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Ten Commandments of Jim Grant's Leadership for Development

by

Kul C. Gautam

UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific

The late James P. Grant, former Executive Director of UNICEF, was a visionary with a missionary zeal. I have never encountered a man, or a woman, whose faith in human capacity for doing good was so profound, and whose capacity for seeing a silver lining in every dark cloud was so total. A man of holistic vision, Grant was very aware of the great complexities of development issues. But he was a great master at simplifying complex issues until they became easily understandable and readily doable.

Grant believed that more human progress has been made in this century than in all previous human history. It was not the dramatic decline in infant mortality, increase in life expectancy or reduction of illiteracy, about which he spoke so much, that were the key indicators of this human progress. The most significant transformation in human development, he believed, was the fact that for the first time in history, we regard it as normal that the world order should be organized for the benefit of the teeming masses rather than for the benefit of the chosen few.

Grant often quoted Arnold Toynbee, who said that "the twentieth century will be chiefly remembered in future centuries not as an age of political conflicts or technical inventions, but as an age in which human society dared to think of the welfare of the whole human race as a practical objective". Grant devoted half a century of his own professional life to pursuing this objective. Arguing that morality must march in step with the growing capacity of governments, international agencies, NGOs and the civil society, he tirelessly advocated for Universal access to basic services. He used the resources and the bully pulpit as the head of UNICEF to influence policies and priorities of governments, international agencies, NGOs and others in a crusade that is credited with saving the lives of some 26 million children, improving the health and well-being of millions more and contributing to a people-centred ethics of development.

What strategies did Grant employ to achieve such remarkable results? And what lessons can be learned from his approach to development? Some have argued that Grant was a one-of-a-kind phenomenon. I believe that while he was in a class by himself in his indefatigable optimism, and can-do spirit, the strategies he followed are readily replicable in the hands of leaders with a vision and genuine commitment for development. In fact, these strategies are

being applied today in many countries, communities and organizations throughout the world with good results.

In his last State of the World's Children:1995 report Grant summarized the strategies that he had found particularly effective in his promotion of the child survival and development revolution and the follow up to the World Summit for Children. He proposed similar strategies be adopted for the follow up to the World Summit for Social Development. Drawing on it and other attempts to distill lessons on his leadership, I would group Grant's strategy for accelerating human development under what I would refer to as the 10 Commandments of Jim Grant's leadership for development.

Adapted from a statement delivered at the International Development Conference, Washington, D.C. on 13 January 1997.

1. Articulate your vision for development in terms of inspiring goals: Grant believed in the mobilising power of measurable goals. Fuzzily formulated general aims of development tend to be a prescription for evasion and non-accountability. Broad development objectives such as "Sustainable Development" or "Health for All" or "Education for All" sum up a desired end result, but give no clue as to how to get there. Such broad aims need to be transformed into more concrete goals such as reducing infant mortality by a certain percentage, increasing adult literacy rate to a certain level, eradicating a dreaded disease from the face of the earth, etc. which can help achieve the broad objectives of development.
2. Break down goals into time-bound, "doable" propositions: Even concrete national (or international) goals need to be translated into specific actions that can be taken at the sub-national, community or family level. Often this means setting proxy goals and intermediate targets. Sometimes it requires a sub-goal of mobilizing the means or creating the precondition for achieving the larger goal. Most importantly, goals should be broken down to actionable propositions within the lifetime of today's political leadership, before the next election or the next coup d'etat.

Goals can be very powerful means for mobilizing action, for ensuring accountability of public officials and for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery systems. But a goal-oriented approach also has its downside. It can lead to too much attention on the end results, and neglect of participatory processes. It can distort priorities by emphasizing the measurable versus the truly important. It can lead to imposition of national or even global goals on reluctant local communities. And it can corrupt the development process by giving disproportionate attention to programmes for which funding is readily available from governments and donors.

Indeed misuse of goals and targets in some countries, especially in family planning programs, has led to a general antipathy towards a goal-oriented

approach to development in some circles. But it would be "throwing the baby with the bath water" not to capitalize on the enormous power and potential of a goal-oriented approach. There are ways in which goals can be selected and pursued that command universal acceptance. Pitfalls of goals can be minimized. We can adopt goals that empower people, and avoid those that victimize them. We all ought to be for goals that inspire people, not intimidate them; goals that challenge us, not frighten us; goals that are ambitious but achievable. In this post-cold war era, what we need are goals that are equivalent in excitement to the "man in the moon", not cynical protestations of "dog in the manger".

In the "lost decade" of development in the 1980s, Jim Grant led a movement that, with carefully crafted goals and strategies, brought about a child survival revolution against great odds. It showed that under dynamic leadership the United Nations system can make a great difference. It vindicated a creative, goal-oriented approach to development.

3. Demystify Techniques and Technologies: Many development programmes are expressed in such technical terms as to be understood only by specialists. For any programme to develop a large following, it is vital to communicate the required actions and techniques in the simplest possible terms. Presented or demonstrated in ways that voters and politicians can understand, large scale actions develop their own constituencies of concerned citizens and activists. The ubiquitous ORS packet that Jim Grant waved, and how he encouraged Presidents, Prime Ministers, Governors and Mayors to personally administer polio vaccines or test iodised salt, left a lasting impression on the practicality of these interventions. Far too many technocrats and bureaucrats alienate the very people whom they are trying to help by failing to communicate in a language they can understand. Instead of being their best allies, people become passive bystanders when development-speak characterises action for development. Demystifying the techniques of development is therefore essential for ensuring popular participation, ownership and empowerment of participants and beneficiaries of development programmes.

4. Generate and Sustain Political Commitment: Quite often social development programmes are the domains of weak and under-funded ministries, vulnerable to budget cuts in times of austerity. Securing commitment of top political leadership, at national as well as provincial and local levels, and commitment of departments that control resource allocation is vital. But this requires convincing these leaders that it is in their political interest to identify themselves with success in pursuing such development goals. Once secured, political commitment must be sustained, and resecured whenever there is a change in government or leadership. Fostering a *national* consensus on human development goals, helps ensure that such goals do not become vulnerable to changes in political winds. Grant was able to mobilise the political commitment of a wide spectrum of leaders, democrats and dictators, for the well-being of children. The World Summit for Children, the largest gathering of world leaders until that time was, of course, the pinnacle of his achievement. But there are scores of other examples showing that when political will is cultivated, resources can be found even when budgets are tight.

5. Mobilise a Grand Alliance of All Social Forces: Even the best run Government ministries and departments cannot reach all the people and help bring about the

desired behavioural changes required for most development activities in a large scale. But with today's information and communications capacity, it is possible to mobilise a vast array of actors for promoting development. Once sectoral straight-jackets are thrown off, many development programmes can be turned into movements around which "grand alliances" can be built involving the media and the NGOS, the churches and the school children, private marketing channels and public policy forums. This is how Jim Grant turned what might have been a conventional programme of technical assistance into a movement for child survival and development. And as a builder of movements, Grant was generous, and genuinely so, in giving credit to all partners, big and small, whose contribution made a difference.

6. Go to Scale: The development map of the world is littered with pilot studies and demonstration projects. Some of these have been useful for innovation and replication, but far too many have been more beneficial to local officials, researchers and donors than to the intended beneficiaries. Few development programmes attempt to take action on a scale commensurate with the problems they are trying to tackle. Grant was convinced that going to scale with a few ambitious but achievable actions was extremely important, both on its own merit and as a powerful boost for broader development advocacy. Against all odds, and often derision of conventional development experts and academics, Grant advocated that immunization levels be raised from 10% to 80% within a few years; that the world's major cause of mental retardation be tamed by iodising all of the world's salt, that major strides be made in reducing illiteracy, universalising access to primary education, and expanding availability of safe drinking water and sanitation. Dramatic achievements were registered in each of these areas, and many more. The lives of over 3 million children a year are being saved today because immunisation programmes went to scale. One and half billion more people are consuming iodised salt today than just 3 years ago, because of the effort to iodise salt in a scale commensurate with the magnitude of its deficiency. Net primary school enrolment rose from 50% to 80% in the 1980s with significant reduction in gender disparities. Over a billion people got access to safe water supply in the decade of the 1980s. While the remaining problems are still staggering, the record of achievement in human development is an impressive one.

7. Select Your Priorities and Stick to Them: Many development agencies suffer from trying to do too many things, often in a mediocre manner rather than doing a few important things, and doing them well. A tribute to Jim Grant was his ability to select just a few priorities and sticking to them. This is easier said than done. For someone of Grant's broad vision of development, and can-do spirit, there were always many temptations to become involved in many issues. The needs of children are many and the constituencies clamouring for UNICEF's attention are manifold. But Grant led UNICEF to devote a lion's share of its resources and efforts to just a few major interventions - immunization and oral rehydration therapy, among them. He withstood the criticism about being tunnel visioned, and never tired of advocating for his priorities. The results have been spectacular: guinea worm disease affecting over a million people in Africa reduced by 95% within 5 years; deaths due to measles reduced by 85%; the reported cases of polio reduced by 83% in 7 years, with the crippling disease eliminated in at least 110 countries; a million child deaths averted every year by popularising the low-cost, low-tech oral rehydration therapy, millions prevented

- from being blind by lack of vitamin A, and tens of millions overcoming mental retardation by iodine deficiency. Grant could have taken the easy path of doing many miscellaneous good things for children in a small scale. That would have certainly satisfied a larger number of constituencies clamouring for UNICEF's attention, but it would probably have left a legacy of great *underachievement* for UNICEF, a sad characteristic of too many U.N. agencies.

8. Institute Public Monitoring and Accountability: The beauty of measurable goals is that progress can be regularly monitored. But to use it effectively to accelerate progress or to take corrective actions, monitoring must not be confined to specialized expert analysis. It must involve and inform political leaders and the media, NGO activists and the participating communities. Publicizing the progress and retrogression, using indicators that the public can understand, is essential for maximum benefit of a goal-oriented programme. Generating healthy competition by comparing the performance of neighbouring districts or neighbouring countries is often a great catalyst for faster progress. UNICEF's annual report on the *Progress of Nations* contributes to such monitoring at the global level on progress towards the goals adopted by the World Summit for Children. A major challenge in monitoring social development programmes is that relevant statistics are not collected, processed or disseminated with sufficient frequency. Grant pressed his staff and others to give priority to compilation of social statistics in the same timely manner as some of the common economic data. Methodologies for doing so, including the multiple indicator cluster surveys, were devised and merit widespread application.

9. Ensure Relevance to Broader Development Agenda: A corollary to being selective and focused is not to lose sight of the broader context of development.

Grant's interest in development was very broad, multi-faceted and holistic. His keen sense of strategy led him to work on several high profile success stories lending him credibility to push for even more ambitious goals. But he always saw the child survival and development actions he promoted so vigorously as a springboard for sustainable human development. In his annual *State of the World's Children* reports Grant boldly addressed issues ranging from the need for reducing military expenditures, providing debt relief for developing countries, promoting adjustment with a human face, ending the apartheid of gender, restructuring aid and national budgets in favour of basic social services. Success in ambitious programmes for children and women, he believed, could be the Trojan Horse for attacking the citadel of poverty, for undergirding democracy, dramatically slowing population growth and for accelerating economic development.

10. Unleash the Full Potential of the United Nations System: Grant was a true Believer in the principles of the United Nations and its great - if under used potential for promoting peace, human rights and development. While some viewed the series of major U.N. conferences of the 1970s and 1990s, as futile and unproductive, Grant saw them as developing consensus and commitment for the great issues of our times: environment, population, shelter, health, food and nutrition, education, human rights, social development and women's empowerment. There was an in-house joke in UNICEF that Grant never saw a summit that he did not like. A more apt rendering would be that he never went to

a summit from which he did not win a significant commitment for children. He was masterful in exploiting the potential of the U.N. system : in mobilizing sister agencies to help accelerate action for children, in influencing other agencies' policies and priorities, in finding common ground and forging solidarity among agencies, and by offering, without being pretentious, a personal model of vision and leadership. The *World Summit for Children*, was a crowning achievement of his career both in terms of how he used the U.N. system so effectively to fashion an inspiring agenda for children and development with ambitious but practical goals, and a vigorous follow up with impressive results.

Today we see much cynicism and pessimism about development cooperation. Instead of the end of cold war generating a peace dividend and a new momentum for development, we see the growth of a mean spirit of inward looking, isolationist impulses in many countries. Although our nightly news tends to be dominated by stories of failures of development, the fact is that the daily lives of three-quarters of humanity are now characterised by unprecedented progress, and success stories of development. What we need at this critical time to recapture the excitement for development cooperation is a can-do, must-do spirit so characteristic of Jim Grant, who helped us to lift our gaze from today's depressing headlines to tomorrow's exciting horizons.

BUILDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ Increasing awareness, understanding and a sense of responsibility for action among policy makers, leaders and the public
- ◆ Reducing stigma and discrimination towards those with HIV/AIDS and their families
- ◆ Ensuring laws and government action protect the rights and support the coping capacities of individuals, families and communities--with particular attention to the situation of children and women
- ◆ Increasing the impact and effectiveness of community-level programmes
- ◆ Monitoring the epidemic and its effects.

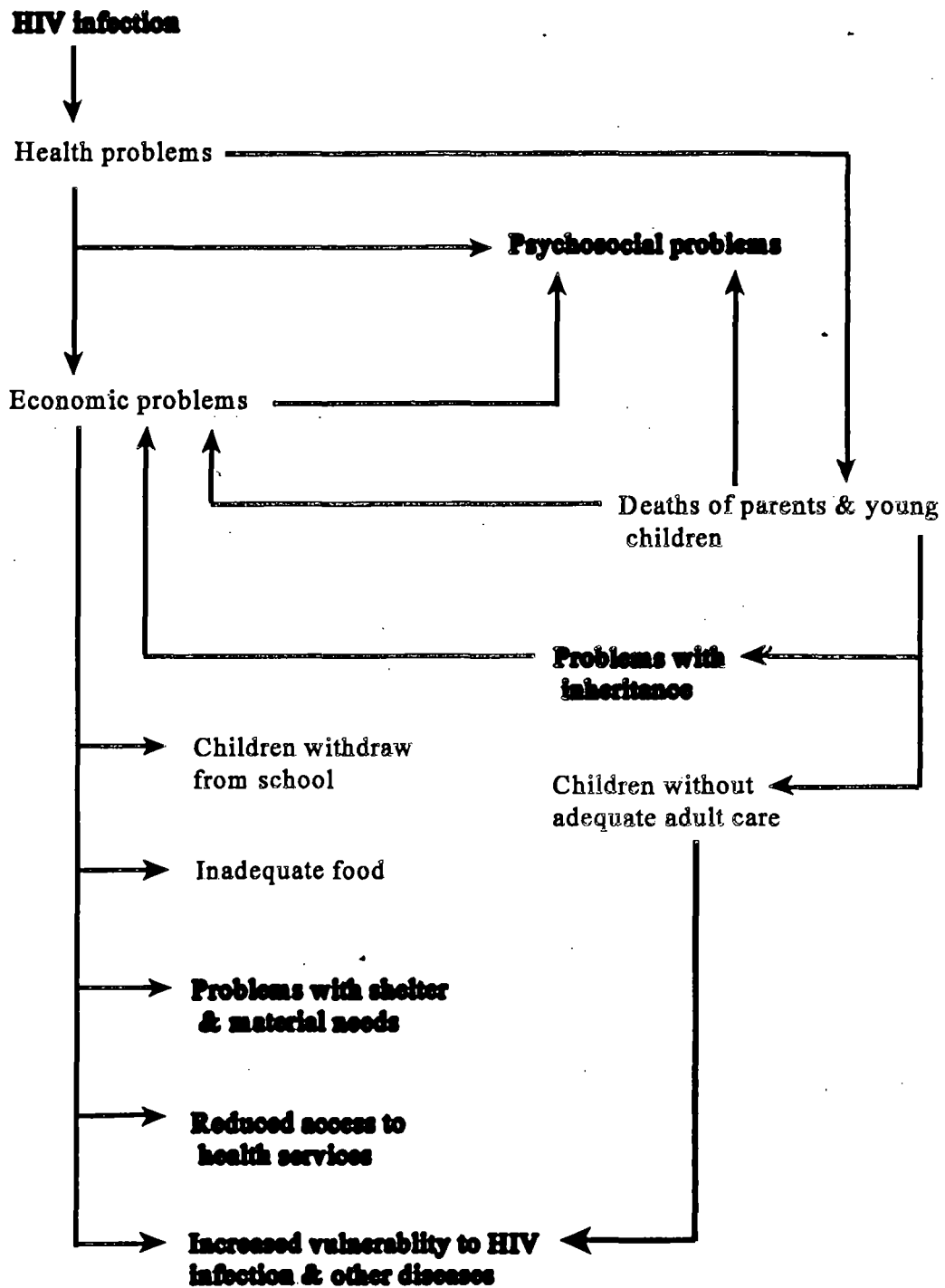
DEVELOPING PROGRAMMES

- ◆ Identifying and monitoring the most vulnerable children,
- ◆ Increasing family capacity to provide for children's needs,
- ◆ Increasing community support for vulnerable children and families,
- ◆ Helping children stay in school and prepare to support themselves,
- ◆ Ensuring systems are in place to protect and care for vulnerable children,
- ◆ Addressing threats to psychosocial well-being and development and
- ◆ Ensuring access to health services.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONSE

1. Strengthen the capacity of families to cope with their problems.
2. Stimulate and strengthen Community - Based Responses
3. Ensure that Governments Protect the most vulnerable children and provide essential services
4. Build the capacity of children to support themselves
5. Create an enabling environment for affected children and families

PROBLEMS AMONG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS



Problem and Context Matrix

Use the table as a two-dimensional checklist to identify areas to be examined.

Problem Areas	Aspects of the Context						
	Epidemiologic	Demographic	Social, Cultural and Religious Aspects	Attitudes and Knowledge about HIV/AIDS	Economic	Services	Laws & Policies
Economic problems							
Children withdraw from school							
Food insecurity							
Shelter & material difficulties							
Inadequate access to health services							
Vulnerability to illnesses							
Inheritance problems							
Children without adequate care							
Psychosocial problems							

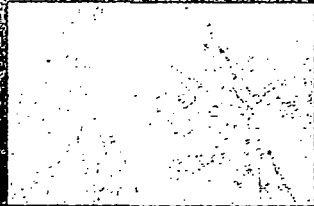


HIV/AIDS is a silent emergency in Africa

An emergency out of control

The AIDS pandemic
in sub-Saharan Africa is
more significant,
in terms of impact on child
survival and maternal mortality
than all other emergencies
combined.

Compared to Emergencies...



Emergency

**2 Million in Sub-Saharan
Africa at heightened risk**

**CDR moving to 2/10,000
per day**

HIV/AIDS



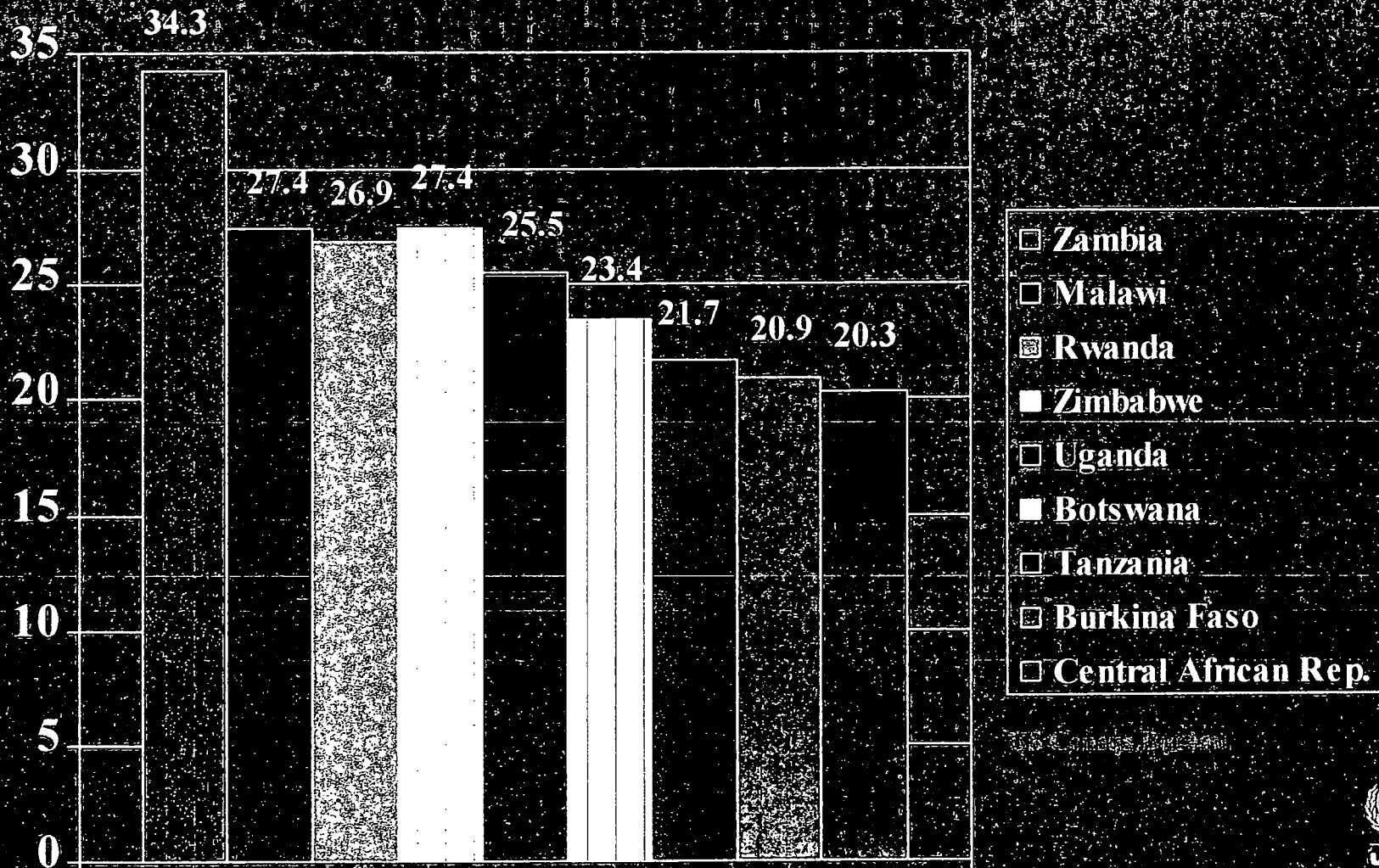
**7 million new infections
annually**

**.5 to 1 million children
born HIV+**

**20 to 35% of all children
orphaned**

**CDR moving to 2/10,000
per day**

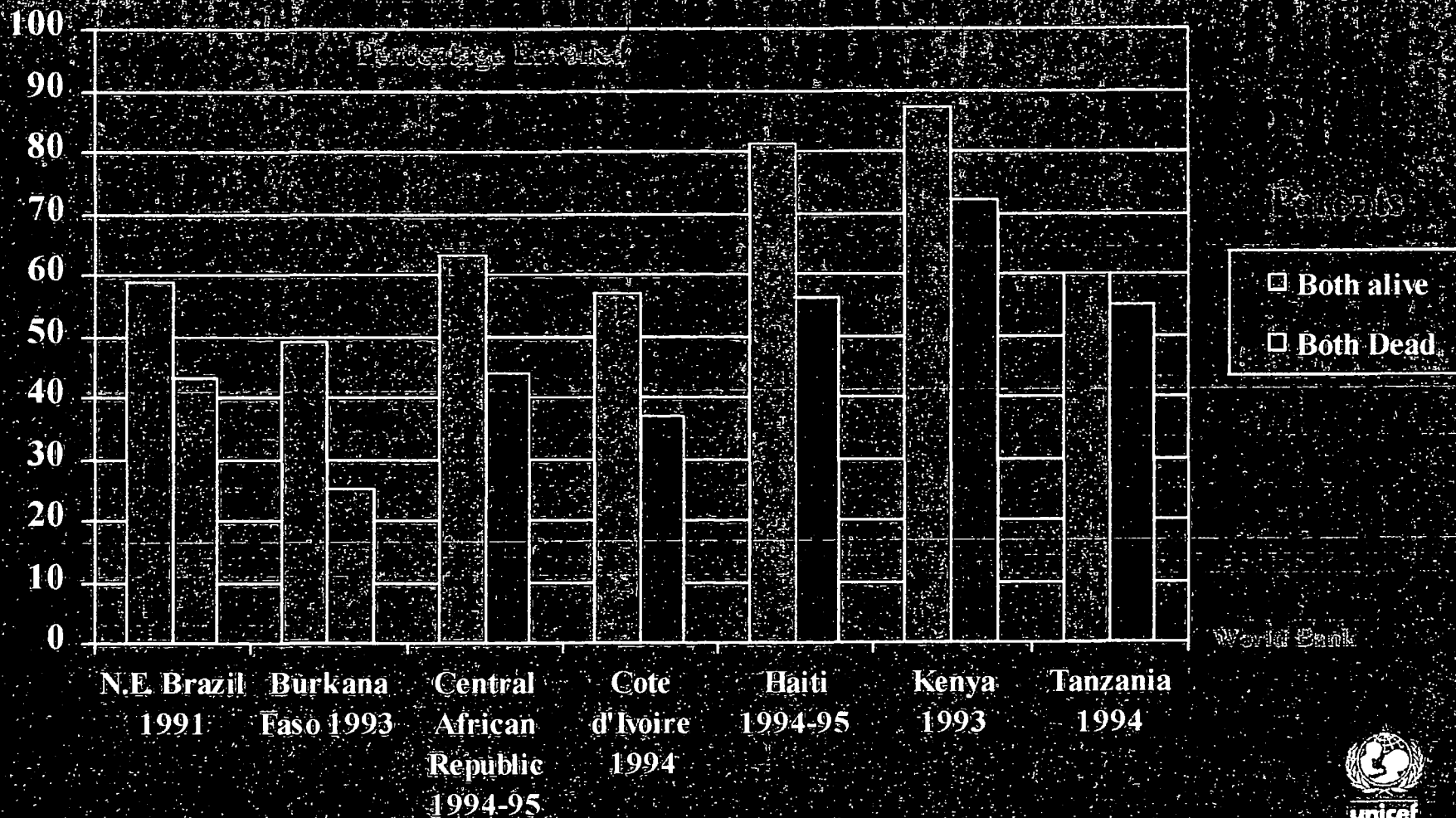
Estimated Sub-Saharan African countries: one-fifth to one-third of all children under the age of 15 will be orphaned by the year 2000



UN Children's Fund

Orphan school attendance declines unless there is outside assistance

Enrollment Rate For Children Ages 7-14, by Orphan Status

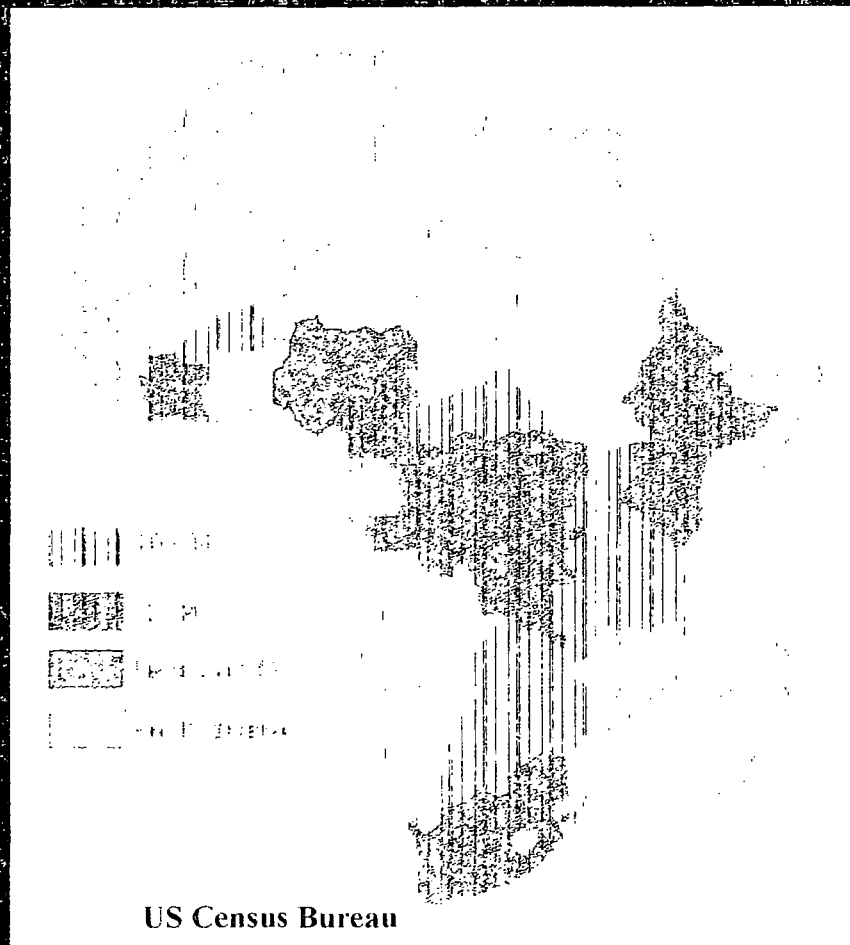


**In Sub-Saharan Africa,
up to one - quarter of
all children are living in
a family where a parent
is HIV positive and in
need of care**

**In heavily affected
countries, the proportion
of orphans triples
or quadruples**

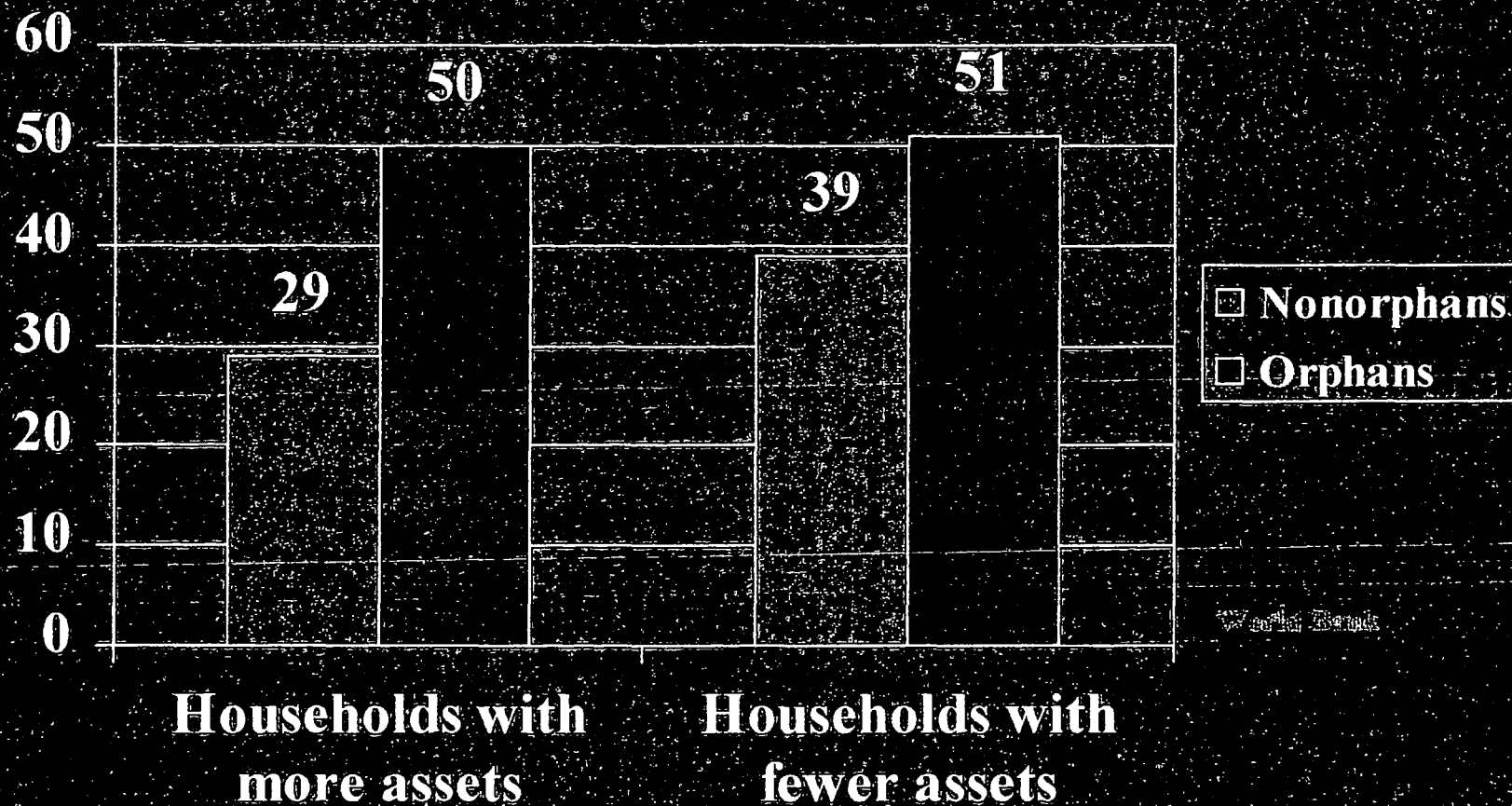


More than 90% of the world's orphans estimated
in *Children on the Brink* are
in 19 Sub-Saharan African countries



Stunting of orphaned children is very high especially compared to non-orphans in the same household

Percentage of children stunted



World Bank

Increases in AIDS Mortality Are Responsible for the Large Increases in Orphaning

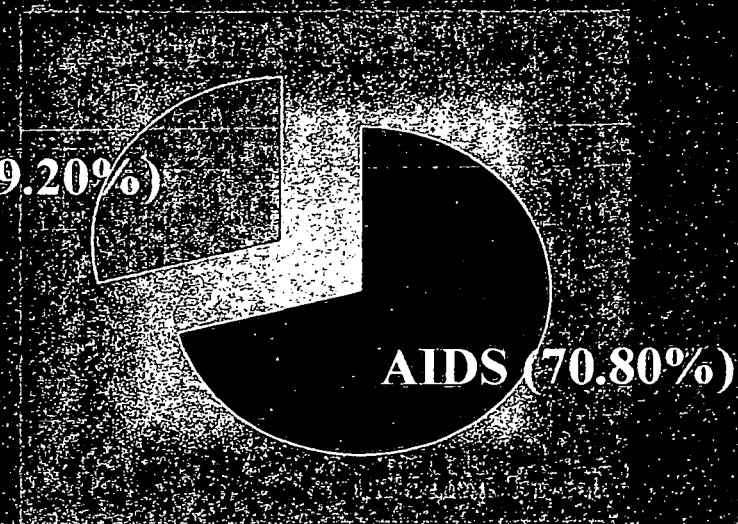
Orphans by Cause, 1990

Other Causes (80.10%)

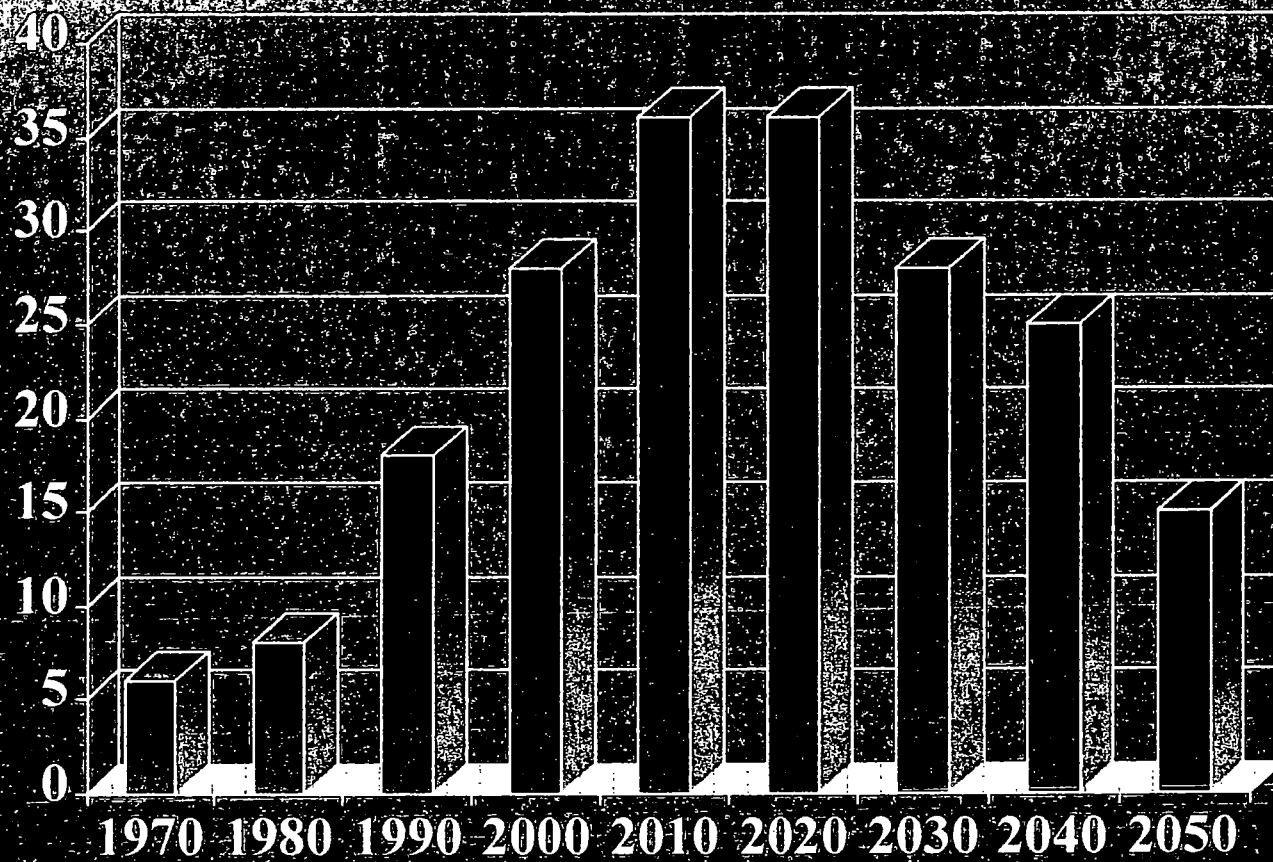


Orphans by Cause, 2010

Other Causes (29.20%)



The Problem is Long Term



Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe will have high proportions of orphans through at least 2030

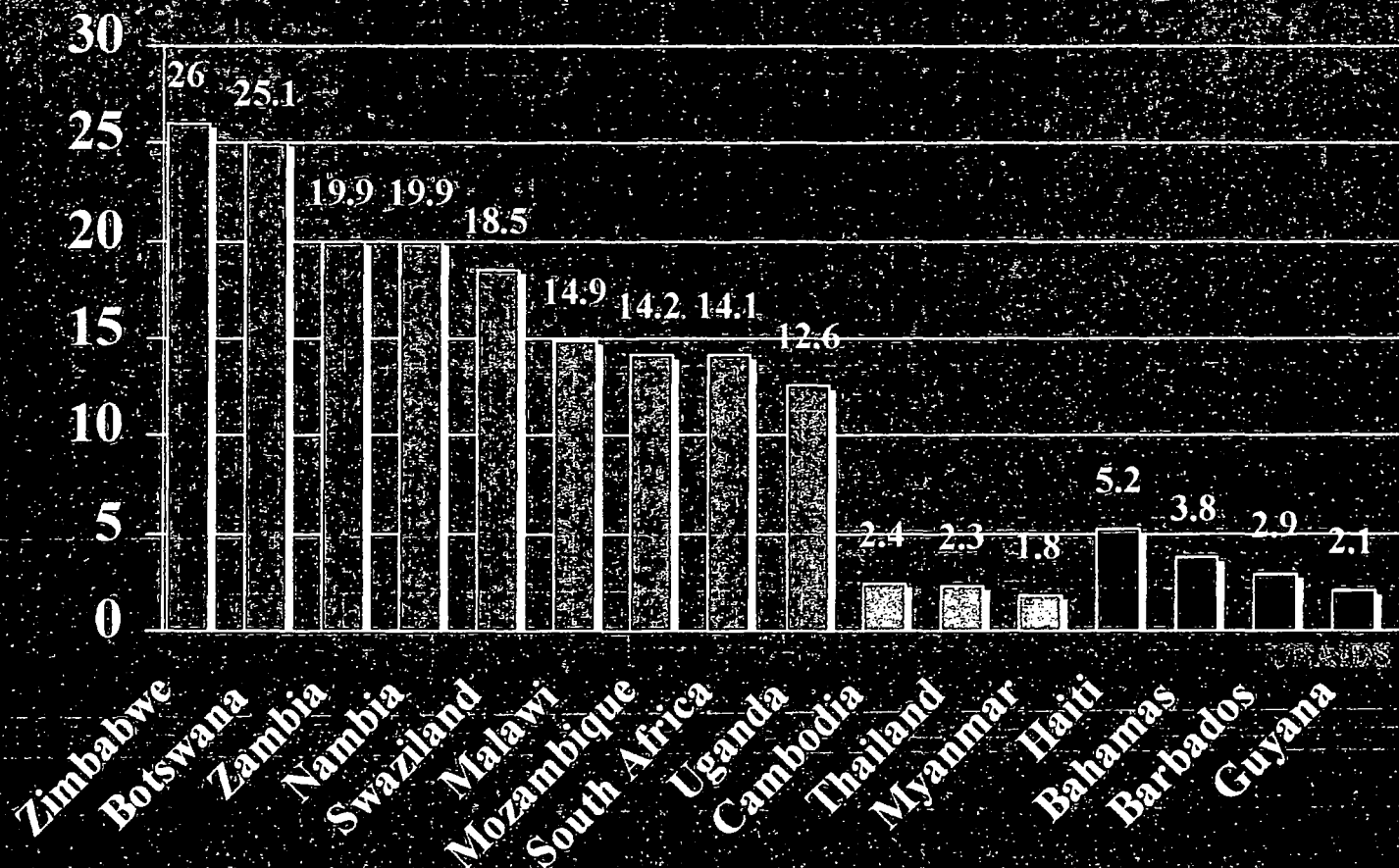
**Even if new infections leveled by the year 2000
in Sub Saharan Africa...**

**Infection rates will remain high
through at least 2010**

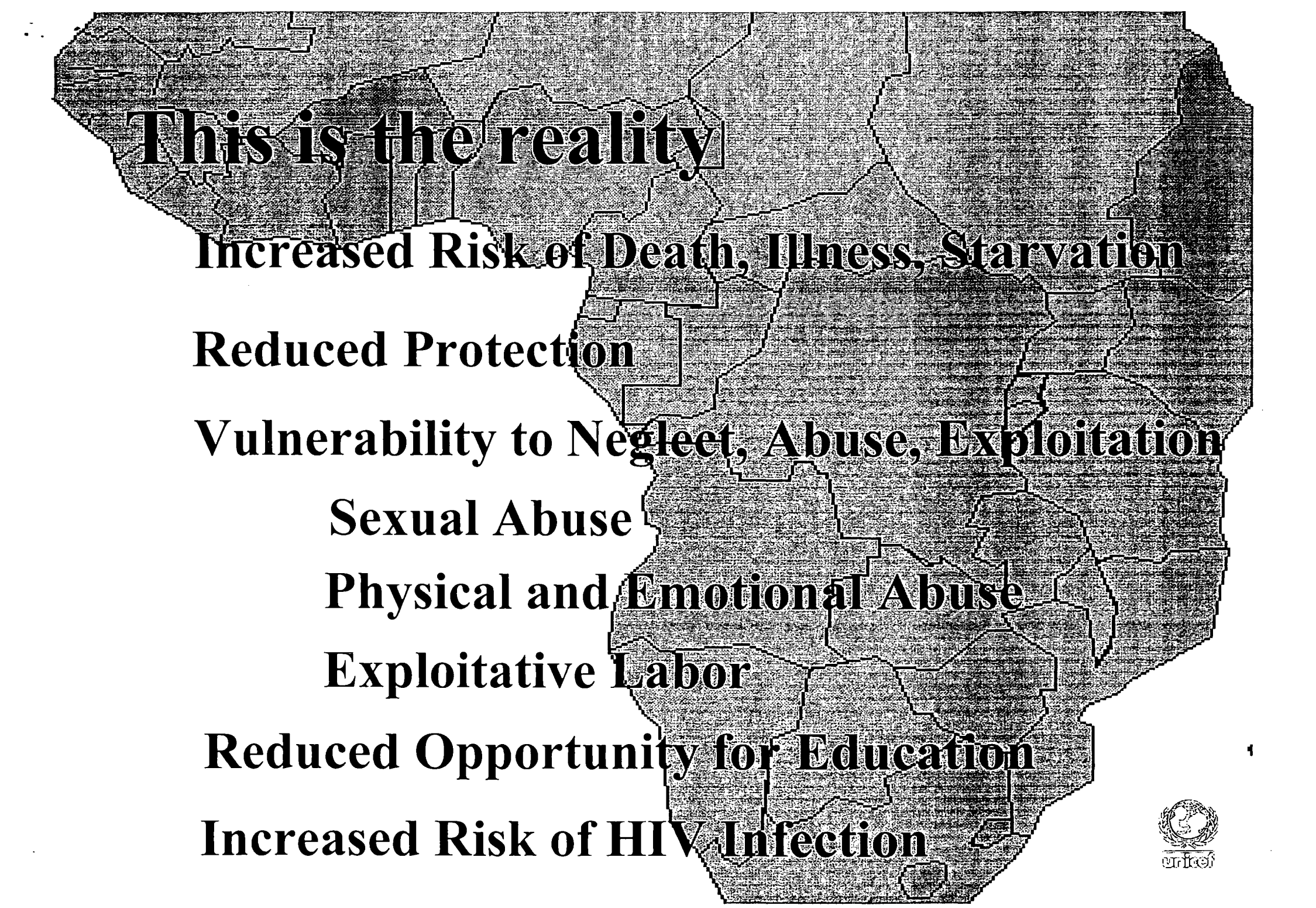
Deaths will not level until 2025

**The proportion of children orphaned will be
unusually high through at least 2050**

Infection Levels are Higher than Ever Imagined



And They Are Worsening



This is the reality

Increased Risk of Death, Illness, Starvation

Reduced Protection

Vulnerability to Neglect, Abuse, Exploitation

Sexual Abuse

Physical and Emotional Abuse

Exploitative Labor

Reduced Opportunity for Education

Increased Risk of HIV Infection