

DRAFT
Oral Report on the Global Challenge of Orphans and Vulnerable Children
Background and Policy Discussion

Issue

1. The lives of millions of children around the world have been assailed by HIV/AIDS as it ravages families, communities, schools, health-care and welfare systems and national economies. Over 11 million children are affected in sub-Saharan Africa alone. By 2010, more than 25 million children are expected to be orphaned due to AIDS. Orphaned (whose father, mother, or both have died) are only one group of children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS: millions more are living with ill and dying family members, or are infected themselves. Children affected by HIV/AIDS are frequently stigmatized by society, denied affection, protection, care and support, and living in poverty. Many of these children drop out of school; they face stigma and discrimination, are at risk of exploitation and abuse, and often they, too, will become more vulnerable to becoming infected with HIV/AIDS.
2. UNICEF is accelerating its efforts to expand and strengthen partnerships to meet these challenges.

Action

3. UNICEF at the country, regional and global levels:
 - Serves as a convenor of partnerships.
 - Provides intellectual leadership on advocacy to improve national policies and capacities.
 - Provides programmatic leadership on design and going to scale with basic social services.
 - Advocates for increased resources and action, including the participation of affected children and people living with HIV/AIDS.
4. For instance, UNICEF recently led an effort to establish a Global Partners Forum on orphans and vulnerable children, comprised of more than 50 multilateral, governmental, academic, faith-based, private sector and other civil society organizations.
5. Efforts should be strengthened to:
 - Prolong the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support;
 - Mobilize and support community-based responses to provide both immediate and long-term family assistance to vulnerable households;
 - Open access for orphans and vulnerable children to basic social services, including education, health care, birth registration and others;
 - Advise governments how to protect vulnerable children and families through improved policy and legislation and by channelling resources to communities;
 - Raise awareness at all levels through advocacy and social mobilization to create a supportive environment for children affected by HIV/AIDS.
6. These strategies are reflected in the consensus document *A Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV/AIDS*, which is an important tool for guiding and mobilizing the response. The development of this Framework was spearheaded by UNICEF working through the Global Partners Forum.
7. UNICEF and partners have agreed on a set of priority actions aimed at reducing disparity and discrimination against and ensuring protection, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children:

- (a) Girls' Education, Child Protection, HIV/AIDS and Integrated Early Childhood Development are four critically linked intervention areas through which countries can strengthen national programme capacities.
 - (b) Increasing the capacities of families, communities and governments to scale up their responses remains the greatest challenge.
8. Sustained national responses, consistent with the UNGASS on HIV/AIDS, should include national:
- Participatory situation analyses
 - Policy and legislation to protect orphans and vulnerable children
 - Coordination mechanisms
 - Action plans
 - Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Impact (Outcomes for Children)

9. Some countries are making excellent progress, while others need to accelerate actions. 36 countries have a national strategy and 32 countries are developing them, to meet the specific UNGASS goals.
 10. UNICEF is working with partners to fill in the existing gaps in data for monitoring and evaluation. A core set of indicators now exists to monitor progress toward the UNGASS goals. This includes accurate data reflecting communities' and countries' progress on care, support and treatment for children living with HIV/AIDS; preventing orphaning and reducing vulnerability by keeping parents alive through, for example, PMTCT Plus; and reducing the heavy burden that female headed households carry in protecting and supporting children.
 11. Scaling up good local responses can be supported and sustained by Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs). Governments, civil society organizations, and UN agencies must seize opportunities to protect children's rights in education, health, social welfare, and poverty reduction efforts. But of the nineteen Sub-Saharan African countries with full PRSPs, only six - Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia – focus on orphans and vulnerable children as “priority actions”, – and none have this area specifically identified in budgets.
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