

CHILDREN AND HIV/AIDS

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GLOBAL VIEW OF AIDS

Not all babies of HIV-infected parents are HIV-infected. Several months must pass before a reliable blood testing process can happen. The mother's antibodies should have cleared the baby's system, and the test then measures the baby's own antibodies. About one-third of babies born to HIV-infected mothers acquire the infection, and of those infected about 80 percent will die by the age of five.

In 1981, AIDS was first reported in the United States of America. Today, HIV, the virus which causes AIDS, is present in virtually all countries and has infected around 18 million adults and 1.5 million children.

The following facts further depict the spread of Aids

- WHO estimates that 18 million adults, and about 1.5 million children, have been infected with HIV since the beginning of the pandemic.
- By the end of the century, WHO estimates that 30 to 40 million men, women, and children will have been infected with HIV.
- Today, WHO believes that 4.5 million individuals infected with HIV have developed AIDS.
- By the end of the century, developing countries will account for over 80 percent of all people with HIV infection.
- Sub-Saharan Africa, with 11 million HIV-infected, has by far the largest number of people living with HIV. But the region where HIV is spreading fastest is South and Southeast Asia, with 3 million infected adults—double the estimated number in mid-1993.

Child orphaned because of HIV/AIDS

Children with AIDS

SAFETY AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN

HIV/AIDS will "set back the clock" on primary health care successes of the past fifteen years. Infant mortality will increase. Birth rates are increasing, in part as a result of increasing mortality. Average age of death and life expectancy will decrease.

RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM

Children are facing many problem. How do these different problems all point to the same roots of poverty, abuse and changes in community values.

Community Change

Welfare or restoration?

Economic survival is one dimension. If they are not adults when their parents die, children may not have the right to their inheritance of house or land. Health and education needs are a particular concern when parents are not present to provide them or be advocates. Children who are surviving without parents have many challenges, including the burdens of sorrow, grief, fear of the future or—more frequently—hopelessness about the future.

JOURNEY INTO HOPE

In practical terms, bringing hope to AIDS children and orphans means the social worker is now reaching for a different vision. He or she, along with team members, is talking with members of the community and looking for a way to meet together as a whole to discuss the children's future. Community members as well as the workers can be affirmed in their responsibility as decision-makers rather than only burdened by the physical responsibilities of care without resources. The salvation Army will then be better able to discern its role in supporting community-determined strategies for care and protection of the children.