



CHILDREN ON THE BRINK 2004 – Fact Sheet

- In 2003, 2.9 million people died of AIDS and 4.8 million people were infected with HIV. AIDS is the leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 49.
- By end-2003, there were an estimated 143 million orphans (from all causes) ages 0-17 in 93 developing countries. More than 16 million children were orphaned in 2003 alone.
- In just two years (2001 – 2003), the global number of orphans due to AIDS increased from 11.5 million to 15 million.
- Some 5.2 million children in sub-Saharan Africa became orphans in 2003. In five countries in southern Africa, 15 per cent of all orphans lost one or both parents in that year; a similar number of children were living with chronically ill family members.
- **Double orphans:** AIDS is more likely than other causes of death to create double orphans – children who have lost both parents. Sub-Saharan Africa had almost as many double orphans in 2003 as Asia although Asia has about four times more children. Of the 7.7 million double orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, over 60 per cent lost one or both parents due to AIDS.
- **Maternal orphans:** In sub-Saharan Africa, where women have higher rates of HIV than men, maternal orphans now outnumber paternal orphans in five of the most affected countries. In the most affected countries of southern Africa, 60 per cent of orphans have lost their mother, compared with 40 per cent in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **Age structure of orphaning:** The proportion of children who are orphans generally increases with age, and older orphans outnumber younger orphans. However, almost half of orphans are below the age of 12, and 12% of orphaned children 0-18 years of age are under 5. These are the most vulnerable children.
- **Burden of care:** Extended families are caring for more than 90 per cent of orphaned children. Today, 20 per cent of households with children in southern Africa are caring for one or more orphans. Orphans are also more likely to be living in female-headed and grandparent households.
- **National responses:** At the end of 2003, only 17 countries with generalized epidemics reported having a national policy for orphans and vulnerable children to guide strategic decision-making and resource allocation.



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REGIONAL stats

- **Sub-Saharan Africa** is home to 24 of the 25 countries with the world's highest levels of HIV prevalence, and the fastest growing proportions and absolute numbers of orphaned children. Between 1990 and 2003, the number of children orphaned by AIDS increased from less than one million to an estimated 12.6 million. Nine out of 10 children living with HIV/AIDS are African, as are eight of every 10 children who have lost parents to AIDS.

Orphans are concentrated in certain countries, reflecting broader trends in HIV prevalence and population. In five countries in southern Africa, 15 per cent or more of orphans lost one or both parents in 2003, the large majority of them due to AIDS. Equally high numbers of children are now living with chronically ill family members and will become orphans this year.

Even without the impact of HIV/AIDS, sub-Saharan Africa already had the largest proportion of orphaned children. In 2003, 12.3 per cent (43 million) of all children in the region were orphans, nearly double the 7.3 per cent of children in Asia, and 6.2 per cent of children in Latin America and the Caribbean, who were orphans.

Botswana has the highest rate of orphaning (20%). In 11 of the 43 countries in the region, more than 15 per cent of children are orphans. Of these 11 countries, AIDS is the cause of parental death between 11 and 78 per cent of the time.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on mortality and the number of children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa will continue to increase through 2010. By then, more than one in five children will be orphaned in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

- **Asia has the largest absolute number of orphans.** Absolute orphan numbers are much higher in Asia, which has almost four times more children (1.2 billion) than sub-Saharan Africa (350 million). In 2003, despite lower prevalence rates, there were 87.6 million orphans due to all causes in Asia, double sub-Saharan Africa's 43.4 million.

Orphan numbers have dropped by almost 10 per cent since 1990. But in some countries with large populations (such as China, Indonesia and Pakistan) the HIV/AIDS epidemic has only recently begun. If epidemics expand, the numbers of children orphaned by AIDS could grow dramatically.

