

FACTS & FIGURES

Almost 50 percent of orphans are adolescents; 12 percent are younger than age five.

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Recent studies show that girls are most vulnerable, especially when the mother is dead or absent.

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Less than 10 percent of children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS receive some kind of public support.

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Orphans are more likely to be fostered by poorer households; household food insecurity increases as the number of orphans increase.

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In Zambia, between 30 and 40 percent of orphans do not attend school.

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A 2007 study in Malawi showed that enrolment increased by 40 percent in one school where OVC take-home rations were introduced and decreased by 37 percent in a school where the programme was suspended.

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Every day, 1,400 children under 15 die of AIDS-related illnesses and more than 6,000 young people aged 15-24 are newly infected with HIV.

S O U R C E S:
Statements and statistics reflect the most reliable information currently available from the United Nations family of agencies, academic sources and partners in the international aid community.

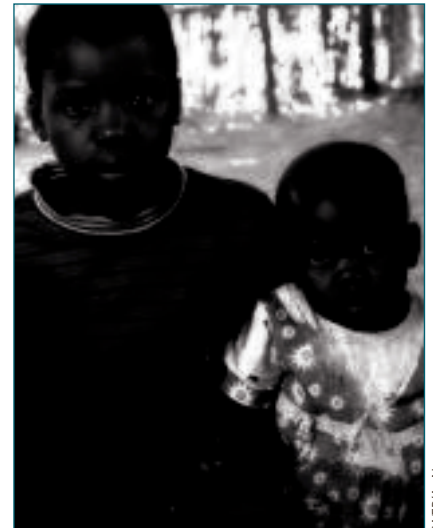
HIV/AIDS & Children

BRINGING HOPE TO A GENERATION

Orphans — An Expanding Crisis

By this time tomorrow, over 8,000 people will have died of AIDS, many of them leaving children behind. Fifteen million children have already lost one or both of their parents to the disease. In some of the worst hit countries, more than 15 percent of all children are orphans. By 2010, 18 million children will be orphans due to AIDS.

In the developing world, young parents have been particularly hard hit by the HIV epidemic. Those who die leave their children in an uncertain world where survival – let alone prosperity – can be an uphill battle.



WFP/PA. Nusca

The Parental Gap

Studies show that children from households affected by AIDS are more likely to be malnourished, drop out of school, and have limited access to health and social services. Orphans are more prone to exploitation and abuse. Extended families have assumed responsibility for more than 90 percent of orphaned children, with most living in households headed by a grandparent. For example, 62 percent of all orphans in Zimbabwe are living with grandparents. Although keeping children in a family setting is ideal, in many cases, the financial strain and the additional burden of more hungry children can upset a household's tenuous food security, placing everyone at risk.

Street Children and Child-headed Households

Orphans or children from households affected by AIDS are among the first to drop out of school either to help with childcare and other chores or to search for work and food. In extreme cases, these children are pushed onto the streets to fend for themselves. Street children, particularly girls, are subject to violence and exploitation at the hands of older children and adults. Some children who have lost both parents opt to stay together to protect family property and to avoid the trauma of separation from their siblings. These child-headed households live on the edge, struggling to find the food, clothing, and shelter needed to make it to the next day.

Other Vulnerable Children

Orphans are not the only vulnerable children. Every year an estimated 300,000 children who are infected with HIV die before their fifth birthday. And older children who are HIV-positive are unlikely to see their 35th birthday. The children of poor families where one or more people are HIV-positive are also at risk. When an HIV-positive parent falls sick his or her ability to work and earn an income is reduced. Children leave school to help care for the sick adult or to earn money by any means available. This can mean being forced into activities such as survival sex – the trading of sex for food or money – that put them at even greater risk of contracting HIV. For orphans and other vulnerable children, food is one of the most immediate and urgent needs. WFP provides nutritious food to address the present hunger and future food security of children through education and livelihood support programmes.



WFP/J. Giambone

School Feeding

WFP has school feeding programmes in 20 of the 25 countries most affected by HIV/AIDS. So far, five million schoolchildren in these countries have been assisted. Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and one of the most powerful weapons in the fight against HIV/AIDS. By sponsoring school feeding programmes in high prevalence areas, WFP attracts orphans and vulnerable children to school. Education empowers poor children, especially girls, raising their status in their families and societies and giving them an opportunity to take control of their lives. It also delays sexual activity among girls. In addition, HIV awareness and prevention education at school feeding sites help children learn to protect themselves from infection.

Take-home Rations

It is important to assist families before children become orphans. Experience shows that nutritious take-home rations can help HIV-positive parents send their children to school and keep orphans in nurturing family settings. For example, WFP provides take-home rations to school children from food insecure households in Kenya, where a family member is on anti-retroviral treatment.

Securing the Future

For some orphans and vulnerable children, especially older children who are caring for their younger siblings, traditional education programmes are unworkable. They need to be supported at this critical stage and develop vocational skills to secure their future. Flexible food-for-work and food-for-training programmes provide options that help older children develop livelihood skills while keeping their brothers and sisters fed, clothed, and in school.

The new approach to social protection has gained prominence as an effective tool to address the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children. Food transfers (school feeding and take-home rations) form an integral part of a social protection package for children in high prevalence countries. Such programmes not only reduce hunger but also address micro-nutrient needs through the provision of fortified foods. Food provided through schools and vocational training activities ensure that children get education or learn a long life skill.

WFP in the Field

In **Tanzania**, WFP and its partners provide family take-home-rations to orphans and vulnerable children who attend primary schools, vocational and life skills training. These activities enable children to learn skills that will help them earn a living without risking their health. Family rations boost household food security and help keep children affected by HIV and AIDS with their families.

In **Zimbabwe**, WFP and its NGO partner, help ensure that the nutritional needs of orphans are met. In addition, children at school are trained in HIV/AIDS awareness and life skills.

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Case Study: Supporting Orphans in Kenya

The western region of Kenya, including the Busia district, has one of the highest adult HIV prevalence rates, coupled with widespread poverty. Not surprisingly, it also has the highest number of orphans. When he was 16 years old, Vincent dropped out of school to care for his two brothers and sister after his parents died of AIDS. The two younger boys are in seventh grade and Vincent's little sister attends third grade. The four orphans have managed to stay together although they have no permanent home. A local NGO gave the younger children school uniforms, but Vincent still cannot earn enough to pay his own secondary school fees. The WFP food aid that the children receive has made it possible for the three younger children to stay in school and even plant some crops on their small piece of land, instead of scavenging for food.



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