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Orphans and vulnerable children:
HIV and AIDS reporter, September 2008

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Feature: Orphans and Vulnerable Children

The number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS is expected to exceed 25 million by 2010, with the majority living in sub-Saharan Africa, where 12 million children have lost one or both parents to the disease. HIV/AIDS has also made many more children vulnerable, by weakening communities and social support networks, schools, welfare systems and economies. With the spread of the epidemic, the number of HIV orphans is also growing in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. As HIV rates continue to rise in many such regions, the complex and interrelated problems affecting these children and their families will have an impact for many years to come.

As well as the psychological distress caused by the death of one or both parents, HIV orphans are more vulnerable to poverty, illness and abuse. They are more likely to experience increased economic hardship and a lower standard of living, due to higher spending on healthcare and loss of household income. It is often the elderly, who have less ability to generate income, who become responsible for HIV orphaned children. Although the extended family, neighbours and the local community often step in to care for these children, they can struggle to cope with this increased burden of care without outside assistance. Orphans living with extended families or in foster care are more likely to experience discrimination, exploitation and loss of inheritance, and are less likely to receive health care and education. They are also more vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual abuse through child labour or sexual exploitation. HIV orphans also have a higher risk of HIV infection, malnutrition, illness, stigma, discrimination and isolation, and can become marginalised from society. Orphans often become responsible for the care of their sibling or family members, and those living in child-headed households or on the streets are more vulnerable to exploitation or abuse.

Historically government programmes aimed towards HIV orphans have been disjointed and weak, although improvements have occurred in the last decade. The Declaration of Commitment adopted at the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) specified targets to reduce the impact of HIV on children, and in 2005 the G8 leaders committed to provide 'proper support' for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Increasingly, rights-based programming is tackling the view of HIV-affected children as passive victims of the epidemic, and reducing discrimination against them in policy and programming. More countries are introducing policies to address these children's needs, and donor support for children-focused programmes has increased. However, long-term responses that actively include children and their families are still necessary. In order for programmes to remain sustainable, they must include support for social welfare systems and education, and build on the strengths of families and communities.

Relevant documents:

Framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS

http://www.unicef.org/aids/files/Framework_English.pdf

The role of education in the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001355/135531e.pdf>

Enhanced Protection for Children Affected by AIDS

http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Enhanced_Protection_for_Children_Affected_by_AIDS.pdf

Global AIDS Report 2008. Chapter 6: Mitigating the epidemic's impact on households, communities and societies

http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2008/jc1510_2008_global_report_pp159_186_en.pdf

National plans for action for orphans and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa: Where are the youngest children?

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=39664&type=Document>

Relevant links:

UNAIDS - children and orphans

<http://www.unaids.org/en/PolicyAndPractice/KeyPopulations/ChildAndOrphans/default.asp>

World AIDS orphans day

<http://www.worldaidsorphans.org>

Avert - AIDS orphans

<http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm>

Family Health International - orphans and vulnerable children

<http://www.fhi.org/en/topics/orphans+and+vulnerable+children+topic+page.htm>

Recommended readings

1. Missing mothers: meeting the needs of children affected by AIDS

Authors: C. D'Allesandro

Publisher: Save the Children Fund, 2006

This report explores the increase in children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. As many women are dying from the AIDS pandemic, children of parents with HIV/AIDS have become more vulnerable. While several countries have vowed to provide support for children living in families with HIV or AIDS or orphaned by the pandemic, financial commitments have been limited.

In order to provide the necessary support for these children, this report calls for the following:

- focus on better care for mothers and children affected by HIV and AIDS, as well as support for orphaned children
- at least US \$6.4 billion - 12 per cent of promised AIDS funding over the next three years to be targeted at children and families as recommended by the UNAIDS Global Task Team
- support for building national social welfare systems that provide direct financial and other benefits to families
- donors to remove funding bottlenecks and ensure that communities are involved in developing and implementing national AIDS plans, so that funds can reach the most vulnerable children

free healthcare and more testing and treatment facilities.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=22852&type=Document>

2. Education and HIV/AIDS: ensuring education access for orphans and vulnerable children

Authors: World Bank; UNICEF

Publisher: United Nations Children's Fund, 2005

This training manual aims to assist key decision makers to reflect on the difficulties faced by children orphaned by AIDS and other vulnerable children, and on the different policy options available within the education system, within the government and elsewhere in general. It has been developed for the training of key stakeholders within the education sectors of World Bank client countries, NGOs and church-based groups involved with interventions to benefit AIDS orphans and vulnerable children.

The module is divided into five sections: Identifying orphans and vulnerable children (OVC); the impact of parents' HIV/AIDS related illness and death on their children's home life; impact on schooling; what has been done to improve OVC access to education; key emerging issues and the way forward.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=18942&type=Document>

3. More than words? Action for orphans and vulnerable children in Africa: monitoring progress towards the UN declaration of commitment on HIV/AIDS

Authors: H. Young

Publisher: World Vision, 2005

This paper, from World Vision, examines how far the rights and needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) are being met in four of the worst AIDS affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia. It finds that children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS are most likely to be missing out in terms of education, health, nutrition and other basic needs. The authors argue that care and support for OVCs must be considered an integral part of national and international responses to the AIDS crisis.

The authors call on governments to fully implement articles 65 -68 of the 2001 UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS to ensure special assistance for children orphaned and affected by HIV and AIDS. They also call for governments to produce and fund National Plans of Action for OVCs in all highly affected countries, focusing specifically on education, health, nutrition, psychosocial support, community capacity and protection issues. The authors call on international institutions to support the development of government responses to OVCs. Other recommendations include: accelerating the abolition of local school and health fees; providing access to treatment; and ensuring the inclusion of children in national and international initiatives to scale up access and care. [adapted from authors]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=19480&type=Document>

4. Orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS: principles and operational guidelines for programming

Authors: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Publisher: International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2002

This document from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provides guidelines for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies who are working on the front line in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is aimed at those helping communities and families to strengthen their traditional coping mechanisms, and meet the challenge of addressing the needs of orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.

Part One looks at guiding principles for working with orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. These are: participation of children; community-based care; non-discrimination; awareness of the needs of children at special risk; and collaboration and partnerships. Part Two addresses some of the ways that the principles may be converted into action for the benefit of orphans and vulnerable children. Part Three offers some options for intervention. These include: day-care centres for young children; memory boxes and memory books project; advocacy concerning children's rights and access to available resources; OVC support as part of home-based care programmes; OVC support as part of programmes with schools; community and school gardens; skill-building activities; enabling children to remain in school; and psychological and social support. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=15943&type=Document>

5. Adolescents: orphaned and vulnerable in the time of HIV/AIDS

Authors: C. Daileader Ruland; W. Finger

Publisher: YouthNet, Family Health International, 2005

This paper emphasises the distinct needs of HIV/AIDS orphaned and vulnerable adolescents. It summarises the limited studies and programmes which are working primarily with adolescents orphaned due to AIDS, and highlights four case studies from Cambodia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Romania. These case studies demonstrate different strategies for working with adolescent orphans and other youth vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, reflecting different cultural and programmatic approaches relevant to Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

The authors argue that most programmes working with orphans do not focus on the particular needs of adolescents, and call for projects to prioritise secondary education or livelihood training, sexual and reproductive health education and services, psychosocial and social support for the difficult transition to adulthood, and adult mentors as role models.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=20672&type=Document>

Latest additions from the HIV and AIDS resource guide

1. United against AIDS: The story of TASO

Author: P Ssebhanja

Publisher: Strategies for Hope, 2007

This book from Strategies for Hope tells the story of The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) in Uganda. TASO was founded in 1987 by a group of 16 volunteers - including seven people who were living with HIV. TASO provides over 80,000 HIV-positive people and their families with services such as counselling, medical treatment and social support. All TASO services are provided free of charge, including antiretroviral therapy (ART), which 18,000 TASO clients currently receive.

The first four chapters of the book are available free. See related information for details of how to purchase the full text. An accompanying film shows the stories of individuals and communities that use TASO as well as interviews with staff and health workers that highlight the impact of the organisation.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=39695&type=Document>

2. Livelihood risk from HIV in semi-arid tropics of rural Andhra Pradesh

Author: B V J. Gandhi; M C S. Bantilan; D. Parthasarathy

Publisher: World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), 2008

This paper discusses the livelihood dynamics in the fragile landscape of the semi arid tropics of Andhra Pradesh. The area is home to the poorest of the poor who live in conditions of persistent drought, subsistence agriculture and poor access to markets. This paper is a case study focusing on labour migration, and its influence on health risk behaviour of migrants and the spread of the HIV epidemic among rural households. The most vulnerable populations in these drought prone regions are the migrant labourers, and their vulnerability is influenced by three major factors: unstable productivity in the degraded and marginal landscape; the caste system that has traditionally kept them vulnerable; and experiences in the external environment to which they migrate. This study, based on a theoretical framework in which livelihood risks lead to health risks, particularly HIV infection, outlines how further deterioration of the household and cyclical health risks occur. The paper calls for a multisectoral approach to tackle the issue of migrant vulnerability, and for interventions with an approach more sensitive to migrant needs.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=39660&type=Document>

3. Strengthening human resources for health to deliver HIV/AIDS and other priority services in Cote d'Ivoire

Publisher: Health Systems 20/20, 2008

Cote d'Ivoire has a shortage of health workers in the health system. According to the World Health Organization there is approximately one nurse for every 1,666 inhabitants. This paper

describes the Health Systems 20/20 project's assessment of the human resources for health (HRH) in both public and private sectors between 2005 and 2006. The survey showed that there are 11,749 members of health staff, comprising 58 per cent nurses, 18 per cent midwives and 14 per cent doctors. There was also a lack of funding for HRH, weak institutional capacity for HRH management at all levels, geographic disparities in HRH availability and quality, and insufficient planning for training and allocation of HRH. A 15 per cent reduction in health workers, to the equivalent of 10,023 full time staff, is expected by 2008.

In response to these findings, a comprehensive five-year costed strategy was developed for HRH, focusing on demand and supply elements and drawing on input from a range of stakeholders. The strategy proposals included:

- provision of management and leadership training in a decentralised health system for 184 district managers
- strengthened nursing, laboratory and training institutions through the emergency hiring of 20 new and 15 retired instructors.

Health Systems 20/20 is in the process of devising a Human Resources Information System to monitor HRH needs and support the sustained delivery of quality HIV/AIDS services.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=39508&type=Document>

4. Is the HIV/AIDS response strengthening health systems?

Authors: C. Connor

Publisher: Health Systems 20/20, 2008

This article from Health Systems 20/20 summarises four sessions from the Mexico 2008 AIDS conference that look at how the AIDS response is affecting country health systems. It describes presentations from UNAIDS, the Global Fund, PEPFAR, and the World Bank Multi-country AIDS Program (MAP) amongst others. These organisations present many examples of the AIDS response strengthening the health systems of developing countries, including raising the visibility of pre-existing health systems weaknesses to attract resources and reducing the financial resource gap in countries with a historic and absolute shortfall of health funding.

However, all presentations agree that more can be done. Suggestions include the elimination of donor-specific AIDS information systems; exploration as how to merge the supply chain systems for antiretroviral and essential medicines; training of new health workers (as opposed to retraining the existing workers); and financing the hiring of new health workers (as opposed to paying salary top offs to existing workers). The article concludes that countries are not opting to use AIDS funds in ways that strengthen their whole health system because they are not clear what they can ask donors for; they lack coordination between HIV/AIDS and the general health system, and there aren't enough funds to do both. The Minister of Health of Ethiopia described how strong national leadership can achieve some degree of harmonisation and alignment of external assistance to reduce the transaction costs of planning, procurement, and reporting; and integrate HIV/AIDS with the broader health system.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and->

[aids&id=39403&type=Document](#)

5. Failing women, withholding protection. 15 lost years in making the female condom accessible

Publisher: Oxfam, 2008

Since the beginning of the HIV pandemic, many girls and women have struggled to protect themselves from infection, even when fully aware of the facts of HIV transmission. This report highlights how despite the absence of any other female-initiated form of protection, and unprecedented rises in funding for the response to HIV, female condoms remain inaccessible, and their contribution remains untapped. The document describes how women who use female condoms report an increased sense of power for negotiation of safer sex, and a greater sense of control and safety during sex. Providing both female and male condoms leads to more instances of protected sex and reductions in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

This report considers what is behind the failure to act comprehensively to create access to female condoms. Overarching errors of a lack of leadership, a huge funding bias against existing forms of primary HIV prevention, failure to scale up programming, and failure to invest in strategies to lower the cost of female condoms are described.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=39293&type=Document>

See the complete list of latest additions at: www.eldis.org/hiv aids

Announcements

Call for abstracts: 4th Southern African AIDS Conference, International Convention Centre - Scaling up for Success

Dates: 31 March - 3 April 2009

Location: Durban, South Africa

Abstract submission is open for consideration by the Scientific Programme Committee for participation at the 4th SA AIDS Conference, organised by the Foundation for Professional Development. Abstracts can only be submitted electronically through the conference website, and should be no more than 300 words. The deadline for abstract submissions is 31 October 2008.

The theme of the conference is “Scaling up for Success” and abstracts will be reviewed according to the following tracks:

- Basic Sciences
- Clinical Sciences Epidemiology, Prevention and Public Health
- Social and Economical Sciences, Human rights and Ethics
- Best Practices & Programmes

- Community Exchange Encounters

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids/hiv-events-and-opportunities&id=39010&type=Item>

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The IDS Health and Development Information team promotes health and equity in developing countries through the provision of high quality, accessible information to policymakers and practitioners. IDS Health and Development Information currently has three flagship products:

Health Resource Guide - <http://www.eldis.org/health/index.htm>

Health Systems Resource Guide - <http://www.eldis.org/healthsystems/index.htm>

HIV and AIDS Resource Guide - <http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids>

The HRC provides access to technical assistance and information for the Department for International Development (DFID UK), and its partners, in support of pro-poor health policies as well as health systems, service delivery and public health topics and programmes.

Eldis currently includes descriptions and links to over 4,500 organisations and over 22,000 full-text online documents covering development and environmental issues. It can be searched or browsed free over the Internet.

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