

FACT SHEET 4: RISKS FACTORS FOR CHILDREN

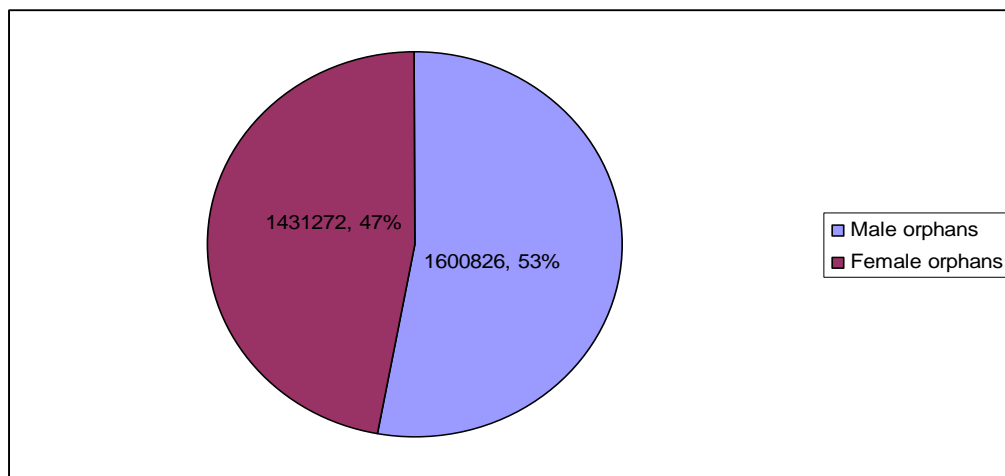
ORPHAN NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED

Among the negative impacts of AIDS is the loss of parents. The overall number of orphans (defined by the World Health Organisation – WHO – as children who have lost one or both parents) have increased from 15.6% in 2002 to 19.3% in 2008. This figure includes all orphans regardless of the cause of death of parents.

About one in ten orphans had lost their fathers (10.5%, translating into 1.9 million children), and this was significantly higher than those who lost their mothers (3.9%, translating into 713,000 children). The number of orphans who had lost both their parents was 419,000 children (2.3%).

It was also found that the likelihood of being an orphan increased with age: 3.3% of young children (0-4 year olds) were orphans as compared to 32.7% of teenagers (15-18 years old). The study found that across provinces, the Eastern Cape had the highest proportion of orphans (23.2%), followed by KwaZulu-Natal (19.4%), while Northern Cape (10.5%) and Western Cape (11.0%) had the lowest percentage of orphans. Rural informal areas had the highest burden of orphanhood at 20.0% of children aged 18 years and below. The figure below illustrates the number of male and females orphans in South Africa, according to the findings of the study.

Figure 1: The number and proportion of male and female orphans in South Africa, 2008



Child-headed households

Among children aged 12–18 years who identified themselves as heads of their households, there was a notable decline from 2.6% in a similar survey conducted in 2005 to 0.8% in the 2008 survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Programmes for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) should be further strengthened so that children affected by HIV or living with HIV are supported adequately and also protected from all forms of abuse.
- The Department of Social Development should urgently engage with people living in households with no sustainable livelihoods as this could be a major HIV risk factor leading to HIV-related risk behaviours such as transactional sex involving children.

Note: *South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey, 2008: The health of our children* by Shisana et al. was part of a large national population-based household survey conducted by a research consortium led by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The survey included 8 966 children aged 0-18 years. The full report is available on www.hsrbpress.co.za.