



# HIV/AIDS Today

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## Orphans and Vulnerable Children

This week's HIV/AIDS Today will focus on children who are orphaned or otherwise made vulnerable by the AIDS epidemic.

### HIV/AIDS MORTALITY AND ORPHANS

In 2005, there were more than 15 million children living worldwide who had lost one or both parents to AIDS.<sup>i</sup> More than 12 million of these children were living in sub-Saharan Africa, where 9% of all children have lost at least one parent due to AIDS.<sup>ii</sup> From 1990 to 2001, the percentage of orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa whose parent or parents died of AIDS increased from 3.5% to over 32%.<sup>iii</sup>

### EFFECTS OF ORPHANHOOD

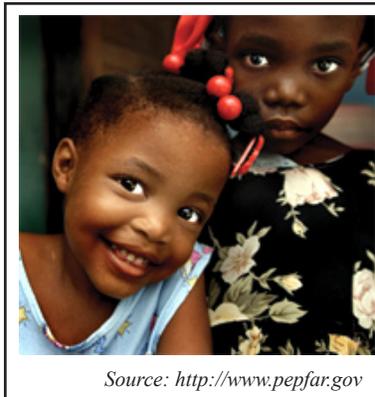
In many countries, the death of a parent or parents to HIV/AIDS has significant economic consequences for a child.

Orphaned children have reduced access to basic necessities such as shelter, food, clothing, health, and education. Orphans are also more likely to be psychologically distressed and significantly less likely to attend school than other children.<sup>iv</sup>

Children often experience significant emotional suffering beginning with a parent's progressive illness and eventual death. Orphans are often forced to adjust to a new situation with little support and face an increased

risk of exploitation and abuse.<sup>v</sup>

Vulnerable children also face emotional and financial hardships related to caring for an ill parent or other AIDS orphans, and may experience discrimination due to a family member's or their own HIV status.



Source: <http://www.pepfar.gov>

### CARE OF ORPHANS

In sub-Saharan Africa, extended families have assumed responsibility for more than 90% of orphaned children, with 20% of all households caring for one or more orphans.<sup>vi</sup> Orphans are increasingly more likely to be in female-headed households or grandparent households.<sup>vii</sup>

### DOUBLE ORPHANS

AIDS is more likely than other causes of death to create double orphans, or children who lose both parents. If one parent is infected, there is a higher probability that the other parent is or will become infected and that both will eventually die.<sup>viii</sup> Surveys show double orphans tend to be even more disadvantaged than children who have lost one parent.<sup>ix</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *Children and orphans* (online at <http://www.unaids.org/en/PolicyAndPractice/KeyPopulations/ChildAndOrphans>).

<sup>ii</sup> *Id.* Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*. (online at [http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006\\_GR\\_CH04\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2006/2006_GR_CH04_en.pdf)).

<sup>iii</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). *Fact Sheet: Children Orphaned by AIDS*. (online at [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_16313.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_16313.html)).

<sup>iv</sup> AVERT, *AIDS Orphans* (online at <http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm>).

<sup>v</sup> Jo Stein, *Sorrow makes Children of us all: A literature review on the psycho-social impact of HIV/AIDS on Children*, Center for Social Science Research Working Paper No. 47 (Oct. 2003) (online at [http://www.sahims.net/doclibrary/11\\_03/05/regional/Sorrow%20makes%20children%20of%20us%20all.pdf](http://www.sahims.net/doclibrary/11_03/05/regional/Sorrow%20makes%20children%20of%20us%20all.pdf)).

<sup>vi</sup> *Children on the Brink 2004: A joint report of new orphan estimates and a framework for action*, *supra* note <sup>ii</sup>.

<sup>vii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>viii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>ix</sup> UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2006* (2006) (online at [http://www.unicef.org/aids/files/SOWC06\\_Table4.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/aids/files/SOWC06_Table4.pdf)).