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Orphans give Aids

a whole -new face

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa and around the world, the damage

being wrought by HIV/Aids has a new face — the millions of children

who have been orphaned by the pandemic, left behind to struggle not only with their personal losses, but with the stigma and discrimination

that often accompany Aids. In a new report. “Children Orphaned by

Aids Front-line responses from Eastern and Southern Africa.”, the

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Joint United

Notions Programme on HIV/Aids (UNAIDS) say that the number of children orphaned by Aids is skyrocketing and that the traditional African extended family is breaking down under the unprecedented

burden of the pandemic.

Aids orphans are defined as children- numbers of Aids orphans it

who, before the age of 15, addition to the loss of life caused

have lost either their mother or by Aids - patting a severe strain

both parents to Aids. on Traditional support systems in

“The figures are staggering: By Africa. The grandparents who in

the end of this year the world will

have seen 1.2 million children

orphaned children their orphaned grandchildren

orphaned by Aida, 95 per cent of have limited resources,” Carol Bellamy

them in sub-Saharan Africa,” said,

Peter Piot; Executive Director of “What makes this epidemic

UNAIDS. “By the end of the year uniquely threatening to children

2000, we estimate that the is the age factor,” Dr Piot said.

number of Aids orphans will rise “Half of all people with HIV

to more than 13 million.” become infected before they turn

“The scale of the orphan crisis 25, and they typically die of Aids

it’s almost unimaginable,” said white their children are still too

UNICEF excessive director Carol young to fend for themselves.

Bellamy. “Before Aids, about 2 Given that Aids has claimed over

per cent of alt children to developing- 16 million lives so far - and that

countries were orphans. By the death toll is expected to keep

1997, the figure had jumped to 7 rising the ramifications for the

per cent of many African - children left behind are clearly

- m same countries the figure enormous,”

The figures run as high as 11 Per cent. Some African communities

“Worse, the skyrocketing have developed innovative care

and support programmes. But

while communities are clearly

unit in the forefront of the

response, the sheer numbers of

orphans threaten to overwhelm

their efforts.

There turn lessons to learnt

From case studies of how the

orphan crisis is being dealt with

in Botswana, Malawi, Zambia

and Zimbabwe. Bellamy pointed

out that, while still in die to infancy, the efforts spotlighted provide

reason for hope.

Eastern and Southern Africa,

the focus of the Aids orphan

report, is home to 4.8 per cent of

the world’s population yet has

over 50 per cent of the world’s

HIV positive people and accounts

for 60 per cent of all lives

claimed by Aide since the epidemic began.

\* A call for action

To address the situation,

UNICEF, UNAIDS and the

National Black Leadership Commission on Aids, a US group

active in Aids causes, has issued a

“Call for Africa”, at the end of a symposium on Aids orphans at

the United Nations in New York.

They urged governments to

break the conspiracy of silence”

Aids and act with “openness

and urgency’ to fight the discrimination and ostracism that

often accompany Aids.

**AZT: Activists criticise Mbeki**

CAPE TOWN, Wednesday sex or use condoms to prevent the South Africa,” leading Aids

Aids campaigners criticised spread of the disease that attack campaigner Clero Jones said. “Il is

South African President Thabo Mbeki body’s immune system. It is

Mbeki at World Aids Day for AZT can inhibit Aids and scientifically misinformed. It I economically unsound and it is

morally bankrupt," to give the drug AZT to vent infection in the womb, morally bankrupt,” he told a pregnant women with HIV. “I have asked to say to crowd in Cape Town gathered to

Mr Mbeki, avoiding the con- President Mbeki and parliament watch the unveiling of parts of the controversy he has sparked by spies- that this decision is contrary to the Aids Memorial Quilt started by the safety of AZT, urged principles of the African National Mr Jones and earned round the South Africans to abstain from Congress and the constitution of globe streets yesterday to mark the world Aids