

Between the years 1990 and 2000 the number of orphans in Africa climbed from 30.9 million to 41.4 million, and those orphaned due to AIDS rose from 330,000 to seven million. Expert's project that by 2010 there will be 53.1 million children under the age of 18 without their parents, and of those 53.1 million 15.7 million will have parents who died of AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa is the home to 24 out of the 25 countries with the world's highest HIV levels. Nine out of 10 children living with AIDS are African, and eight out of those ten have lost their parents to AIDS. Almost half of orphans are under the age of 12, and 12 percent ages 0 to 18 are under the age of 5. These children go through a lot more than just losing their parents.

A girl who lost her parents told her story. Her name is Teddy after both her parents died from AIDS she has to take care of her three brothers and sisters and she helps care for three other boys whose parents also died from AIDS related illnesses. Her father died in the hospital, and she watched her mother die at home. After her mother died she describes how much different their lives were. They had no food, or money to buy the essentials they need to survive. Their neighbors would talk bad about the kids, they would say, "Those children are so poor; they don't even have any relatives; they don't belong." Others would call them the 'AIDS orphans' and say that their parents infected them too.

More children told their stories; a young boy had his mother die from AIDS at the age of 12 and his father die at the age of 16. When his mother was sick his sister and he would have to trade of going to school. He would go for a term then his sister would go. Because their mother and father were sick they could not get a proper education. Another boy lost both his parents at the age of 8. He was able to continue to go to school but was not treated like the rest of the students. He was segregated from the other kids and they called him 'the son of AIDS'. When the students had to share desks none of the kids wanted to sit by him because he was the AIDS boy. A girl lost her parents at the age of 17 and was forced to care for her four siblings. People would tell them that the reason their mother died was because their mother was promiscuous and right when their mother passed away the oldest daughter had to stop going to school and go try to find a job to care for the children she now cared for. A girl who was orphaned was sent to live with her aunt at the age of 15. Her aunt would not let her turn to light on in her room at night; she forced the girl to work instead of study. She had to wake up at 5:00 am to walk an hour for school while her aunt's children went to a school right next to their home. Her aunt didn't want the girl to go to school, so she made it very difficult for her to attend.

In a study passed in Uganda psychological distress was found at a very high level in children who had been orphaned due to AIDS. Anger, depression, and anxiety was found to be more common in AID orphans compared to other children. The study showed that 12 percent of AIDS orphans said they wish they were dead, compared with the other children they interviewed showing only 3 percent wished they were dead. Without family members to care for these children almost all of them end up on the streets, where they have poor odds for survival. They will eat from others garbage's for food, they drink from dirty and diseased water, they will have no safe place to sleep, and many will end up exploited and abused as prostitutes, or as child slave laborers.

Glossary

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

UNAIDS- United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS

CPR- Portuguese Refugee Council

SCF- Save the Children Fund

TASO- The AIDS Support Organization

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

Maria Teresa Tito de Morais- CPR's chairwomen

Dr. Anne Peterson- Assistant administrator for global health

Biennial Report- A report released every two years

Sub-Saharan Africa- The region of Africa south of the Sahara Desert

Orphan- A child who has lost both parents through death or, in some cases, one parent

Exploited- To make use of selfishly or unethically