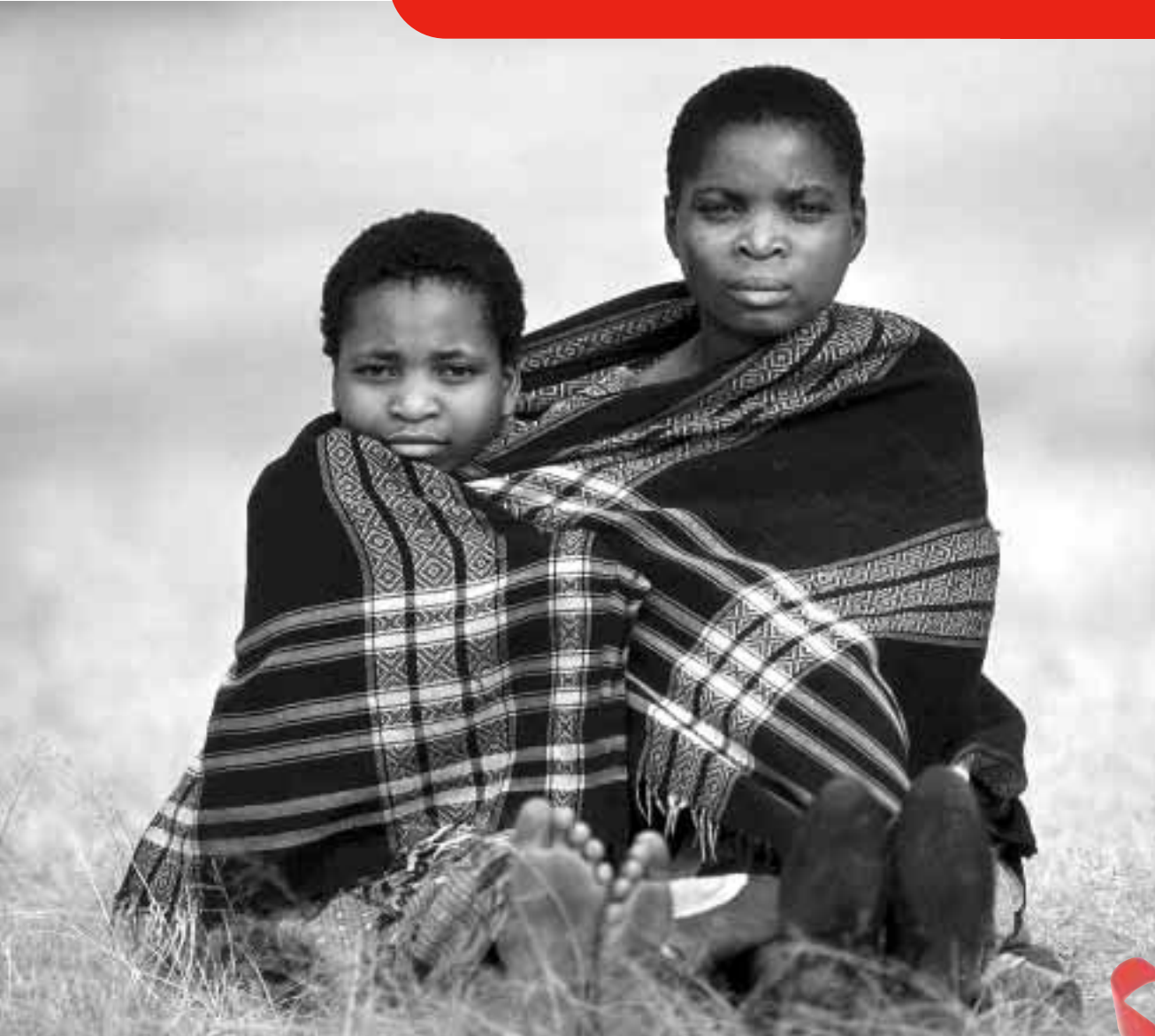


Children

IN A WORLD OF AIDS



TWENTY YEARS AGO, HARDLY ANYONE HAD HEARD OF HIV/AIDS.

Today, it rivals poverty and exceeds war as a threat to the lives of millions of children in the developing world. Every 14 seconds, another parent dies of AIDS, leaving behind an orphaned child. The epidemic is spreading through countries and across continents, threatening to undermine decades of progress in social and economic development. Now, more than ever, children and families need global assistance to develop community-based programs – providing education, health services, food security, income generation opportunities and other care and support – that will help combat the devastating impact of this disease.



Save the Children®



Q. How serious is the AIDS crisis today and what impact has it had in various countries around the world?

A. The HIV/AIDS global epidemic has far surpassed experts' predictions only a decade ago and the impact of this disease will be felt for generations to come. As of 2003, approximately 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS, the vast majority in sub-Saharan Africa. In Asia, the epidemic is growing rapidly and if current trends continue, some countries in Asia may surpass Africa in the number of people affected.

The rapidly spreading epidemic threatens to reverse decades of progress in social development and economic growth in many of the world's most impoverished countries. The following trends have been widely observed in many developing countries affected by HIV/AIDS:

- **Health-care costs are rising rapidly** in response to a flood of new patients. In countries where health-care resources were scarce even before the HIV/AIDS crisis began, national and local government resources are now buckling under the weight of rising costs.
- **Investment in education has suffered greatly**, especially in communities where many teachers are dying, and where children are leaving school to earn money or help care for family members who are ill.
- **Food supplies have been directly affected** by the death and disability of so many people, leaving surviving family members with sharply reduced food crops and family income.
- **National economies are severely strained**, as a growing number of agricultural and industrial workers die or become unable to work. Teachers and health care workers, among others, are also greatly affected, reducing services available to the poor.

Q. What is Save the Children doing to battle the HIV/AIDS epidemic and provide support for those affected?

A. Drawing on its global experience, Save the Children has identified two principal goals to address the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic: first, to mobilize communities to provide **care and support** for orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS and their families, and second, to **prevent** new HIV infections, especially among youths at high risk.

Save the Children focuses on helping community groups, local governments and nongovernmental organizations achieve these and other important goals in the following ways:

- **Prevention** – Expanding access to information and services in order to help young people and others at risk make healthful choices that reduce the risks of infection and mother-to-child transmission.

- **Care and Support** – Assisting children affected by HIV/AIDS with support for education, food and nutrition, community-based child care, psychosocial support and guidance for healthful living to prolong and improve their quality of life. Home-based care and support also extends to families who are experiencing AIDS-related illness and disability.
- **Mitigation** – Minimizing the impact of HIV/AIDS on communities by bringing leaders and members together to secure food, assure basic education, develop livelihoods and meet additional needs of orphans, other vulnerable children, their families and individuals who have HIV/AIDS.
- **De-stigmatization** – Providing information and stimulating dialogue and community activism to dispel myths and reduce the stigma and discrimination often associated with HIV/AIDS; also having those at risk and people affected by HIV/AIDS actively plan and implement their community's care and support services.
- **Advocacy** – Helping community, national and global organizations and governments enact policies that create supportive environments for those infected with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS.

Q. What still needs to be done?

A. There are three key areas where greater investments are needed to address HIV/AIDS:

Prevention – Raising awareness about protective practices is critical to stopping the spread of HIV. However, information alone is not enough. User-friendly prevention services must reach those most vulnerable to infection – women and youths – particularly those engaging in high-risk behaviors. Young men and women between 15 and 24 need access to voluntary counseling and testing as well as assistance in preventing mother-to-child transmission.

Community Support – Community-based “safety nets” are essential for orphans and other children and families affected by HIV/AIDS to ensure the protection, education and health of children, and to help them remain in their communities. However, the optimal solution for these children is to help their parents survive. Providing anti-retroviral treatment for parents and increasing the prevention and early treatment of infections will improve the well-being of children in AIDS-affected households.

Cooperation – Save the Children believes that to address the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, it is important to join forces with other nongovernmental organizations, local governments, community-based organizations and community leaders. Working together through partnerships like the Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI), we can strengthen efforts to help deliver care and support for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS.



Mozambique

Save the Children has developed several successful strategies for fighting and managing the HIV/AIDS crisis:

I. Save the Children Strengthens Communities' Ability to Provide Care and Support

In the coming years, the impact of HIV/AIDS will continue to be felt most significantly among children who have lost their parents to the disease or who are dealing with the demands of illness in their families. Their struggle will be exacerbated by the crippling effects of poverty and the strain on traditional community supports at a time of increasing need.

Save the Children's flagship program, **Scaling up HIV/AIDS interventions Through Expanded Partnerships (STEPs)**, began in Malawi in 1995, and involves working directly with local, district and village leaders to develop and manage successful prevention and support activities. It has already helped hundreds of communities and thousands of families, and is now being replicated in additional districts in Malawi as well as other African countries. It works by creating self-run village AIDS committees that can:

- Provide community-based child care to support children's development and assist their caregivers and guardians;
- Train individuals for home-based care of chronically ill patients;
- Offer emotional and social support to orphans and their caregivers;
- Ensure the continuation of children's education and skills training;
- Supplement income through microfinance activities;
- Develop structured recreation activities to promote psychosocial growth and well-being among children and youths;
- Promote prevention through organized public events, structured youth activities and use of popular education methods.

In Malawi and Mozambique, Save the Children leads the **Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI)**, a consortium of seven nonprofit relief and development organizations that implement community-run programs. With support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, Plan Netherlands and other donor agencies, the initiative has four strategic objectives: to build awareness and reduce the stigma that surrounds HIV/AIDS; to extend the life of the parent-child relationship; to

prepare families for transition; and to ensure the child's future well-being. Save the Children also implements HACI programs in Ethiopia and Uganda.

In Ethiopia and Mozambique, Save the Children works with members of the International Save the Children Alliance and HACI to implement the **SCALE-UP HOPE Program**, expanding community responses to the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children. This program, funded by the United States government, uses field-proven methods to mobilize and improve community programs for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS by building access to education, improving livelihoods and providing psychosocial support.

II. Save the Children Helps Reduce the Spread of HIV

Men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 are among those at greatest risk of contracting HIV, and currently account for more than half of all new infections. Girls have been disproportionately affected and are more likely to be infected than their male counterparts and at a younger age. Other people, including commercial sex workers, their clients and transient workers, are often vulnerable to infection due to high-risk behavior. Save the Children conducts several programs that help reduce the spread of infection among youths, high-risk populations and persons living with HIV/AIDS:

In Ethiopia, Save the Children's **High Risk Corridor HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project** works to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) along the transport routes to and from the Djibouti port where it is highly prevalent. The focus is on reducing unsafe sexual practices and intravenous drug use, providing voluntary counseling and testing and promoting the use of condoms. The project also includes care and support for children and families living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in these communities.

“Every week we have four or five funerals. In the past, people weren't dying like this and grandmothers didn't have to work so hard. When my daughter died, I was forced to become strong. There was no one else to take care of her child. So many people are dying in our community, we remain poor.”

Ndulaga Sampson,
Grandmother caring for six orphans in Mpondas, Malawi

In coordination with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health and other partners, Save the Children implements a national level program to reduce **mother-to-child transmission** of HIV. Community-based activities are designed to increase access to services, to reduce the stigma that often stops people from seeking help and to ensure that services will meet the needs of pregnant women and HIV-positive mothers.

In Malawi, through the **BRIDGE Program**, Save the Children works with Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs to improve ways of curbing the spread of the epidemic among youths, adult males and others at high risk of HIV infection. It involves working with community-based organizations and community leaders to develop better support for protective practices and services, and for promoting healthful decisions and actions, particularly among youths.

There are many nations outside sub-Saharan Africa where HIV/AIDS is endangering lives. In Nepal, for example, Save the Children works through the **HIV/AIDS Western Highway Project** to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among female sex workers and their clients (taxi drivers, microbus drivers, rickshaw pullers, and hoteliers). The project helps women help each other learn how to prevent infection and how to share this knowledge within their communities.

Save the Children also works in the Republic of Georgia. The **STI/HIV Prevention (SHIP)** program increases awareness about HIV/AIDS and other infections among populations at high risk, and establishes peer education and counseling networks to teach preventive practices and behaviors.

Save the Children's specialized programs in **Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH)** enable youths to acquire knowledge and life skills, including how to prevent HIV infection and use quality health services to stay well. As a result, a growing number of teens have begun to adopt healthful practices such as abstinence,

Malawi



Vietnam

delaying sexual activity, having fewer sexual partners and using condoms. ARSH programs currently run in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines and Vietnam.

III. Save the Children Builds Community Resources

One of Save the Children's main goals is to mobilize and strengthen community-based organizations so that they can sustain programs that address the many effects of HIV/AIDS at the local level.

For example, through the **Umoyo Network for Capacity Building for Quality HIV/AIDS Services Project**, Save the Children and its partners provide a comprehensive package of technical support and facilitate cooperation among approximately 15 Malawian nongovernmental organizations that offer key HIV-related services. The project prepares these organizations, through training, mentoring and monitoring, to provide user-friendly services such as voluntary counseling and testing, and to support services that reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission.

Through the **Malawi National AIDS Commission's Umbrella Program**, Save the Children works with local organizations and other community partners to strengthen and expand their prevention, care and impact mitigation services throughout the country.

“My grandmother is the head of our household, but if she's away, then I'm the head. She goes away a lot – mostly for funeral ceremonies in the village. I take care of my brothers and sisters when my grandmother isn't here. I'm stronger than other children because I'm a child and I'm also an adult.”

Silanga Martin,
11 years old, Malawi



Save the Children's HIV/AIDS programs address the specific effects of the epidemic and the needs of the most seriously affected population groups:

Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children

An estimated 2.5 million children under the age of 15 currently live with HIV/AIDS and face an uncertain future because of the disease. In 2003 alone, approximately 700,000 children were newly infected with HIV and more than 500,000 children died as a result of an AIDS-related illness. Millions more must care for ill parents and other family members.

Even more alarming is the exponential rise in the number of orphans left in the destructive wake of AIDS. Experts estimate that a child loses a parent to an AIDS-related illness every 14 seconds, most often in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, there are nearly 14 million children orphaned by AIDS throughout the world; by 2010 it is projected that as many as 25 million children may be orphaned by the AIDS-related deaths of their parents.

Social support systems in many developing countries are overwhelmed by this dramatic increase in children and youths without parents. Devastated by grief and the loss of their parents' love, guidance and protection, they are increasingly exposed to poverty, discrimination and severe risks to their well-being. Orphans and children living in families coping with chronic illness, as well as children infected with HIV, have less access to education, fewer income opportunities and an uncertain supply of nourishing food. Without care and support, they are far more susceptible to abuse and exploitation.

Young Women and Men at Risk

Youths between 15 and 24 represent the largest and fastest growing segment of people infected with HIV, accounting for approximately half of those newly infected every day. Globally, about half of the people now living with HIV/AIDS are under 25 and they often do not have access to prevention information and services, or to the necessary treatment, care and support. Young girls are particularly vulnerable, especially

those who do not have the social and economic power to prevent unwanted sexual activity or to take protective measures.

Poverty also unfairly discriminates against young girls and women. When girls leave school to help out at home, they miss the chance to acquire a vital tool that could protect them from the disease – education. Girls who are educated are more likely to delay marriage and childbearing, have smaller families, achieve greater economic security, take better care of their health and have fewer reproductive and sexual health problems, including HIV/AIDS.

Pregnant Women and Other People Living with HIV/AIDS

Around the world, an estimated 40 million people now live with HIV and AIDS, about 70 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. While recent international efforts have focused on expanding access to treatment and improving equity in the delivery of anti-retroviral drugs, the cost, means of distribution and monitoring requirements still pose major challenges.

As the number of adults living with HIV/AIDS increases, so too does the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which can occur during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. Increasing women's access to and use of family planning can both reduce the risk of transmission between partners and help HIV-positive women prevent or delay pregnancy. Prenatal services and HIV testing are also important to help reduce transmission and protect the overall health of mothers and newborns. Simple, inexpensive measures conducted as a woman enters labor, and within the first 72 hours of the infant's life, can reduce mother-to-child transmission by more than 50 percent. Save the Children also advocates continuing anti-retroviral therapy for mothers and fathers to prolong their lives and health as much as possible.

Even where anti-retroviral drug therapy is not yet available, there are ways to slow the progression of the virus to AIDS and to enhance the quality of life for patients with HIV. Improved nutrition and hygiene, early, aggressive treatment of common infections and community-based peer support can significantly improve their physical and mental health, and prolong the nurturing family relationships that are so vital for their well-being and that of their surviving relatives.

“HIV/AIDS is not just a health problem but a social problem. Let us not look at where it is coming from but what we can do to eradicate this pandemic. We young people are the ones to bring this change because we are a force for change.”

Wisdom Morowa,
Young Resource Person, Malawi



The Impact of HIV/AIDS*

	Persons living with HIV/AIDS today	Persons newly infected with HIV in 2003	Deaths from HIV/AIDS in 2003
Total	37.8 million	4.8 million	2.9 million
Children (under 15 years)	2.1 million	630,000	490,000

Children Orphaned by AIDS**

Total	15 million
Africa	12.3 million

Around the World*

	Persons living with HIV/AIDS today
Total	37.8 million
Sub-Saharan Africa	25 million
South & Southeast Asia	6.5 million
Latin America	1.6 million
East Asia	900,000
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	1.3 million
North America	1 million
Western Europe	580,000
North Africa & Middle East	480,000
Caribbean	430,000
Oceania	32,000

* Median taken from regional ranges of adults and children. (2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS.)

** 2003 Estimates for children under the age of 18, who have lost one or both parents to AIDS related causes. (Children on the Brink 2004, USAID/UNICEF/UNAIDS.)

SOURCES: CDC, UNAIDS, UNICEF, USAID, WHO

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Save the Children is the leading independent nonprofit children's relief and development organization working in more than 50 countries worldwide, including the United States. Our mission is to create lasting, positive change in the lives of children in need.

Save the Children is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, comprising 27 independent Save the Children national organizations working in more than 100 countries to ensure the well-being of children everywhere.

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