

Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children



Photo: CRS Zimbabwe/Giacomo Pirozzi

Over 105,000 orphans have benefited from USAID's integrated programming in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of orphans since 1998 -- now an estimated 800,000 -- mostly due to the high prevalence and incidence of HIV and AIDS. Either one or both parents have died due to AIDS, leaving them to cope alone. Many of the orphans care for themselves and their siblings without the protection or guidance of an adult. These children are often exploited for their labor, turn to vandalism, or drop out of school. Without outside help, their chances of thriving or even surviving are slim. Many show psychosomatic disturbances, depression, low self esteem, disturbed social behavior, and low levels of life skills.

USAID is funding the STRIVE program, implemented by Catholic Relief Services, to take a comprehensive approach to addressing orphans' multiple needs, especially community-led efforts to care for children affected by HIV and AIDS. The program, designed to develop effective and sustainable models for this support, reaches out to children affected by AIDS through sixteen international non-governmental and local community-based organizations. These organizations implement care and support in psychosocial services, food security, education assistance, and economic strengthening. There has been a particular focus on girls who are generally more likely to miss out on education, lack parental guidance, suffer social stigma, and fall into prostitution or crime. To date, the program has assisted 105,240 children.

Photo & Caption