

Abstract

This paper focuses on the impact of HIV/AIDS on child survival and development in Kenya. The rapid spread of HIV, mainly through heterosexual contact and mother-to child transmission, contributes to the increasing rates of infant and under-five mortality in Kenyan provinces. Moreover, the impact of AIDS on the well-being of children is likely to worsen, as preliminary findings of the 1999 sentinel surveillance data indicate that HIV prevalence among the adult population is still rising. Poverty increases the vulnerability of children to HIV/AIDS. In addition, it may increase the likelihood that women become commercial sex workers as an alternative source of income. Poverty also increases the risk of illness and death through poor access to basic services. Poor environmental sanitation and lack of access to safe water sources increase the vulnerability of children to the impact of the infection. As a consequence, more and more children will be infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and the ability of HIV-positive parents to care for their children will be impaired, while the number of orphans will continue to increase dramatically as parents die within a short period. Recommended strategies in combating the epidemic and improving the well-being of children are outlined.