

## Children and HIV

**A Generation at Risk: The Global Impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans and Vulnerable Children**, edited by Geoff Foster, Carol Levine, and John Williamson, 312 pp, \$75, ISBN 0-521-65264-2, New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

*A GENERATION AT RISK* MAKES A HUGE contribution to our understanding of the impact of the HIV epidemic upon children. The book examines clearly and concisely the effect on children's lives in developed and developing countries. The authors rightly point out that children were neglected in early discussions on the epidemic.

The book provides invaluable insight into children's lives and what it means to watch a parent become sick and die. There is a cascade of events in children's lives during the illness and death of a parent. Children are often the chief caregivers for a sick parent and suffer great anxiety before the death; they worry about the parent and then about their future after the parent dies. After the death, the grieving child may be removed from the familiar community and from the school, which often provides the only remaining structure in the child's life. Grief may be suppressed or simply not given an opportunity for expression, because practical issues predominate. The psychological impact on children is often overlooked, and they are then more likely to be depressed and anxious, with subsequent behavioral problems that further reduce their chances of being cared for properly.

The different solutions to the problem of large numbers of children who do not have parents to care for them are discussed. Only a tiny proportion of orphans live in institutions, a tribute to the strength of the extended family structure, particularly in Africa. Often, however, the extended family is struggling to survive financially. The book considers the economic impact of HIV at each stage of the illness and death and the effect on the family's income and social capital and ultimately on the child's welfare.

The book outlines a three-level framework to consider how families can

be supported, thus improving the quality of care children receive. On the first level are the communities in which the children live. The second level is the influence arena, such as nongovernmental organizations. The third level is the enabling arena, which includes governments and international organizations. Considered are the importance to children of actions taken at each level and how families and communities can be supported by good decisions at the influence and enabling levels. Suggestions are outlined for how a national response might ensure that children have access to health and education. School is crucially important to a child whose life has been disrupted by bereavement, and the potential role that schools could play in affected communities is considered.

Institutional care, including the financial cost and the damage that this model of care may cause, is discussed. Adoption in cultures in which this is not the usual model is reviewed, including how it may be influenced by decisions made at the enabling level. Authors note that the importance of children determining their own preferred care option and of keeping siblings together is often overlooked.

Teenage infection and gender inequalities, reflected by higher rates of infection in girls, are discussed. Faith-based organizations, their views, their huge role, and how to capitalize on these attributes are highlighted. There is an update on the epidemic in Asia, including successes, the opportunity to learn from other countries, and the importance of scaling up interventions. Principles of care in a Western setting are outlined.

This book will add a great deal to the understanding of anyone involved at any level with the care of children with HIV/AIDS in both developing and developed countries. In developed countries, which have low rates of mother-to-child transmission, children seen in clinics have often come from developing countries. Information in this book will provide new understanding of the situation in the countries that they have

left. This book has opened my mind to the kind of suffering that individual children experience, often not obvious when we evaluate them in a clinical situation.

This book has inspired me and will inspire those who read it to do everything in their power to advocate for children affected worldwide by HIV—ideally, so that they are not orphaned, by advocating for their mothers to have access to antiretroviral medication, but for those who are orphaned, for a strong, well-resourced support mechanism within the educational system.

I highly recommend *A Generation at Risk* for doctors, nurses, and social workers who work with families affected by HIV. It is a "must read" for those in the influence and enabling arenas, including nongovernmental organizations and ministries of health and education, who are making policy decisions on affected children's behalf.

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## Global AIDS Activism

**Drugs Into Bodies: Global AIDS Treatment Activism**, by Raymond A. Smith and Patricia D. Siplon, 196 pp, \$44.95, ISBN 0-275-98325-0, Westport, Conn, Praeger, 2006.

THIS INSPIRING BOOK CHRONICLES THE birth and expansion of the global AIDS treatment activist movement—a movement that refuses to accept that people with HIV in the developing world should be left to die. *Drugs Into Bodies* clearly demonstrates how a small but growing group of activists banded together to fight for the improvement of universal access to HIV treatment. These activists forged a global network to combat the AIDS crisis in Africa and throughout the developing world by promoting access to effective and affordable HIV treatments. They defied the dictates of globalization, altered government policies, shamed multinational corporations, secured funding for treatment, and brought hope to millions of people.