

The effect of HIV on children in Africa

The HIV/AIDS epidemic combined with drought in many areas has resulted in a severe food crisis.

This has led to:

- Children's lives being threatened by high levels of malnutrition
- Families are forced to leave their homes to search for food
- Children are taken out of school to work to pay or find food
- Some children are forced into prostitution to earn money or food

The high rate of HIV/AIDS also means that there are many child-headed households. These households are particularly vulnerable to food shortages.

Statistics

- One child dies of AIDS every minute of every day
- More children have been orphaned by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else in the world
- 14 million children have been orphaned by the death of their mother or parents due to AIDS related causes

What happens to these orphans?

- They are often discriminated against and forced to fend for themselves
- They drop out of school in order to support their families
- Some are taken in by relatives

In short, because of an AIDS-weakened infrastructure, the living standards of children continue to degrade and they run a greater risk of being malnourished than children with parents to take care of them. Their access to education may also be blocked when extended families can not afford to educate all the orphans in the household. (The attached article on AIDS orphans is very informative and I have highlighted particularly useful parts)

However, all children are now more vulnerable to disease, neglect and food insecurity because of the rate at which HIV/AIDS is spreading.

HIV/AIDS and the link with poverty

An article on "The Impact of Water Supply in HIV/AIDS Transmission" (see attached file) illustrates this inextricable link. Here is a summary of the paper.

The study area was Tanzania. Women and children are having to walk long distances to fetch water for their families. Not only are they wasting the most productive hours of the day but they are also facing risky situations:

"Due to long queues, some women and children come back home late at night and are raped on the journey home. Most women and young girls questioned in the city of Dar es Salaam revealed that in various streets "rapists" wait at the tap points for women/girls coming to fetch water.

It was also learnt that some women and girls admit themselves to sexual acts when asked by men owning such water sources as a means of getting water from the source. It is said that refusing to do the act results in not being allowed to fetch water.” Safe sex is probably rarely practised under these circumstances.

How would you like me to continue with this research?

Do you want more statistics?

A more detailed look at the above points?

For what purpose do you require this information?

Do you want to know about programmes which are tackling these problems?