

# Africa ignoring youth with AIDS

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AP) - Governments, schools and communities are turning their backs on the education needs of children affected by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, an international rights organization said Monday.

More than 12 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than a third of them are not in school, New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a report.

The group said lack of education puts children at risk of sexual exploitation, unemployment and hazardous labor — as well as becoming infected with HIV themselves.

"It is part of the cruel logic of the AIDS epidemic that when parents become sick or die, it reduces their children's access to education, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to HIV," the report said. "Governments do far more to break this cycle."

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than 25 million of the nearly 40 million

people around the world infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. More than 2.2 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses in the region in 2004 — most of them parents.

When Kenneth Kyambadde's father died three years ago in Uganda, he was left responsible for three of his 10 siblings.

The children take turns going to school based on how much money the 17-year-old can scrape together selling fuel on the black market.

Now his mother is also ailing and Kyambadde wonders if he will ever graduate from university, where he is studying accounting.

"I am going through this nightmare, and I do not know whether I will succeed, and yet I cannot leave my helpless mother alone," the solemn, wide-eyed youth told The Associated Press. "I am a child, as well as a parent, and there is nothing I can do about it."

The 57-page Human Rights Watch report was based on interviews with dozens of children affected

by AIDS and their caregivers in South Africa, Kenya and Uganda in June.

It found that many children are dropping out of school to care for terminally ill parents and younger siblings.

Some are forced to work long hours to make up for lost family income.

Children who are themselves infected miss long periods of school because of poor health, inadequate access to treatment and fear of stigma. The taunts of their peers also discourage them from discussing their difficulties with teachers.

South Africa, Kenya and Uganda do not officially exclude children who cannot afford to pay school fees. However, children in all three countries told researchers they were turned away by schools because they did not have the money for other expenses, such as uniforms and textbooks, or could not produce documents proving they were eligible for free tuition.

In addition, few schools provide support to children caring for sick parents or

coping with deaths. Most institutions simply accept it when emotionally scarred children fall behind or drop out of school, the report said.

Vuyiswa Peter, a 14-year-old South African, already lost one year of school when her mother died eight years ago. In August, her father also died. Her grandmother cannot afford to pay her school fees, and she worries she won't be allowed to take exams next month.

"Sometimes I feel like crying," the shy girl said, tugging nervously at her knee socks. "It seems like I am useless to (others) when they look at me."

South Africa has taken steps to place needy children in foster care and issue them grants, but AIDS has overwhelmed the system, and these benefits are only reaching a tiny fraction of those who need them, the report said. In Kenya and Uganda, there is no comparable system to care for orphans.

All three governments rely heavily on overstretched extended families, faith-based organizations and other groups to fulfill this role — in some cases exposing children to abuse by unregulated and ill-intentioned caregivers, the report said.

Uganda's information minister, James Nsaba Buturo, acknowledged the difficulties keeping children in school but said Human Rights Watch should also recognize the financial constraints faced by African governments.

The report's author, Jonathan Cohen, urged governments to review legislation and school policies to ensure no child is turned away for lack of money, and alternate parental care is provided to those who need it.

# Bush urges Muslims to lead fight on terrorism

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush said Monday that all responsible Muslim leaders should denounce violent extremism because terrorists follow an ideology that exploits Islam.

"Many Muslim scholars have already publicly condemned terrorism, often citing chapter 5, verse 32 of the Qur'an, which states that killing an innocent human being is like killing all of humanity, and saving the life of one person is like saving all of humanity," Bush said as he hosted a dinner marking the end of the daily fast during Ramadan.

"I appreciate those of you here who have joined these scholars in rejecting violent extremists. And I believe the time has come for all responsible Islamic leaders to denounce an ideology that exploits Islam for political ends and defiles your noble faith," he said.

Bush said those in the room share a conviction that the United States must be free of religious discrimination and that the world must be safer and more peaceful. He said he was grateful to Muslim nations that have helped in the war on terrorism.

"The killers who take the lives of innocent men, women and children are followers of a violent ideology very different from the religion of Islam," he said. "These extremists distort the idea of jihad into a call for terrorist murder against anyone who does not share their radical vision, including Muslims from other traditions, who they regard as heretics. Their strategy will fail."

Bush has hosted an iftar dinner annually for the last five years in the State Dining Room.

Attendees included ambassadors from Islamic nations, administration officials and Muslim leaders in the United States.

The group interrupted Bush's brief remarks once, when he said a Qur'an has been added to the White House library for the first time in history.

# Malawi drought highlights food shortage

MANKHOKWE, Malawi (AP) - Dona Kijani dives into a crocodile-infested river for water lilies, gambling with death to pull up tubers that are barely edible and give her children diarrhea. She says it is her only source of food.

For Kijani and many of her neighbors in the dirt-poor southern tip of Malawi, water lilies have become a staple part of the diet as drought withers corn crops, worsening a malnutrition problem aggravated by poverty, corruption and AIDS.

"I have nothing else to give to my children," the widowed mother of three young children said with a grimace, holding out some of the

small, bitter-tasting, gnarled roots.

With the food crisis worsening, President Bingu wa Mutharika declared all of the southern African nation a "disaster area" Saturday and appealed for international help. He warned that 5 million people, almost half the population, are threatened with hunger.

Opposition politicians and civic leaders complained that the declaration should have come much sooner. But the president has been snarled in an impeachment battle with parliament leaders he has accused of hindering his campaign to clamp down corruption.

Mutharika said the government would spend \$50 million to import 330,000 tons of corn from South Africa but that Malawi needs an additional 158,000 tons to help feed people until the next harvest in March or April.

Kijani is among those who need help.

"I'm desperate to be registered to receive food aid," she said recently while standing with thousands of others in front of a dusty warehouse hoping in vain to receive the 110-pound monthly corn ration.

The scene at the Mankhokwe distribution center was a microcosm of

# Annan to Eritrea: Cease meddling

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned Eritrea on Monday that if it continues to impede peacekeeping operations the United Nations may pull its troops out of a buffer zone separating the Eritrean and Ethiopian armies.

Eritrea informed the United Nations that it was banning helicopter flights by U.N. peacekeepers in its airspace in the buffer zone starting Oct. 5. It also banned U.N. patrol vehicles from operating at night on its side of the 621-mile Temporary Security Zone.

The zone was established after a December 2000 peace agreement that ended a 2 1/2-year border war between the Horn of Africa neighbors.

The deal provided for an independent commission to rule on the position of the disputed border, but Ethiopia refused to accept the panel's April 2002 decision, which awarded the town of Badme to Eritrea.

Annan told reporters the United Nations had not received any explanation from the Eritrean government for the bans.

"Obviously, we need all our tools — helicopters, trucks, communications to operate," he said. "We are placed in a situation where the government has not been cooperating and has limited the movement of our troops."

"If this continues we will have to take some very hard and critical decisions as to the usefulness of staying there if we cannot operate," he added.

Annan said the United Nations has begun regrouping U.N. troops who were isolated "and positioning ourselves in a manner that protects the men."

The U.N. Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea announced Monday that peacekeepers and military observers were pulling out of 18 isolated posts in the buffer zone and going to strengthen operations at other positions. The U.N. has 22 other posts in the zone.

Annan said he had not spoken to Eritrean leaders but "we've sent messages."

Last month, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, the head of the U.N. mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, warned the unresolved border dispute could lead to more war if the Security Council and the African Union did not do more to find a solution.

The Security Council warned Ethiopia and Eritrea on Oct. 4 against re-igniting war and urged Eritrea to reverse its ban on helicopter flights immediately.

On Saturday, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said he was ready to hold talks with Eritrea's president or other officials on resolving the dispute.

Eritrea says it will not resume talks until the decision by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission — part of the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration — is implemented.

what is happening across all of southern Africa, where an estimated 12 million people will need food aid in the coming months because of drought, mismanagement and disease.

Malawi, already one of the world's poorest nations, is the worst affected in the region.

The long, landlocked country is no stranger to hunger, but aid groups fear the current food crisis will be the worst in a decade. Drought has been a blow, and with more than 14 percent of Malawians infected with the AIDS virus, many farmers are too sick to work.

So far, donors have pro-

vided only \$28 million for Malawi relief, far below the \$88 million sought by the United Nations. Appeals for seed and fertilizer have gone mostly unheeded. Even once funds are promised, it takes four months on average for the aid to reach hungry mouths.

"Our window of opportunity to help Malawi and the rest of the region is closing fast," said Mike Sackett, southern Africa director for the World Food Program. "It will be too late once emaciated images appear on television screens," he said, alluding to the recent crisis in the West African state of

(See Food, Page 15)