

ISSUE FACT SHEET: ORPHANS

DID YOU KNOW?

It is estimated that 132 million children in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have lost one or both parents (UNICEF 2015)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What circumstances can lead to children becoming orphaned?
2. How can poor communities care for their youngest and most vulnerable citizens?
3. What resources do communities need to help educate orphans?

DEFINITION

An *orphan* is defined as a child whose parents are dead, or a child who has been deprived of parental care and has not been adopted.

OVERVIEW

Children become orphaned for a number of reasons. In developing countries, these reasons often have to do with lack of access to health care for adults, HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality, extreme poverty, war, and natural disasters. Orphans in developing countries can be particularly vulnerable because, in many cases, there are few government-funded programs available to assist with their care.

Orphaned children are dependent on others to advocate for them and provide for their needs and education. Those resources and aid frequently come from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with local communities.

RELATED IMPACTS: POVERTY

For orphaned children living in developing countries, the impact of poverty is extreme, as Sokha's story

demonstrates. The consequences of poverty are magnified when family support fails. Without parents, orphaned children have few options to feed and provide for themselves and, without resources, they frequently suffer from hunger and homelessness. They don't have access to the basic hygiene needed to keep healthy, or to doctors and hospitals when they are sick. Orphaned girls are especially vulnerable to violence and human trafficking.

RELATED IMPACTS: EDUCATION

When children's basic needs are not met, it is virtually impossible for them to obtain an education or focus on their future. Their priority becomes finding food and shelter, not going to school. These children need help. Without an education, the cycle of poverty continues; with an education, a foundation is created for children to grow and build healthy futures.

WHAT'S WORKING

So what can be done? How can we help feed and clothe children, including orphans, living in such extreme circumstances? How can we help orphans go to school?

Here are some initiatives that are currently working to help orphans in Cambodia:

- Basic needs such as a place to live, food, and water must be addressed for the children surviving in Cambodian dumps. A New Day Cambodia is providing sustainable orphanages to house and care for orphans while they attend school.
- Children in Cambodia need books in their native language, Khmer. Room to Read implemented a book-publishing program in the country to help meet this basic educational need.

RESOURCES

- A New Day Cambodia at www.anewdaycambodia.org
- Room to Read at www.roomtoread.org
- See Additional Resources Guide for other resources, including relevant videos (found in the Resources section).