

The AIDS Orphans Crisis

15 Million AIDS Orphans Need Our Help

More than 15 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents to AIDS – equivalent to the number of people living in New York, Paris and Rome combined. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, 12 million children have been orphaned by the pandemic. Experts believe that millions more orphans remain unaccounted for in India, China and Russia. By 2010, the number of AIDS orphans worldwide is expected to climb to an estimated 20 - 25 million children.

Behind these statistics are millions of stories of human suffering. In addition to the psychological trauma of losing a parent, orphans are often subject to discrimination and are less likely to receive healthcare, education and other needed services. The situation is yet more desperate for those living on the streets or in child-headed households. Deprived of protection, education, support and love, they face malnutrition, illness and HIV infection and are easy prey to many forms of exploitation: forced labor, prostitution and child soldiering. These children, and the world they inherit, face a future of unprecedented tragedy.

The AIDS orphans crisis has a catastrophic impact on households and communities – deepening poverty and exacerbating hardship. The extended family remains the only safety net for most affected children. Households are usually overwhelmed and are often unable to meet children's most basic needs.

Few Resources Reach Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Too little attention is given to orphans and vulnerable children. Few resources are reaching the families and communities that provide the front-line response. We must bring the needs of these children to the forefront of our battle against HIV and AIDS. Specifically, governments should direct at least 10% of their overall HIV and AIDS funding to support AIDS orphans and vulnerable children.

Providing Support to Orphans is Cost Effective and Simple

With adequate funding, the world can help children orphaned by AIDS to grow up healthy and safe. We can address the challenges presented by the AIDS orphans crisis through:

- Support to families and communities that serve as the safety net for AIDS orphans.
- Access to education, health & nutrition for orphans and children affected by AIDS.
- Job training and livelihood support to give young people the skills necessary to enter the workforce and to become productive members of their community.
- Social protection laws that promote and enforce inheritance and other legal rights for orphans must be in place.
- Treatment for HIV positive children that is provided with special consideration for the physical, psychological, and social needs of a child living with HIV.

We need your help to speak out and spread the word about World AIDS Orphans Day. Your voice is their future.