

A Generation at Risk: The Global Impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Edited by G Foster, C Levi and J Williamson. Cambridge University Press, 2005. ISBN 978-0-521-65264-3

This publication helps us to understand the impacts of HIV/AIDS on OVC in the family and community-based care, households and communities; needs of OVC and responses in the educational system; psychosocial impact on children and youth; human rights of children affected by HIV/AIDS; and religion and responses to OVC. It does this with the help of many contributors with expert knowledge on issues affecting children, particularly those who are orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.

The introduction deals with HIV/AIDS and its long-term impact on children. The editors look at paradoxes and dilemmas of understanding the concepts of orphan and OVC, the scope and trends in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and how to build an effective response. In Chapter 1, Stanley Ngalazu Phiri and David Tolfree look at family and community-based care for children affected by HIV/AIDS. They focus on the strengthening of what they call the front-line response. They look at strategies to support families and communities, and also at fostering, adoption, and other family-based care arrangements.

In Chapter 2, Jill Donahue focuses on strengthening households and communities. She looks at the economic impact on children of HIV/AIDS-related illness and mortality, the economic impact of HIV/AIDS-related crises on households, and how poor households cope economically in response to crises. She makes a case for building the resilience of household and community economic safety nets. In Chapter 3, Michael Kelly outlines the response of the education system on the needs of OVC affected by HIV/AIDS. He provides a background on HIV/AIDS and schooling, looks at the ability of schools to respond to the needs of learners, the appropriateness of the school curriculum, and shares an expanded vision on the school at the heart of the community.

In Chapter 4, Laurie Bauman and Stefan Germann describe the psychosocial impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on children and youth. They describe HIV-related risk factors for psychosocial problems in children, resilience and protective factors, symptoms and manifestations of psychological problems, and share lessons learned in putting knowledge into practice. In Chapter 5, Sofia Gruskin and Daniel Tarantola discuss human rights for children affected by HIV/AIDS. They look at children's rights in the context of HIV/AIDS, children confronting HIV/AIDS, the advent of the rights of the child, the Convention on the Rights of Children's (CRC) four general principles, and governments at the forefront with regard to respect, protection and fulfillment of rights. They end the chapter by answering three pertinent questions: Is there an age for childhood and an age for HIV? Still ignoring gender? So where do we go from here?

In Chapter 6, Geoff Foster focuses on religion and responses to orphans in Africa. He focuses on teachings of major religions on

orphans, influence of traditional religions, religious organisations responding to orphans, and the values built into faith-based responses. He also looks at strategies for expanding the responses of religious groups.

In Chapter 7, Tim Brown and Werait Sittitrai look at making the right choices in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on protecting children and young people from HIV and its impacts. They report on the diversity in the epidemics of the Asia-Pacific region, children orphaned and affected by AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, vulnerable children and youth at heightened risk in Asia and the Pacific, evolving patterns of sexual risk among youth in the region, evolving patterns of risk through drug use, and protecting children from HIV and its impacts. They close the chapter by answering a question: Forewarned, but up to the challenge? In Chapter 8, Barbara Draimin and Warren Reich look at what they call troubled tapestries: children, families and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. They look at a team approach used at a family centre, the evolution of HIV/AIDS in the USA, and public and private responses to HIV/AIDS in the USA. They then share one client's story, the social context of families affected by HIV/AIDS, and custody planning and practices that support families and children.

In Chapter 9, Douglas Webb describes interventions to support children affected by HIV/AIDS and identifies priorities for future research. He identifies AIDS-affected children who need support, then describes family responses, the psychosocial consequences of AIDS for children, children as caregivers, and extended family support. He closes the chapter by answering two questions: Are we missing the most vulnerable? What is being evaluated and for whom in closing the information gap? In the last chapter of the book, John Williamson proposes a way forward in reducing the impacts of HIV/AIDS on vulnerable children and families. He looks at elements of an adequate and effective response, programmatic interventions, key interventions, scaling up and sustaining responses, targeting responses, and monitoring, evaluation and research.

The book helps readers to make the right choices and interventions for selected regions. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, in his foreword to the book, says this is 'a story of resilience, compassion and innovation in the face of loss and destitution'. I cannot agree more. Professor Linda Richter, in her plenary address to the International AIDS Conference in Mexico in August 2008, expressed some optimism that at long last the children's time has come. This book is a testimony that the children's time has come, albeit too late. Better late than never!

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