

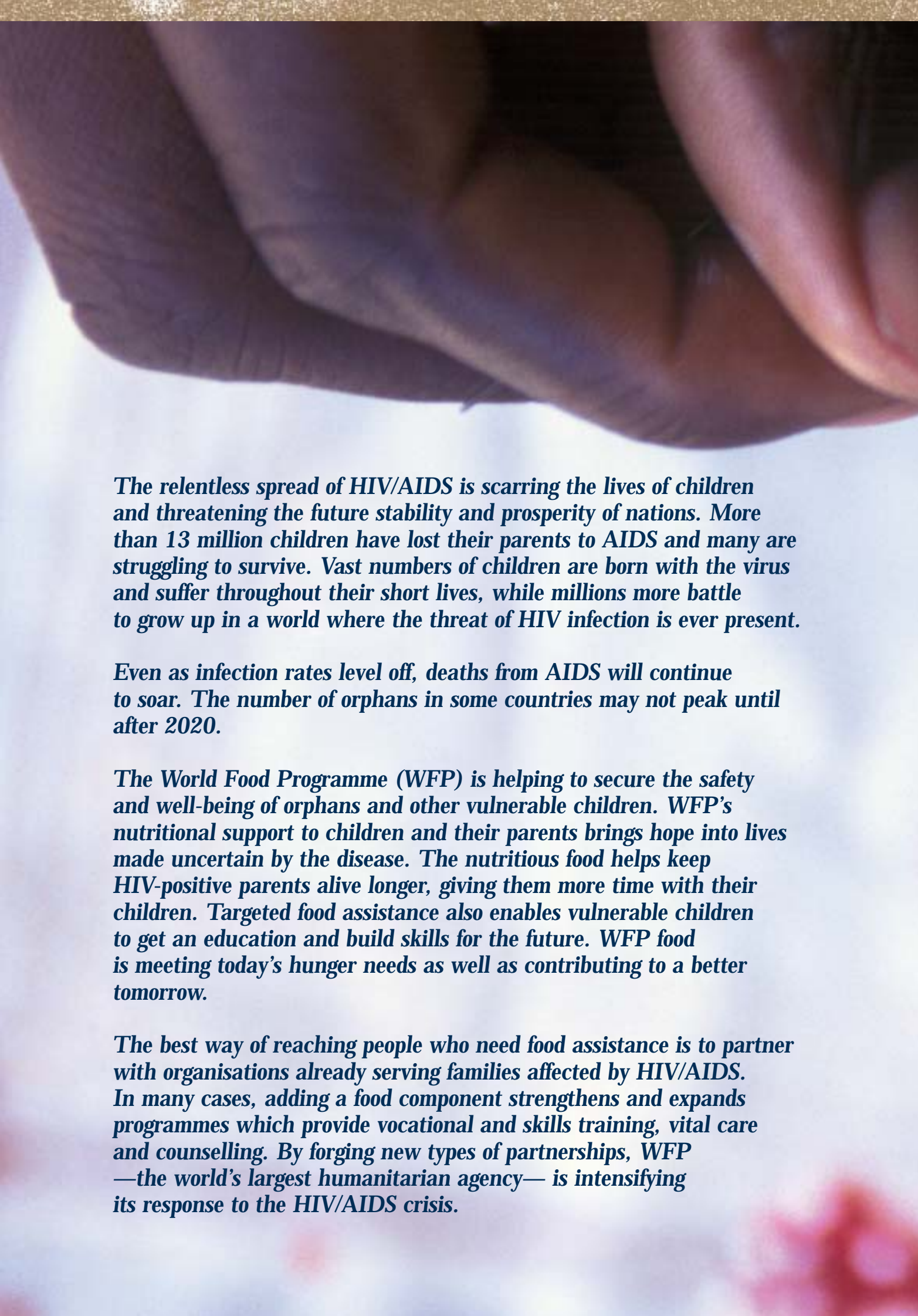
HIV/AIDS & CHILDREN

Bringing hope to a generation

Food aid to help educate orphans and other vulnerable children



**World Food
Programme**



The relentless spread of HIV/AIDS is scarring the lives of children and threatening the future stability and prosperity of nations. More than 13 million children have lost their parents to AIDS and many are struggling to survive. Vast numbers of children are born with the virus and suffer throughout their short lives, while millions more battle to grow up in a world where the threat of HIV infection is ever present.

Even as infection rates level off, deaths from AIDS will continue to soar. The number of orphans in some countries may not peak until after 2020.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is helping to secure the safety and well-being of orphans and other vulnerable children. WFP's nutritional support to children and their parents brings hope into lives made uncertain by the disease. The nutritious food helps keep HIV-positive parents alive longer, giving them more time with their children. Targeted food assistance also enables vulnerable children to get an education and build skills for the future. WFP food is meeting today's hunger needs as well as contributing to a better tomorrow.

The best way of reaching people who need food assistance is to partner with organisations already serving families affected by HIV/AIDS. In many cases, adding a food component strengthens and expands programmes which provide vocational and skills training, vital care and counselling. By forging new types of partnerships, WFP—the world's largest humanitarian agency—is intensifying its response to the HIV/AIDS crisis.



“Existing therapies require sound nutrition. Adequate food is essential for prolonging the lives of parents and enabling them to have a few more precious weeks, months or maybe even years to work and spend time with their families. Perhaps we cannot give them hope for a cure, but we can give them time.”

James T. Morris, WFP Executive Director

Keeping Parents Healthier

Keeping HIV-infected parents healthier for as long as possible gives their children a fighting chance for the future. When one or both parents die, the effect on their children is devastating. Besides suffering extreme distress, depression, and feelings of abandonment, they frequently have to take on the overwhelming responsibility of supporting the family. Orphans and other vulnerable children are more likely to be malnourished or sick. They are often forced into hostile foster situations or onto the street, through poverty and neglect. Without parental protection, they face every kind of abuse and risk.

In such dire situations, orphans and other vulnerable children are the first to drop out of school. Uneducated and lacking the love, care and guidance provided by parents or guardians, the future of orphans and other vulnerable children is bleak. The longer parents stay alive, the brighter the future looks for their children.



FOOD FOR LIFE

Nutritious food can help keep HIV-positive people healthier longer. Food should be a core component of any essential HIV/AIDS care package. For a person living with HIV/AIDS, good nutrition can improve the effectiveness of drug treatments and improve the quality of life.

WFP reaches people living with HIV/AIDS through its partner organisations providing home-based care and take-home rations in school feeding programmes. Nutritional support to tuberculosis (TB) patients and their families is also critical since TB is one of the main causes of death for people with AIDS. Food assistance is given as an incentive to patients to complete the lengthy treatment for TB.

FOOD IS AN IMMEDIATE NEED

Kampala, Uganda: At 30, Annet Nandase is a widow and mother of five young children with seven orphans in her care. She lives in a slum in Kampala, where WFP



HIV/AIDS and Education

Education is the key to a bright and healthy future for all children, but for those whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS, going to school may no longer be a priority. WFP aims to change that. Food assistance encourages children to attend school. Empowered with knowledge and literacy, educated children will lead more productive, healthier lives and contribute more to society.

supports the work of a local partner organisation. Annet, who is HIV-positive, started feeling ill two years ago. Working in the nearby quarry, hammering rocks into chippings, she weakened by the day. Though feverish and faint, Annet forced herself to work because the quarry was the only income and source of food for her family. She eventually had to send her children to work in the quarry.

Annet remembers those days as her worst nightmare: "I knew I was dying. All my friends who were at the same stage and did not get treatment and food in time, are dead. I was worried sick for my children. Now that I get food and treatment, I can work again and the money I earn goes to school fees. I can only afford to educate two children, but before I could not afford to educate any - because we had to eat."

WFP/A. du Toit

FOOD FOR EDUCATION

For children who might otherwise miss out on an education, food plays a vital role in attracting them to school and keeping them there. Almost 16 million children benefit from WFP School Feeding Programmes, which supply one nutritious meal per day to those who are enrolled and attend school. Once school feeding programmes have been launched, complementary activities such as de-worming and HIV prevention maximise the benefits of food aid.

HIV Prevention Education

Children provide a window of hope in stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS. Keeping children HIV-negative is vital to future generations, but this is impossible unless they understand how the virus is transmitted and how to protect themselves. WFP will see that HIV prevention education is incorporated into all schools where school feeding programmes exist. WFP is also investigating ways of assisting informal and community schools where the most vulnerable children are often found.



Take-Home Rations

Food is often cited by poor HIV/AIDS-affected families as their greatest need. Without food and in the absence of available and affordable treatment, hungry families are forced to make drastic short-term decisions. In times of crises, one of the first ways a poor family copes is to remove children from school. Children, especially girls, are leaving school at alarming rates to help find food and to take care of sick parents and younger siblings. WFP provides take-home rations to lessen the burden on families and enable these children to stay in school.

UNAIDS/S.Noorani



Girls' Education

In some regions of the world, women are more likely to be infected with HIV than men. They also face the added risk of transmitting the infection to their children, either in the womb, during delivery or through breast-feeding. Ensuring that girls are educated can help stop the spread of HIV. WFP is a world leader in promoting education for girls through its take-home rations programme. The programme gives a months supply of food rations to the parents of girls who are enrolled in school and maintain a high attendance rate. The result is that girls' enrolment has tripled in some places.



UNICEF/G.Pirozzi

FOOD FOR TRAINING

Orphans and other vulnerable children, particularly girls, who have been taken out of school, will have limited opportunities to find reasonably paid, secure work as adults. Vocational training in areas of demand will increase their chances of earning an income. WFP provides older orphans and other vulnerable children and/or their families with food rations while they are enrolled in a vocational course. Providing food can break the cycle that forces street kids and poor women to engage in high-risk activities such as trading sex for basic necessities.

Once trained, new graduates can benefit from start-up food assistance. When food assistance is linked to income generation and micro-credit schemes, poor households have a real chance to escape from poverty. Without having to spend their income on food, the newly-trained graduates can focus on getting their careers and businesses established.

FOOD FOR VOLUNTEERS

Most community-based education initiatives depend on volunteers to instigate, implement and sustain activities. Volunteers usually face the same problems as their neighbours and often struggle to find time to help others while meeting their own basic needs. Food assistance can greatly improve the commitment, performance and morale of community health or education volunteers as well as home-based care volunteers.



Food in the field: New partnerships

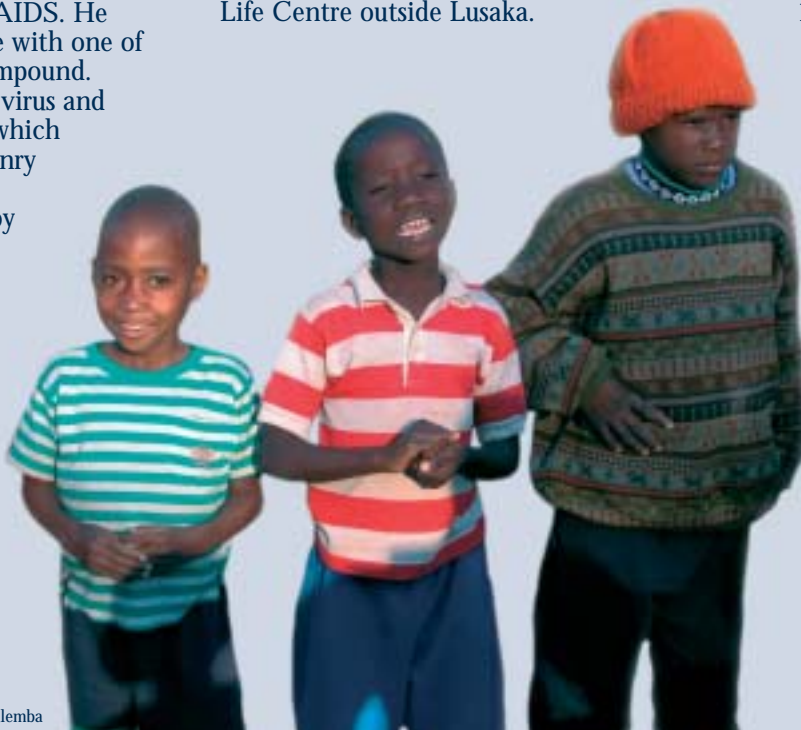
- In **Cambodia**, WFP school feeding and take-home rations enable children from poor, food insecure households affected by HIV/AIDS to stay in school.
- In **China**, WFP worked with UNAIDS to develop HIV/AIDS communication messages to educate rural families.
- In **Ethiopia**, WFP provides fortified food for urban HIV-infected mothers enrolled in a support programme.
- In **Haiti**, WFP supports life skills and vocational training programmes to increase agricultural production for people affected by HIV/AIDS.
- In **Lesotho** WFP provides family take-home rations to HIV/AIDS and TB patients through health centres and supports home-based care and income-generating activities.
- In **Malawi** WFP, with the Story Workshop, launched a radio campaign to disseminate messages on HIV/AIDS and protection of women and children from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- In **Mozambique**, with five implementing partners, WFP supports chronically ill people and their families through home-based care; orphans and vulnerable children get food assistance at day-care centres and receive informal education and vocational training.
- In **Swaziland** WFP provides corn-soya blend to pre- and post-natal clinics for pregnant and nursing women, many of whom are HIV-positive.

HENRY FINDS HOPE

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA: Henry Mwamba is seven years old and HIV-positive. A year ago he lost both his parents to AIDS. He was forced to go and live with one of his aunts in a nearby compound. Due to ignorance of the virus and the extreme poverty in which his new family lived, Henry was abused emotionally, physically and verbally by his aunt. He was not allowed to play with the other children because she feared he could infect them. She herself would only touch him with gloves. On many days, Henry would not get any food at all and as a result was severely malnourished. This in turn made him more susceptible to HIV/AIDS related diseases.

After the community became concerned, Henry was taken in by the Zambia Children's New Life Centre outside Lusaka.

This is an NGO that looks after 30 orphaned and abused children aged from six months to 18 years old. At the centre, Henry gets food from WFP under the supplementary feeding/orphan support programme. Thanks to WFP food, Henry is no longer undernourished and he is more resistant to infections. The food consists of maize grain, cooking oil, beans, corn soya, milk, and Henry's personal favourite, peas. He now attends school and has made new friends.



Henry, on the left, with his friends.

**HIV/AIDS UNIT
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