



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

Millions of orphaned children could lose support May 4, 2023

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The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief — aka: PEPFAR — marked its 20th anniversary this year. Far from being old news, the program remains the largest-ever commitment by any nation against a single disease, and since its inception it has [saved more than 20 million lives in sub-Saharan Africa](#), and [cared for more than 7 million orphans and vulnerable children created by the epidemic](#).

PEPFAR faces reauthorization this year. Created by President George W. Bush in 2003, PEPFAR has always enjoyed strong bipartisan support. In fact, previous reauthorizations under 10 Congresses and four presidents have essentially [made the program permanent — with some exceptions](#). **Chief among them: The funding set aside to care for those millions of orphans and vulnerable children.**

PEPFAR sets aside at least 10% of all funding to care for these children. Those dollars provide them with stable and good nutrition, access to school and psychosocial support, and savings and livelihood for their caregivers. These holistic services keep children's families together and functioning and connect them to HIV treatment services if they are HIV positive. [This provision expires on September 30th.](#)

During recent visits to Capitol Hill, our policy experts have heard from lawmakers and staff that they expect Congress to renew these child-focused provisions.

BUT.....five years ago some members of Congress mounted an almost successful effort to remove the 10% set aside while leaving all other provisions untouched. Given the legislature's current bad blood — and the fact that kids are always last and least — we thought it was important to mention a few key facts:

- While AIDS is no longer a death sentence on the African continent, [the number of children orphaned by HIV has grown](#), from 12.4 million when PEPFAR was created to 14.9 million in 2021.
- Millions more children, who are highly vulnerable but not necessarily orphans, also subsist on these funds.
- COVID-19 has added to the burden on children globally, robbing [nearly 11 million more](#) of a caregiver. PEPFAR has been so successful at caring for children, [experts and scholars have floated it as a model](#) to help these newly orphaned and vulnerable children.
- [Children continue to be left behind in the global HIV response](#). Just slightly more than half of all children living with HIV are on life-saving treatment, [versus roughly 76% of adults](#).

The increased number of children still affected by HIV and the world's distraction by other issues — war, climate, catastrophes — make the 10% set aside more important than ever. So far, [PEPFAR's bipartisan appeal appears to be holding up](#). The program and its supporters [aim to eliminate HIV as a global public health threat by 2030](#).

We must make sure that children are part of that plan.



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