

2021 Orphan Report

Orphan and Orphanhood

Childhood refers to the period of childhood and adolescence. The task of parents is to satisfy both the physiological and psychosocial needs of the child, give them a good education and prepare them for life's challenges. Every child who goes through this most critical phase of life without enjoying parental care is considered an orphan.

Today's social and economic problems create new definitions of orphanhood. If the necessary precautions are not taken with regard to the most fragile members of the society, it seems inevitable that the problem will become much more devastating. Although it may show variations, one definition of *orphan* all cultures agree on is a pre-adolescent child who has lost either of their parents or both. In the Islamic tradition, a paternal orphan is a child who has lost a father while a maternal orphan is a child who has lost a mother. Apart from these, there is also the concept of the *social orphanhood*, referring to children with at least one parent alive who does not fulfil their parental obligations.

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The first 18 years of human life constitute not only a period of physical development, but can also be defined as a period of sociological interactions with psychological effects. So, circumstances a child faces early in life, determine not just their prospects in adult life, but also has serious implications for the mental health of a society as a whole.

According to UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), about 10,000 children are left either paternal or maternal orphans every day across the world. Internationally accepted figures also indicate that number of orphan children around the world is at least 140 million; however, based on many evidences suggesting that there are millions of orphan or abandoned children which are not included in the official statistics, this figure is actually much greater.

When a child loses either of their parents or both, they face so many economic and mental issues down the line. For example, an average of 10,000 children die every day as a result of war, poverty, hunger or similar causes. The majority of these children are known to be orphan and abandoned. The available data show that most of the countries where the situation is most worrying are in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.^[1]

Without a doubt, one of the most common reasons leading to children becoming orphans is natural disasters. Almost 750,000 people have died in natural disasters in the last 20 years, and as a result, hundreds of thousands of children became orphans or left without parental support. 79% of these deaths occurred in poor Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, India and the Philippines, the countries with the highest number of orphans.

Another common cause is chronic illness or disease outbreaks. Poor health services or a rapidly-spreading pandemic can lead to a significant number of loss of lives. While 68% of all deaths worldwide are caused by non-contagious diseases, 22.5% are caused by contagious ones.

Poor health infrastructure is one of the most frequent causes of death for parents in economically underdeveloped countries. It is not known exactly how many children become orphans each year due to these mortalities. The figures show that between 2000 and 2014 there were about 15 doctors and 33 nurses per 10,000 people in the entire world. It is reported that in Islamic countries there are 8 doctors and 18 nurses per 10,000 people. Available data show that Somalia, Niger, Sierra Leone, Chad and Afghanistan are the countries in the worst situation in terms of deaths due to poor health services. The number of doctors and nurses per 10,000 people is as follows in these countries: Somalia (1-5), Niger (1-6), Sierra Leone (1-9), Chad (2-3) and Afghanistan (2-7).

Today, about 140 out of every 1,000 women between the ages of 18 and 60 die worldwide due to infectious or non-infectious diseases. This means a large number of children left behind who need looking after.

Wars or conflicts are among one of the leading causes of orphanhood. For example, in 2018 alone almost 100,000 people died in armed clashes, and tens of thousands of children became orphans or were deprived of parental care in the process. 80% of these deaths occurred in Islamic countries^[2] Due to the war in Syria, which is considered as the biggest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, 9,200,000 children under the age of 18 lost their homes or families.^[3] Although the actual figures for Syrian orphans are not known due to the continuous relocation of refugees, it is estimated that almost 1 million children became orphans due to the war.

When a child loses either or both of his parents or when parents do/can not fulfill their parental duties, this leaves the child exposed to myriad dangers. Orphans or children abandoned by their parents become vulnerable and defenseless; whereas children under the care of their parents live in a relatively better-protected way in case of war, natural disasters, poverty or disease. At this point, it must be stressed that the problems of orphans are not isolated cases; for it should be remembered that children without access to safe and healthy environments grow up to become problematic adults, leading to other serious social problems.

Orphans and abandoned children are barely able to maintain a decent standard of living, making them more likely to be exposed to risks and dangers. Such children can easily fall into the clutches of malevolent people or criminal gangs in exchange for basic needs such as shelter and food or to satisfy emotional needs, like a sense of belonging.

Big migration movements caused by war, natural disasters, poverty etc. result in tens of thousands of children being relocated unaccompanied by their parents or unprotected. It is noted that today in many European countries, thousands of children are on the list of missing children and thousands are not included in any list because they have no birth registration. It is also known that migrating orphans and unprotected children are targeted by various criminal organizations involved in human trafficking, either in their own country of origin or during migration to other places. For instance, some reports show that tens of thousands of children that migrated to Europe as a refugee following the war in Syria are now considered missing.^[4]

Intensive missionary activities in places of poverty and famine, especially in the countries of the African continent, are among the major threats to orphans. For example, children are taken to orphanages established by Western missionary organizations and brainwashed to change their religion; exploiting their economic disadvantage.

Social Orphanhood and Child Abuse

During the childhood, the most important period of human life, fulfillment of all physiological and psychological needs of individuals from nutrition to education is considered as the duty of parents or the state.^[5] In today's world, however, it is known that there are millions of children neglected by their parents even though they are alive. This state of children going through various deprivations due to parents' failure to perform their duties is referred to as social orphanhood. In other words, amounting to a state of parental destitution, the condition is referred to as social orphanhood. Yet, the absence of the family, and therefore the absence of the parent, which is the first and most basic component with a child's identity formation, causes serious trauma to the child who is in need of being loved, respected, protected and supported.

Social orphanhood might occur due to irresponsible parents, social and family problems, extra-marital births, early or unwanted motherhood and many other factors^[6] Mental health problems, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, physical and mental disability, poverty, heavy work conditions, working away from the family, socializing outside the home, internet and social media addiction can also lead to a deterioration of family ties and children becoming isolated. It must be noted here that there is no

acceptable justification of abandoning a child when at least one of the parents is alive. Causing trauma, it also has a negative effect on the child's physical and mental health.

Researches show that 90% of the 2.7 million children living in orphanages around the world are social orphans.^[7] While the number of children living on the streets is not exactly known. Although many children have their basic needs like food, drink and shelter met today, they suffer severe disadvantages in terms of receiving regular education appropriate to their needs and age, and the love, care and support they need to become healthy adults in the future^[8]

Experts state that a significant amount of children staying at home during the Covid-19 has been exposed to various forms of abuse

While social orphanhood can be as severe as orphanhood from loss of parents, it may cause some other serious psychological consequences. Another aspect of social orphanhood which is not easily noticeable is the abuse. Experts state that a significant amount of children staying at home during the Covid-19 has been exposed to various forms of abuse. Physical, psychological, sexual abuse as well as online abuse that has increased due to dense use of Internet during the period all pose a great threat for children.

It has been proven by researches that children are psychologically harmed at a high level when their needs of care, love, respect, feeling valued and supported under any circumstances are unmet. Psychological violence is a type of abuse covering all other abuse forms. Emotional violence includes attitudes and behaviors such as yelling, humiliation, intimidation, rejection, absence of love, expectation of responsibilities over the child's age, comparison and discrimination between siblings, excessive pressure and discipline, making the child dependent, overprotectiveness, punishment, forcing the child to work.^[9] Such types of abuse are difficult to notice but yet the most common ones. They may cause behavior disorders, and emergence of advanced level chronic psychological and physiological disorders, harming the identity of child.^[10]

Researches show that about 200 million children are subject to sexual abuse every year worldwide due to parent negligence.^[11] Such abuse may occur in two ways. The first is non-physical sexual abuse; sexually explicit talks, exhibitionism, voyeurism, making the child watch pornographic movies, making the child act in advertisements, films and plays with sexual content, etc. The second type of sexual abuse includes physical contact; touching and caressing in a sexual manner, touching any part of the body with the sexual organ or sexual intercourse, prostitution, obscenity are all involved in this category.^[12]

A research conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) worldwide in 2015 and 2016 revealed that Europe plays the main role in reproducing, downloading and sharing materials such as pornographic photos and videos aimed at child abuse. Click rate of web pages with child abuse content was about 41% in Europe and 57% in North America in 2015 whereas such rates were 60% and 37%, respectively, in 2016. Emphasizing the increasing demand for such publications, child protection agencies state that studies conducted and laws made fall short in prevention of sexual abuse of children. Netherlands is the country with the largest illegal content of such type in Europe. Russia and Turkey sourced abuse elements were discovered in 34,212 web pages used in Europe. It is evident that at least one child is victimized while preparing each material, children are abused at each view of such content, and those individuals consciously searching for these materials are growing the child abuse figures in the world.^[13]

Performance of many processes on the Internet and provision of online education at all levels due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as increased dependency to the virtual world with motives such as being an influencer on social media, are the key factors increasing online child abuse and pedophilia cases.

Researches show that every child is subject to some kind of abuse regardless of their gender. Some studies on child abuse suggest that children between the ages of 0 and 18 are targeted by the pedophiles. Having turned into an industry due to films, advertisements, magazines and illegal activities, sexual abuse of children is essentially a humanitarian problem in terms of both its reasons and results. This is a universal problem that requires immediate action and precautions, as it is not only a problem between the victim and perpetrator but also an indicator of social anomaly.

When a child is rejected or deprived of a warm family environment despite both parents being alive, this

may cause life-long traumas, resulting in a mental regression, a feeling of worthlessness, and negative perceptions such as not being loved and loneliness, impacting the entire life of the individual. For people who experience such emotional trauma, they will be more exposed to the risk of hanging out with the wrong kind of people, drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution, being kidnapped etc. In addition, these children, who have problems developing a sense of belonging, often experience anger and aggression, poor social adaptability and criminal intentions. Of course, one cannot say that all orphans and social orphans live in poor conditions. So much work is being done by several governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve the conditions of these children, who are guarded and protected by official institutions. It is vital that all institutions entrusted with these children do their share of work properly, as it is crucial for the future of the country and the world to identify and rehabilitate potential groups that could turn into a social anomie in the future. In summary, for the well-being and development of societies, all children should be raised in a nurturing environment and receive a good education.

In view of its causes and effects, it can be argued that the issue of social orphanhood affects the entire society with political, social and religious implications requiring a holistic approach. It is, therefore, clear that addressing the orphanhood as a consequence only is not sufficient. Determination and elimination the causes of such consequence is what matters. To this end, government and non-governmental organizations can get their weight behind more awareness-raising projects and support measures to raise individual awareness. Strict social and psychological measures must be taken about this matter as it constitutes one of the top priority problems of the society; therefore, establishment of moral and material support centers that are accessible by all parts of the society will be an important step forward.

State of Orphans in the World

The number of orphans is increasing worldwide due to problems such as wars and conflicts, natural disasters, epidemics, poverty and mass migration. Children, who make up 2.2 billion of the world population which is estimated at 7.7 billion, remain at risk and exposed every day for various reasons. If all children between 0 and 18 years of age who have lost one or both parents are considered orphans, the number of orphans in the world today is estimated to be over 140 million.^[14] It is estimated that a total of approximately 15.1 million out of 61 million who live in Asia, 52 million in Africa, 10 million in Latin America and 7.3 million in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, have lost both parents.^[15]

In addition to all these official data, it is known that many children around the world are not registered as "orphans" for various reasons. There are many orphans, i.e. "invisible children", who have never been registered, or those who have not been identified as orphans because their relatives took care of them after their parents died, or those who have not been registered due to technical difficulties and negligence, which suggests that the mentioned figure is much more higher. Considering all these conditions, the actual number of orphans around the world is estimated at 400 million.^[16]

Today, it is clear that wars and internal conflicts are the main causes for an ever increasing number of orphans. With regard to countries such as Syria, Iraq, East Turkestan, Somalia, Mali, Sudan, Palestine, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Yemen, Myanmar and Algeria has a large number of orphans, these are either regions of conflict or are ruled by oppressive regimes with most of them scenes of large conflicts in recent history. The number of orphans in these countries corresponds to almost one third of all orphans worldwide.

Humanitarian crises resulting from natural disasters are foremost among the reasons for children losing their parents. About 500,000 people lose their lives and millions of people suffer great financial losses every year due to disasters. One of the most devastating consequences of these disasters is without doubt the thousands of vulnerable children left behind. Natural disasters vary in size and severity, causing different amounts of damage; for example, earthquakes cause loss of parents in countries like Indonesia, Iran and Nepal while in African countries it is usually drought and famine. Whereas social orphans are more common in relatively developed and western countries.

It is stated that there are about 300,000 child soldiers in more than 30 countries, there are at least 218 million child workers aged between 5 and 17, and that at least 73 million of them are

employed in hazardous occupations.

Since the risks and threats that children without parents face apply to all children who are unprotected for some reason, it is important to provide protection for all these children. Heavy labor, being recruited as child soldiers, being trapped by the organ and prostitution mafia and various other criminal organizations are the most common dangers to which these children are exposed. For example, it is stated that there are about 300,000 child soldiers in more than 30 countries,^[17] there are at least 218 million child workers aged between 5 and 17, and that at least 73 million of them are employed in hazardous occupations.^[18] A major part of these children are either orphans or abandoned children. The number of missing children that went into the records in the 20 years from 1987 to 2007 is 1 million. It is estimated that most of these children are abducted by criminal organizations.^[19]

One of the most serious problems faced by orphans is social exclusion and isolation, which is not easy to notice at first sight. Psychological destruction experienced due to the loss of one or both parents can lead to becoming withdrawn, while discriminatory treatment by relatives, peers or the social circle can lead to self-isolation.

A study by the World Health Organization shows that suicide-related deaths for children between the ages of 10 and 19 have increased since 2002.^[20] These figures clearly show that the traumas of childhood and adolescence, words which are not even supposed to be used side by side with the word suicide, are not temporary at all, contrary to assumptions.

Becoming a refugee or being placed in the care of foster parents in other countries is one of the most serious problems faced by orphans. In particular, orphans or abandoned children who are also refugees may face risks such as abuse, ill-treatment or discrimination based on religion or race. Even if the above-cited threats to children in this category are tackled, assimilation policies in destination countries for migrants represent another lifelong risk.

Education is one of the most problematic areas for orphans and abandoned children. Many studies today clearly show that there is a direct link between parental absence and academic performance. Studies show that the academic success of abandoned children or children raised by a single parent is lower than that of children who grow up with both parents. When orphanhood in war zones are brought into the equation, both the schooling rate of these children and their academic success seem to reduce significantly. Today there are 263 million children with no access to school or regular education^[21]

An analysis of the common characteristics of countries with the lowest levels of education reveals that these are poverty and war zones. Since these countries are the least developed countries in the world, lack of resources/means to provide basic services like education creates severe consequences that linger for generations. For example, 3 million out of 8 million children of school age do not attend school in Syria, which is estimated to have around 11 million children population.^[22] Although the war in Afghanistan that has gone on for years has ended, 42% of the country's school-age children are still unable to go to school. And most of these children are female. In Somalia, 49% of children of school age cannot go to school.^[23] In Yemen, there are 2 million children with no access to school.^[24]

According to the report of the *United Nations Development Programme*, the percentage of those who receive only basic education or learn to read and write in a non-educational setting are as follows: Southern Sudan and Mali 27%, Afghanistan 28%, Ethiopia 49%, Haiti 52%, Pakistan 55%, Bangladesh 57%.^[25] The figures given here refer to literacy rates rather than continuous education, which could mean that the quality of education in these countries is actually much worse. It is also estimated that the majority of children deprived of education are either orphans or abandoned by their parents.^[26]

The protection of children, especially orphans, is one of the most fundamental tasks of societies. In this context, it is very important for governments to develop effective social policies to protect the legal rights of children and enable them to grow in a healthy and safe environment; yet, most countries are way off achieving that. 61 million orphans on the Asian continent that has the worst track record of protecting children's rights, are reported to be at risk of leading a totally vulnerable life. India, particularly, needs to take urgent action in this regard as the official figures put the number of orphans at 31 million. In India, only 41% of births are registered, with diseases and outbreaks caused by social inequality, poverty and other social problems that arise due to the strict caste system being considered the primary reason for the high population of orphans in the country. It is estimated that there are 4.9 million orphans in Bangladesh^[27] and 4.4 million orphans in Pakistan,^[28] which are also countries on the Asian continent. As these

countries have no policy of birth registration, it is estimated that the actual number of orphans that are referred to as “invisible children” is much higher than the stated figures.

On the African continent, Nigeria is one of the worst affected countries, with its population of 17.5 million orphans.^[29] It is reported that 2.5 million children in this country became orphans due to HIV.^[30] In Ethiopia, another country on the continent, there are 6 million orphans.^[31] In the country, more than 44% of children under the age of 14 are orphans due to HIV.^[32] It is also reported that 2.9 million children in Uganda and 310,000 in Sierra Leone were orphaned due to the same disease.^[33] It is reported that 74% of orphans in Zimbabwe and 63% of orphans in South Africa were also orphaned by the HIV disease.^[34] One third of the children in Kenya, where there are almost 3 million orphans, were orphaned because of this disease.^[35] Many children across Africa died from this virus, transmitted by their parents. For instance, in Ethiopia that has 6 million orphans, it is estimated that at least 85,000 of these are HIV carriers.^[36] It is estimated that more than 13 million children worldwide were orphaned by HIV.^[37]

What countries with a high number of orphans have in common is that they belong to the category of the most underdeveloped countries. At least half the population of these countries lives below the poverty line. It is children that are most severely affected by the chronic poverty in these countries. The current negative circumstances in these countries clearly threaten children's right to life.

Orphans as Victims of War

Wartime conditions are challenging for everyone, especially more so for orphans and abandoned children. While orphans are exposed to the dangers of the war environment, they have serious problems in accessing basic needs, especially food, shelter, health, security and education; facing all kinds of social, economical and psychological challenges. Children struggling with problems such as illness, hunger, disability or abduction are exposed to all kinds of abuse under wartime conditions.

One of the most serious problems faced by orphans trying to survive alone in war zones is their inability to access adequate and necessary healthcare. The lack or absence of medical facilities further exacerbates the grievances of children in vulnerable situations. Thousands of children who lose their lives are registered as civilian victims, while hundreds of thousands try to stay alive, one way or another.

Today, people who stay at their homes to protect from the effects of the global pandemic that started at the end of 2019 seem to have forgotten about the presence of millions of children outside in vulnerable situations.

According to UNICEF's report called *2020 Child Death Estimates*, Africa ranks first in death rates of children between 5 and 14, followed by South Asia.^[38]

Communities struggling for life at warzones have had to fight against both the political-economical competition between the opposing countries and allies, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, UN has called for a ceasefire and encouraged mutual agreements in order to fight against the pandemic; however, let alone failure of the parties to abide by the ceasefire, their actions to turn the crisis into an opportunity and put new political-economical strategies into practice have left the vulnerable people in these regions faced with several new problems. Abandoned children are the main ones who are left vulnerable against this infectious fatal disease, which poses a greater risk under war and conflict conditions. Children of these under-developed countries who were already struggling with the war, inadequate healthcare services, poverty, famine, lack of sanitation and various infectious diseases before the pandemic have been completely forgotten due to pandemic.

On the other hand, conflicts that could not be stopped even by the pandemic continued in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and South Sudan in 2020 and 2021.

Figures of child death rates in the UNICEF report are high at a jaw-dropping level. Based on the figures stated by averaging the highest and lowest estimates regardless of the reason of death, the top 10

countries with highest death rates of children between 5 and 14 are as follows:

Niger: 30,292

Somalia: 25,365

Mali: 22,123

Democratic Republic of the Congo: 22,121

Sierra Leone: 21,569

Nigeria: 21,268

Burundi: 21,322

South Sudan: 21,043

Benin: 19,896

Burkina Faso: 17,391 [\[39\]](#)

Vulnerable Child Refugees

Orphans who survive on hot conflict zones face even greater challenges afterwards; much tougher prospects come into question for these children, exposed to new threats on refugee camps or migration routes.

Number of displaced children due to wars and conflicts has gone far beyond the available numbers to date, reaching up to 19 million. 12 million children were displaced in 2019, with 3.8 million having to migrate due to conflicts and violence, and 8.2 million mainly due to disasters such as floods and storms. [\[40\]](#) Malicious organizations expecting the orphans as the most sensitive and vulnerable part of global society are lying in ambush on all routes. Human traffickers, warlords, organ mafia, physical and sexual abuse gangs and many more pose a serious threat to vulnerable children along the migratory routes.

Some sources report that number of children who had to leave their houses in 2020 is about 31 million. Over 17 million of these children are displaced in their own country; 12.7 million are refugees and 1.1 million are asylum seekers. [\[41\]](#)

Some part of vulnerable children manage to access refugee camps and immigrant reception centers at the end of a dangerous and obligatory migration journey, however they neither have the chance for social distancing to protect against the pandemic in crowded places nor access to healthcare services, food and means to meet their self-care needs.

Having been away from their country and family for a long time, 19 million children must be immediately put under protection and returned to their families if possible, with the mutual efforts of governments and non-governmental organizations. Specialist teams in the centers must provide the necessary physical and psychological care for millions of orphaned children.

Children With Real Weapons Made of Iron Instead of Toys

One of the most devastating consequences of war for children is the issue of child soldiers. It is reported that the number of child soldiers involved in global conflicts has increased by 159%[\[42\]](#) in five years and that since 2012 at least 300,000[\[43\]](#) children have been actively fighting in more than 30 countries.

Children are used as warriors, suicide bombers and human shields on the fields in conflicts and wars and also as couriers, spies and etc. at checkpoints.

The destruction of educational facilities in war zones deeply affects the lives of children in the long-term, taking away their chances for a good future. Targeting schools in wars and conflicts costs the lives of thousands of children and educational staff. According to a UN report covering 2016-2018, 657 schools in Mali, 396 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 161 in Iraq, 68 in Afghanistan, 67 in Syria, 64 in Somalia, 52 in Southern Sudan, and 28 schools in the Central African Republic were attacked[\[44\]](#).

Educational activities are mostly carried out in houses and tents in war zones, and these are not enough for children to build a good future. These children have their chance of a decent life taken away from them, either ending up in armed groups or having to work as child laborers under extremely difficult conditions.

Cases of child abuse are quite common in war zones. Research has shown that 40 million children under the age of 15 are victims of abuse and neglect in war zones and that these children need regular health and social care[\[45\]](#). For example, it is reported that at least 1,500 children are sexually abused every year in Afghanistan, a country ravaged by civil war and foreign occupation, with those responsible being protected for various reasons.[\[46\]](#)

Moreover, children and orphans who are victims of war are targeted by human traffickers, organ mafias and other malicious organizations operating on border lines with a huge flow of refugees. Research shows that about 1.2 million children are trafficked every year.[\[47\]](#) A majority of these children are orphans. Orphans and abandoned children, targeted by many criminal organizations such as organ traffickers, human traffickers, etc. are also sent to different countries for adoption or forced into prostitution or begging. No one knows yet what happened to the thousands of children that migrated to Europe especially after the war in Syria, most of whom were orphans, raising serious concerns about the fortunes of these orphans.[\[48\]](#)

Even though it is generally assumed that girls do not take part in conflicts as they are mostly deployed away from the front lines, this is not an accurate observation. For example, 30-40% of child soldiers in Africa are girls. Girls are also heavily exposed to sexual violence. Studies show that such abuses increase by 40% in wartime environments.[\[49\]](#)

This severe picture shows that all governmental and non-governmental humanitarian aid organizations working in crisis regions should focus not only on the shelter and nutritional needs of orphans, but they should also be provided with protection, psychological support, treatment and rehabilitation. Developing personalized care approaches that take into account the orphans' conditions is of great importance for the return to normal life of children who have experienced wars.

It is a grave violation of humanitarian values by the states that disregard the sanctity of human life to further their imperialist ambitions causing children who need love and compassion to be abused, to be forced to fight in wars, work in harsh conditions and to be exposed to acts of tyranny while migrating due to natural disasters, war and poverty etc. This, without doubt, will produce ruthless and hostile generations in the future, causing so many new problems for societies.

Consequences of Child Poverty

While the economic gap in developing and undeveloped countries has deepened along with the Covid-19 pandemic, a notable increase is observed in the number of children living in absolute poverty. Absolute poverty, also known as multidimensional poverty, refers to the inability of an individual to meet his needs that are necessary for his survival. The concept includes inequality of access to nutrition, shelter, clean drinking water, life in a healthy environment, education, healthcare and social services.

According to the data published by UNICEF in September 2020, number of children living in absolute poverty has risen up to 1.2 billion due to Covid-19 pandemic. Number of poor children in countries with low to moderate development level, on the other hand, has reached 150 million, increasing by 15%.[\[50\]](#) Progress was made in prevention of poverty thanks to the policies implemented all around the world from 2000 to 2014 as well as the support of non-governmental organizations. However, global poverty started to rise again as from 2014. Number of people suffering from hunger escalated from 630 million in 2013 to 680 million in 2018 and 690 million in 2019. The researches conducted in 2019 pointed out that at least 83 million people suffered from hunger due to malnutrition since the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted food production, distribution and consumption process. This figure reached 132 million by the end of 2020, which highlights the increased number of people that will live in absolute poverty.[\[51\]](#) Pandemic seems to have led to a regression in the problems that were in the progress of resolution.

According to UN, malnutrition was most commonly observed in Asia with 381 million people in 2020. It is followed by Africa with 250 million people, and Latin America and Caribbean with 48 million individuals.[\[52\]](#) Number of people living in acute poverty has also increased along with the rise in global population since 2014. The comparison of nutrition frequency by population suggests that 19.1% people across Africa suffers from malnutrition; therefore, Africa is the most severely affected continent from poverty. This figure is 8.3% and 7.4% in Latin America and Caribbean, respectively. The situation in Africa is two times worse than that in other continents. If the current trends continue, Africa will be home to more than half of the people suffering from chronic hunger in the world by 2030.[\[53\]](#)

An average of 10,000 children die every day as a result of poverty, hunger or similar causes across the world. According to 2020 report of UN, most of these children are from Africa and South Asia. It is stated that orphans and abandoned children make up the majority of the mentioned figure.[\[54\]](#)

The UN report *State of Food Safety and Nutrition Across the World* suggests that purchasing power of globally more than 3 billion people today is not sufficient to maintain a healthy diet. This applies especially to 57% of the population living in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. According to the report, one-third to forth-third (191 million) of children aged below five had a problematic development in 2019, which left them either too short or too thin.[\[55\]](#)

Based on 2021 estimates of UNICEF, a total of 10.4 million children in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Northeast Nigeria, Sahel Region (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger), South Sudan and Yemen are faced with acute malnutrition problem.[\[56\]](#)

It is known that there are millions of children that are under death risk due to failure to meet their essential nutrient needs. Number of children that are under death risk due to acute malnutrition are as follows: A total of 3.3 million children in Democratic Republic of the Congo with at least 1 million at severe level; more than 800,000 children in Northeast Nigeria with 300,000 at severe level; about 1.4 million children in South Sudan; over 2 million children in Yemen with 358,000 at severe level; and 1.4 million children in Yemen.[\[57\]](#)

Afghanistan, Bolivia, Kamerun, Central African Republic, Libya, Madagascar, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen are among the top countries that are mostly harmed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2019, child death rates were high in seven out of nine countries, and there were 50 deaths per each 1,000 live births among the children aged under five.[\[58\]](#) Based on UNICEF's *2020 Child Death Estimates Report*, it is seen that the regions involving the top 10 countries with highest death rates of children aged five to nine in 2019 were the suffering zones characterized by hot conflicts, acute poverty and inaccessibility to healthcare services. The country with highest 5-9 age death rate was Somalia with 16,814, which is followed by Niger (15,738), Chad (15,207), Kamerun (14,339), Ivory Coast (14,307), Mali (13,751), Sierra Leone (13,670), South Sudan (13,604), Nigeria (13,441) and Guinea (12,626),

respectively.[\[59\]](#)

Apart from the absence of any healthcare system to protect millions of children from diseases in the crisis zones, even the minimum support for such regions is blocked by various gangs and groups of interest. Intentional contamination of clean water, bombing of hospitals, kidnapping or killing of healthcare professionals, prevention of healthcare equipment aid provided externally by governments and non-governmental organizations further increase the suffering of orphans in particular.

Child Labor

Shutdown of schools as part of Covid-19 precautions and the inequality in access to education further densified the available problem in the regions with severe poverty. The shock experienced in the fields of economy and healthcare services due to the pandemic affected the vulnerable population of the society most severely. It is observed that children started to be put to work in families with a single unemployed parent due to the crisis. The possibility of children returning back to school seems quite difficult under these circumstances as those children are the targets of unregistered employment and low-cost labor. A gain of 94 million achieved in the fight against child labor since 2000 is also under a serious risk.[\[60\]](#) The experts claim that, apart from the heavy working conditions that child laborers are faced with, the working hours have also extended, and children's health and safety are under a great threat. Some studies show that a 1% increase in the poverty rates of certain countries led to an increase of at least 0.7% in child labor.[\[61\]](#) When the increasing figure in child labor is read backwards, number of children that will not be able to continue their education when the schools reopen is obtained.

The humanitarian crisis experienced by the orphans has peaked up along with the pandemic. During this period of staying at home due to the obligatory precautions taken by governments, the tragedy experienced by children who try to live in camps, travel alone on dangerous roads, or are targeted by human traffickers, used as soldiers in warzones or forced to work under heavy conditions seems to have been completely ignored. Yet, it is of huge importance to increase the efforts to support the most vulnerable population of the society, and meet their basic needs immediately, since they are in need of humanitarian aid more than ever at the moment.

It is required to directly access the hardship areas in order to determine the number of children suffering from hunger and measure their parameters. Each precaution taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, unfortunately, further increases the child poverty. However, increasing the social services to be provided along with the precautions, creating work opportunities for adults which fit their new life conditions, and providing more support for the education of children, will not only prevent the problems from becoming chronic and much more complicated, but will also avoid the future social crises.

Babylift Operations Continue

The concept of *babylift*, which emerged in 1975 during the USA-Vietnam War, originally refers to the Americanization of Asian children. During the "Baby Rescue Operation" called *Operation Baby Lift*, at least 2,000 babies and children were brought to the USA, and 1,300 to Canada, Australia and to Europe, totaling 3,300[\[62\]](#) according to official figures. Although the United States announced that these children brought from South Vietnam were taken away because of war conditions, orphanhood and neglect, it was later understood that not all of these children were orphans. Vietnamese children were taken away from orphanages and even their families with all their ties severed with their countries and roots.

A decision by certain Western groups who had been working with orphans in this country for more than 20 years during the Vietnam War to urgently evacuate children from South Vietnam underlies the Baby Rescue Operation. With the collaboration of organizations including the International Children's Services (Holt), the Travelers Aid International Social Service of America (TAISSA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the World Vision Relief Organization (WVRO), Friends of the Children of Vietnam (FCVN) and the Pearl S.

Buck Foundation (PBF), the necessary procedures were carried out and planes evacuated children from the warzone[63]

It is stated that with the beginning of the operation the number of applications for adoption in the USA and other western countries increased. It was established that more than 91% of the adopted children were younger than eight, that 51% were younger than two, that 57% of the children were boys, 43% girls and 20% mixed race. Relocation of these children was planned within the framework of an international adoption program implemented between 1970 and 1975.[64]

While the term *babylift* has turned into a general concept used to describe international adoption programs nowadays, it is essentially defined as the adoption of children from other countries by certain wealthy Western families. However, it has been clearly understood on several occasions that these child transfers, carried out for ostensibly humanitarian purposes, are not as innocent as they appear. When the idea behind it, its functioning mechanisms and the actors are analyzed, there are serious claims that this process of adoption of children in poor countries in Africa and Asia has become a new instrument of Westernization by certain associations, orphanages, churches and aid organizations operating in these countries. For it is well known that many missionary institutions operating in poverty-stricken regions exploit orphans to spread Christianity in these societies under the pretext of humanitarian aid.[65]

Publications on the sacredness of adopting children, the travels of world-famous artists and actresses to African and Asian countries who adopt children themselves during these travels coupled with the media promote the adoption of foreign children. Facilitating such child transfers through symbolic names encouraged many Orthodox Christian families in the West to take similar steps, and thousands of African children were given to Western families in this way. It is reported that missionary organizations, whose numbers are increasing day by day, are leading this initiative, strengthening their scope of impact thanks to the aid they provide in poor regions, and operating comfortably by gaining the trust of the local population. The activities of these organizations, which collect data on the population in the regions, show that the work is done systematically within a specific framework and program. All this clearly shows that one must be careful about missionaries or organizations that want to change the beliefs and cultures of orphans via the foster family system.

A lack of official figures on international child transfers today raises serious questions about the scale of the whole operation. It is known that today orphans from many countries are being targeted by Western countries, like in 2008 when a French organization (*L'Arche de Zoé*) was caught kidnapping more than 100 children outside Chad.

Today, adoption from overseas is considered an industry, leading to the kidnapping of children, under false pretenses, from countries such as Ethiopia, Cambodia, Somali, Chad, Afghanistan, China, and the Philippines. It is common knowledge that such kidnapped children are sold for cash all around the globe, including in many countries in Europe and the Americas.[66] Practically turning into an instrument to increase the population in Western countries, the adoption policy can have devastating consequences for children, if we leave aside for a moment the benefits these countries may derive from doing so.

This also amounts to a significant loss of manpower for the source countries. The countries that allowed their minor citizens to be adopted and taken away to foreign countries, and did not respond diplomatically to abduction of children through various ways, faced nonrecoverable consequences in the past. Letting young minds out of the country not only leads to interruption of technology, science, arts, politics, and socioeconomic development, which are the critical elements constituting a country, but also the destruction of national consciousness. In brief, exchange of self-identity with the expectation of a better life casts a shadow on the future of source countries.

As is known by all today, the future of countries is directly proportionate to the young population; therefore, still-continuing *Babylift* operations denotes voluntary transfer of power to central countries, consenting to the loss of self-identity. Considering the war policies of countries commanding the global dynamics, especially the selection of military personnel seems to be varying based on the country to which democracy will be transferred. For example, this policy is clearly reflected in Hollywood production war movies: American soldier of Nigerian origin, French soldier of Algerian origin, British soldier of Iraq origin are the simplest examples. Against such a consequence meaning pitting brother against brother, each country with future prospects must have the characteristics and resources to take care of its own children.

The Forgotten Ones During the Coronavirus Pandemic: Child Refugees

The shock wave experienced due to Covid-19 pandemic, a global crisis that has intruded itself into our lives at the end of 2019, has affected the vulnerable communities to the highest degree. While two-thirds of the world stocked food to survive staying at their houses, destructiveness of the pandemic made the life much more difficult for millions of people and therefore, millions of orphans on the migration routes.

Sudden migration movements carried out in masses leads to a destructive impact for both the countries on the transit route, and the destination countries. Social, cultural, economical, political and many other problems arise along with the human movement. The individuals called “refugees” are held in camps and reception centers on the borderlines, which are extremely crowded places with no food support or hygienic conditions. Typically with no access to healthcare services in case of any disease, it is almost impossible to prevent spread of a pandemic at these locations.

Having been perceived as a global threat and displaced even before the pandemic, millions of people with immigrant or refugee status were completely left to their fate based on the “disease carrier” perception during the pandemic.

Refugee camps and immigrant reception and supervision centers located on the borderlines and borders are the places with lowest possibility to take control of a pandemic. Millions of people struggle to survive with almost no life support or preventive measures at these places where the spread risk of pandemic is at the highest level. Considering the modes of transmission of the virus, it is not difficult at all to imagine the risks faced by families and abandoned children staying at the camps.

There are several examples proving that the life conditions in refugee camps and city reception centers, and the treatment of refugees at these places mostly violate essential human rights. Besides, it is observed that such negative situations experienced before the Covid-19 pandemic have got much harder with the pandemic. With the countries closing their borders completely as part of the pandemic precautions, millions of families and children are left simply to misery and disease in the dangerous migration journey they started due to war, famine and poverty.

Occasional opening of border gates as a threat between countries, and supply of aids, even a little, came to a full stop with the borders closed due to pandemic and government aids suspended, which drove millions of people trying to hold on to life in the camps into a great tragedy. The majority consisting of women and children left to the mercy of malicious people that turned the pandemic into opportunity, refugees and immigrants had to struggle with all kinds of dangers as well as the pandemic. Available data show that the state of people displaced since 2019 has become much worse, and their humanitarian needs have increased remarkably. Unsupervised and vulnerable children are, without doubt, the ones that are most severely affected by these conditions.

In April 2020, UNICEF announced that there were 31 million children worldwide that were obliged to leave their homes; more than 17 million of these children were displaced within their own country; 12.7 million were in other countries as refugees; and 1.1 million were asylum-seekers.^[67] According to the report *Lost at Home* published in May same year, there are 19 million children across the world who have been displaced due to wars and conflicts only.^[68] In brief, today, 31 million children have access neither to any healthcare system to prevent transmission of the virus, nor to a protection facility where their essential needs are met.

Countries' decisions to close their borders and restrict travels as part of pandemic precautions have also put aside the rights of children to seek asylum and get reunited with their family members. This amounts to millions of displaced children worldwide being left abandoned. Failure to meet the essential needs of children, deprivation of children from parental protection, and non-execution of the articles of UN Convention on the Rights of Children, have all made these children more vulnerable to dangers; therefore, it would not be hard to imagine that there will be a remarkable spike in the number of children who are victims of kidnapping, violence, human trafficking and abuse during this period. Furthermore, an increase is observed also in crimes such as child labor, child trafficking, child marriage, child organ trade, forced

child soldiers. All these data point out to a terrifying future expecting us on a global scale. Before it is too late, urgent action must be taken to protect millions of children who are struggling for their lives under the risk of being the victim of mentioned crimes at any time.

It is of great importance that governments collaborate with international and local non-governmental organizations to mitigate the direct and indirect effect of pandemic on the life of vulnerable children, and prepare emergency action plans to meet the essential needs of children such as security, health, nutrition and education. Abandoned and vulnerable children must be pulled away from dangerous environments as soon as possible, their shelter and other needs must be met, and family-based care and support plans [\[69\]](#) must be put into practice right away.

Refugees and Global Child Trade

Human traffickers operate most actively in countries with high rates of war and internal conflicts, poverty and famine. Majority of the victims are citizens of Central Asian and African countries. Based on the *2020 Human Trafficking Report* by the US Department of State, these regions pose a great risk especially for orphans since governments cannot take adequate precautions despite their widespread human trafficking operations. Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Iraq, East Turkistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Asian continent; and South Sudan, Eritrea, Chad, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Kenya, Lebanon, Egypt, Somalia, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Algeria in the African continent are the countries with highest number of victims and highest human trafficking rates. Journeys starting from these countries usually end up in North America and Europe.

The child victim profiles have started to change rapidly since the crime organizations also make use of advanced technological devices. In this context, online child abuse, cyberbullying, pornographic streams with child abuse content, and many materials such as photos and videos featuring children as sexual figures are transferred across the world by means of technology, leading to a serious social problem [\[70\]](#). A research conducted in 2016 found that a total of approximately 5 million people worldwide are abducted each year for sexual abuse purposes, including 3.8 million adults and 1 million children. [\[71\]](#) The rapid increase in the number of children victims used in sex trafficking during the recent years reveals the magnitude of danger very clearly. Crime organizations especially in North America and Europe as the destination points of immigrants have a significant role in the preparation and marketing of the said materials. Many pedophilia cases are also reported in these regions. Advanced technological devices are used for the abuse of children living at a very long distance by the human trafficking crime organizations; for instance, images with abusive content of a child in Indonesia can be disclosed to the entire world online.

Researches show that crime organizations primarily prefer forced labor and sex trafficking. The group with highest risk consists of children of the displaced families, who are abducted by the gangs, abandoned children that fall into the hands of human traffickers during the immigration journey, and children that are placed in different groups from their families in the refugee camps (a practice seen in some countries).

Another location with the most common pedophilia cases is the Pacific countries. Children in this region are subject to sexual abuse of various forms. Sex trafficking is called “tourism” in mainly Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, which are known as the countries with the highest child crime rates. In 2017, 70,000-80,000 children became sex trafficking victims in Indonesia. [\[72\]](#) Number of pedophilia victims is not exactly known in the country where online abuse is commercialized and offered to the global market.

It is stated that the refugee and immigrant population is constantly increasing in Iran where number of human traffickers also escalated between 2015 and 2020. As the country of transit to reach Turkey and other countries afterwards, Iran has almost become the base of local and foreign human traffickers due to the increasing population of refugees and immigrants. Abducted in other countries in Asia and brought to Iran, victims are then transferred to various points of the world. Despite the prohibition of prostitution in Iran, children aged 10 as the youngest as well as women are used commercially by means of *mut'a*, which refers to temporary marriage. Research by the US Department of State reports that more than 4,000 marriages were recorded in 2019, which can be classified as commercial sexual abuse through *mut'a*. The same research shows that about 7 million children aged from 10 to 15 in Iran became the victims of

physical, psychological and sexual abuse, hired for hard labor or sold to other countries; majority of these women and children are reported to be Afghan.[73]

Another base used by human traffickers in Syria. Before the war in Syria, more than half of its 23 million population was displaced. It is reported that over 5.6 million Syrians immigrated to neighboring countries as refugees as from February 2019. During the transit of displaced Syrian citizens to neighboring countries, many women and children were held captive, forced to marry illegal organization members, and became the victim of organized sexual violence. Furthermore, it is claimed that thousands of abandoned children were trained in ISIS camps and houses where they were subject to all kinds of abuse. The fact that Syrian female refugees were held captive by fraudulent groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey with the promise of marriage has also been broadcast publicly.[74]

Since the human trafficking involves different simultaneous crimes, not only the traffickers must be stopped, but also a fight must be started against other potential crimes. Various international treaties are concluded to prevent human trafficking which constitutes a serious impediment against the exercise of children rights. One such treaty is the "Palermo Protocol" aiming both to stop human traffickers and enable access of victims to support services; "Trafficking Victims Protection Act" was also enacted in 2000. During the recent years, "European Council Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings" was prepared with detailed provisions especially on protection of the victims, which is an important step taken to stop human trafficking. However, the desired outcome has not been achieved yet due to reasons such as inability of countries to demonstrate the same level of sensitivity against prevention of this crime or their negligence of the issue, and implementation of penal sanctions with no deterrence effect. It is observed that many countries do not even meet the minimum standards to prevent human trafficking especially in war and conflict zones, spend any deterring efforts aimed at solution of the problem, or even take records of the confirmed cases.

Apart from these, prevention of pedophilic tendencies, which is on rise across the globe and almost supported in some circles under the cover of modernism and art, and therefore child abuse, depends on the efforts of the society and official authorities. Raising parents' awareness of their children's protection, and provision of the necessary protection for abandoned children as well as healthcare services, psychological support and accommodation facilities for the victims, are the main steps to be taken in the fight against this issue.

Prevention of online child abuse is one of the top priorities for the protection of children in today's world. Strict control of the cyber network is of utmost importance in this field requiring urgent response especially for orphans; moreover, there must be heavy penalties with deterrence effect in place for those that produce, share and market such content. Additionally, audits must be increased concerning social media and online games played by children, with binding legal regulations in place and close monitoring.

Importance of Education for Orphans

According to the UN, 263 million children and young people worldwide cannot attend school or receive education.[75] Based on the same data, 53% of the 61 million children of primary school age (6-11 years) who cannot attend school are girls. One fourth of children who cannot go to school live in countries hit by various social and economic crises[76], and it is estimated that a significant proportion of these children are orphans.[77]

Between 2010 and 2018, global schooling rates increased by 20.4% for pre-school education, by 6% for primary school, by 10.5% for secondary school and by 3.1% for higher education[78] In this process, it was noted that the share countries allocate from their domestic income for education also increased along with a more positive approach to education in general. During the same period, the global literacy rate was 82.5%. In Islamic countries, this rate remained at 73%[79] Indeed, various campaigns and awareness-raising efforts in Islamic countries have produced positive results, and between 2010 and 2018, enrolment in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education has increased. The figures for the member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation went up from 24.9% to 45.3% for pre-school education, from 98.2% to 104.4% for primary education and from 58.4% to 68.9% for secondary education. However, these figures are currently below the world average.[80]

The fight for the education of children and increased schooling rates worldwide has come to a standstill during the Covid-19 pandemic. Shutdown of schools as part of the pandemic precautions affected 1.5 billion children at the educational age.^[81] While children in developed countries have had full access to online education systems during this period, many children in underdeveloped and developing countries have not been able to continue their education due to both the inadequate technical infrastructure and economical reasons. According to a report by UNICEF, at least one-third of school-age children worldwide, i.e. 463 million children have not been able to access remote education.^[82] Continuing education became impossible for children living in places with not even electricity, let alone having in-house education equipment such as Internet, computers, television. It is predicted that such gap in education at hardship areas may trigger emergence of national crises in the future.

Education has almost like a life saving function for children living in regions where the war, poverty and shortage affect the faith of humans. School is a savior for the children to grow up as qualified individuals for the future of society, and to protect themselves from child labor, domestic abuse, child marriages and many other negative conditions as well as falling into the trap of malicious organizations. Yet, abandoned and vulnerable children with no opportunity of education in today's pandemic conditions are the most severely affected ones by this situation; therefore, it is the responsibility of all humanity to produce effective solutions for these children to continue their lives in a fair manner.

Schools must be reopened by taking the necessary precautions and make-up classes must be started immediately for the disadvantaged children that were unable to attend education during the pandemic; the necessary material support must be provided for access to remote education; a new education model must be designed which can endure crises and will not allow for gaps to occur; and efforts must be focused on rehabilitation of children together with sociologists, social workers and educators at all levels. Losing or gaining a generation causes the countries to gain or lose at least 100 years in terms of social, political, economical, artistic and military development. Therefore, the most urgent action to be taken for the children is to continue education.

According to figures based on data from 100 countries, South Asia ranks first among the hardship areas with inequality in education by 147 million, followed by the entire African continent by 91 million, and East Asia-Pacific by 80 million.^[83]

It is accepted that there is a direct link between the absence of parents and academic success. When poverty, disability and orphanhood in warzones are brought into the equation, the schooling rate of these children and their academic success are significantly reduced. However, education must be accessible and inclusive for all children. Because holistic education makes a serious contribution to the child in terms of socialization, positive character development and recovery from trauma. Furthermore, it is crucial for orphan and vulnerable children to rapidly increase the number of educational institutions, especially in war and poverty zones, and to provide the essential elements for a quality education and employ specialized psychologists in these institutions. Conducting exemplary activities in this regard, Turkey tries hard to provide education to thousands of Syrian children and young people. More than 610,000 refugee children receive education in Turkey, both at schools operated by the Ministry of Education, and at institutions established by Syrian educators.^[84]

Another issue that needs attention and special focus is the education of children with disabilities. The education of children with disabilities requires special planning and professionalism, but the education of orphans who are also disabled must be provided with much more care and attention. At this point, it is of great importance to increase the number of special education establishments and well-trained teachers, to make the physical conditions of the schools suitable for the disabled and to provide proper materials and medical support. Investments made in this area during the recent years have produced positive results, and the majority of the disabled population has reached a secondary education level, a step up from primary school. In order to get more effective results, national strategies must be developed requiring that especially the rights of orphan children with disabilities should be respected and that the focus must be on measurable results.^[85]

Social collaboration for rehabilitating children will have a lasting effect, and consequently, cases of social exclusion and violence will also be significantly reduced. It should be noted at this point that it is not enough to only support children's education. Threats faced by children, especially orphans, should be eliminated and more work should be done to increase social awareness.

It should be remembered that there are many notable figures in world history that did not have a mother or a father who served humanity in leading positions, like politicians and scientists. For the safety of all children, especially orphan and abandoned children, governments should initiate awareness-raising campaigns supported by work by non-governmental organizations that reach out to individuals; while aid organizations that rely on a volunteering workforce should enhance their scope of impact by setting themselves up more strategically on larger territories.

Annex - İHH Orphan Aid

An orphan supported by İHH is a child who has lost one or both their parents due to reasons such as wars, invasions, natural disasters, chronic poverty, diseases, accidents, etc. in Turkey or around the world, and lives with a relative or in an orphanage.

Purpose of İHH Orphan Aid

- Supporting orphans that cannot maintain a living on their own until they are competent enough to stand on their own legs, providing them with education, and preparing them for life with the affection of a family.
- Conducting activities on protection of the rights and freedom of orphans like all other children.
- Preparing safe environments for children where their both material and moral needs are met.
- Supporting the humans that grew up in regions where the social order is disturbed due to reasons such as wars, invasions, natural disasters, etc., and thus contributing in the establishment of social order.

İHH Orphan Aid Areas

- Warzones, refugee camps, and regions with ongoing effects of the war
- Natural disaster areas
- Chronic famine and poverty regions İHH

İHH Orphan Aid Fields ORPHAN AID FIELDS

- Education
- Health
- Shelter
- Food
- Clothing

Orphan Aid Period

İHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation supports orphans with continuous and periodical aids.

Periodical aids: Collective aids provided to the regions in need on certain timeframes such as once in every three, four, six months or one year, aids provided on Ramadan, Eid, and Orphan Solidarity Days, and aids provided for education, healthcare, food, shelter projects are within the category of periodical aids.

Continuous aids: These are the aids provided through the Orphan Sponsorship Support System. Thanks to this system, most of the education, healthcare, food and accommodation expenses of orphans are met by the supporters each month on a regular basis.

Orphan Sponsorship Support System

Started in 1992, orphan aid of IHH has gained momentum with the launch of Orphan Sponsorship Support System in 2005. This system aims to provide protection for orphans and it satisfies the needs of our orphan children for education, healthcare, shelter, food and clothing, thanks to regular donations.

In this system, a person, a family, an institution, a group of friends, a class or a school can be the sponsor of an orphan for 125 TL per month, and contribute in the satisfaction of orphan's needs such as education, healthcare, shelter, food and clothing.

Project Sponsorship

Individual, institutional or organizational sponsorships help to achieve project based activities such as construction and renovation of orphanage / home for orphans, construction of health centers, furnishing of shelter houses, procurement of school furniture and other needs, healthcare etc. The projects conducted contribute in the improvement of orphans' life conditions.

Orphan Support Fund

Except for Orphan Sponsorship Support System and Project Sponsorship, all orphan donations are collected in the Orphan Support Fund. Regardless of the amount, all kinds of contributions made for orphans are included in the Orphan Support Fund, and used in projects such as orphanage repairs, construction of libraries and dormitories for orphanages, clothing for festivals, healthcare services, and social activities for orphans.

Orphanage Works

Aiming to raise orphan children in a mentally, physically and spiritually healthy manner, without breaking their bonds with their own lands and cultures, IHH has opened 38 orphanages, 1 Orphan Education Center and 1 Orphan Life Center in 13 countries. New orphanages are still being built in Pakistan and Somalia.

IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation started its orphanage works in 2003 by opening the Msal Orphanage in Pakistan. The orphanage has been providing shelter to orphan girls for 17 years, and its first guests are now continuing their education at university. Repairs and furnishings of orphanages are performed regularly, with all the care given to make those places a peaceful home for the children.

Classes Competing for Kindness

As part of the campaign conducted by IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation together with the Ministry of Education since 2013, students in Turkey lend a helping hand to their orphans peers from around the world. With this campaign, it is aimed to obtain voluntary contribution of preschool, elementary, secondary and high school students in order to meet basic needs, such as education, healthcare, food, clothing, sheltering, of the children in Turkey or in another country around the world who lost one or both of their

parents due to circumstances such as wars, natural disasters, poverty, diseases etc., and thus spread goodness and welfare all around the world.

Hundreds of students from thousands of schools that have participated in the campaign until today have looked out for their orphan siblings from various countries of the world, and helped to meet their essential needs. Our classes/schools participating in the “Each Class Has an Orphan Sibling” campaign donated 125 TL for their orphan siblings each month. Following the first donation, they received orphan brief information forms including details about their orphan sibling (child’s name, photo, country, date of birth, date of his/her father’s death, whether his/her mom is alive, number of siblings) together with their money-boxes.

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