed a few months later. Jamey's company, Small World, produced two more films for us - 'The Orphan Generation'

and the 'Stepping Stones' workshop film. I'm delighted to say that the author of the 'Stepping Stones' training manual, Alice Welbourn, is also here with us this evening.

None of this work would have been possible without financial support, initially from five main sources: ActionAid, World in Need, DFID (called the ODA at the time), the Norwegian Government and the World Health Organization. Four ActionAid staff from those early days are here this evening - Andrew Bunbury, Roger Ing, Nigel Padfield and Bob Reitemeier. We'll always be profoundly grateful for the confidence and trust which they placed in us.

Two years ago, SFH passed a significant milestone: the production of over 1 million copies of our books, training manuals and films. Many different organisations have helped to make this possible: first, our donors but also our distributors and co-publishers. Crucial to all our work has been the role of our main distributor, Teaching-aids at Low Cost (TALC). I'm delighted to say that two of our colleagues from TALC are here this evening.

Also here with us are three colleagues from Parchment Printers, who have printed hundreds of thousands of copies of our books during the past 20 years. Profile Video, who have made thousands of copies of our films, are also here.

Other partners – mostly in Africa, Asia and Latin America - have also made outstanding contributions to Strategies for Hope. In Indonesia, Project Concern International has produced and distributed the Indonesian edition of the 'Stepping Stones' training manual. In Latin America, Plan has produced and distributed the Spanish edition of 'Stepping Stones'. And in India, ActionAid distributes the 'Stepping Stones' manual in English and five local languages. The Christian Council of Ghana has produced and distributed 8,500 copies of our film, 'What can I do?', about the life and work of Canon Gideon Byamugisha from Uganda. And in Mozambique, the Christian AIDS Network has distributed 3,000 copies of 'What can I do?', in Portuguese and 500 each in three local languages.

Strategies for Hope has no religious affiliations and we don't promote any religious faith in our materials. From the outset, though, we've taken the view that faith communities and faith-based organisations have an absolutely crucial role to play in tackling problems such as HIV-related stigma, shame, denial and discrimination. These are fundamental problems which contribute to the spread of HIV and exacerbate the impact of the AIDS epidemic.

We've therefore developed alliances with faith-based organisations such as Catholic AIDS Action in Namibia, Tabernacle Sifa in the DRC, the Christian Literature Fund in South Africa, and numerous church hospitals and training centres throughout sub-Saharan Africa. On an international level, our partnerships with the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS initiative in Africa are strategically very important.

In the early days, we found it fairly easy to mobilise funds to produce and distribute our materials. Sadly, that is no longer the case. There are now many different organisations producing information and training materials on HIV, gender and related issues – often competing with one another for funds. We believe that our materials, which are produced in collaboration with NGOs and faith-based organisations in developing countries, are unique and valuable. Positive feedback from many users of our materials bears this out. But we still find it extremely difficult to produce and distribute sufficient quantities of our books and films, especially in languages other than English.

We are therefore extremely grateful to the donor organisations who have supported our work during the past 10 years, while funding from government and other official sources has dried up. Particularly important have been church-based organisations: ICCO and Kerk in Actie in the Netherlands; CAFOD, Christian Aid and Meal-a-Day in the U.K.; EHAIA and the Lutheran

World Federation in Switzerland; and Misereor, DIFAEM and missio in Germany. In addition, the Maurice and Hilda Laing Charitable Trust has provided valuable support. Most of these organisations, I'm very pleased to say, are represented here this evening.

Also with us is a former student at Oxford University, Lim Siyin, who last year became the first person to conduct a sponsored event for SFH: she chose to climb a snow-covered, 6,000 metre-high mountain in the Himalayas, and raised over £3,000 by doing so.

There are many other people here this evening who have assisted us in so many different ways, but time doesn't permit me to mention all of you. But I must mention Susan Erb and John Twinn, who worked with us for several years. And I particularly want to thank our trustees - Karima Brooke, James Rowland, Peter Stalker, John Whitley and Tony Williamson. You've given us countless hours of your time to guide and support our work, and we are deeply grateful to you.

Finally, what have we learned from the past 20 years of involvement in the international struggle against AIDS? I'd like to mention just two things: first, that people living with HIV are part of the solution, not part of the problem, of HIV and AIDS. In the past twenty years the people who have impressed me most, and from whom I've learned so much, have been people living with HIV. Many of them feature in our films and our books. Some, such as Alice Welbourn and Gideon Byamugisha, have themselves produced SFH materials. They've been my teachers and mentors, and I am profoundly grateful to them.

Second, it's obvious that huge resources - money, drugs, health care systems, information materials and training facilities – are needed in the global struggle against AIDS. But just as important – perhaps even more so – is the human resource of **HOPE** - the belief that the status quo is **not** inevitable, that ordinary people are capable of achieving **extraordinary** things, and that the human spirit is an unquenchable source of **creativity**, of **courage** and of **determination** to succeed, no matter how daunting the challenges might seem to be.

Thank you all very much for being with us this evening, and for helping us to mark our 20th anniversary.