Children and AIDS

Sub-Saharan Africa

Edited by

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Notes on Contributors

A unique characteristic of this book is the multidisciplinary perspectives that the contributing authors bring to this work. Contributing authors come from a range of academic disciplines and fields of practice. This diverse perspective is essential to a book of this nature. The issue of vulnerability, especially among orphaned children, reveals an intersection of a number of factors such as poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare services, social support, and how these interact to inhibit life chances for vulnerable children and their communities.

Margaret Lombe (PhD) is an assistant professor at the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. She is also a faculty associate at the Center for Social Development at Washington University. Her area of expertise is in international social development with an emphasis on social inclusion/exclusion and capacity building. Margaret has provided consultation to the United Nations and has participated in a number of Experts Group Meetings (EGM), working with the UN to develop tools to assess inclusion/exclusion. She has published book chapters and a number of articles on the issue of social inclusion and AIDS; and has presented papers at both local and international conferences in this field. Her recent work has appeared in refereed journals including: *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment*, *Social Work Research*, *Journal of Community Practice*, and the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*.

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Introduction: Book Overview

Margaret Lombe and Harriet Mabikke

The issue of HIV/AIDS has received considerable attention worldwide. The past two decades have seen progress made on the scientific front. However, the dramatic consequence of the epidemic—especially in countries where access to prevention, treatment and care is severely limited—continues to grow. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions that have been disproportionately impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic; losing a considerable proportion of adults in their most productive years. An aftermath of the high adult mortality rates has been an increase in the proportion of children who are orphaned. Indeed, approximately 9 out of 10 children classified as OVC worldwide live in this region alone. In light of the staggering toll of HIV/AIDS on the region, efforts have been made to curb the spread of the virus—mainly through treatment and prevention. These issues are important and compelling but fail to capture the whole picture; the unprecedented increase in the number of children classified as vulnerable. In response to this, during the past few years, individuals, communities and organizations—from a grandmother in a remote village to the policy-maker in the city—have risen to the challenge. Their effort in alleviating suffering among children classified as vulnerable is laudable. Despite this, children continue to experience high levels of vulnerability, provoking further dialogue.

Our modest contribution to this agenda is to highlight the plight of children in different living arrangements, review policies and interventions undertaken to enhance their welfare, identify gaps, if any, with respect to children's participation/visibility as well as awareness of human rights. These issues deserve attention because in the absence of well thought-out interventions that are guided by the voices of the primary stakeholder—affected children—children classified as vulnerable will continue to experience suffering and exploitation; negatively impacting their life chances and the wellbeing of communities. Moreover, we rest on the premise that society has a moral obligation to protect its vulnerable members, especially when they are children.

This book provides us with a platform from which to grapple with a number of issues including classification of young people who are subjects of rights as OVC, review of policies and interventions put in place to enhance their welfare, along with their perception of human rights.

On a practical note, the concept of OVC may be, and to some extent has been, an effective tool of highlighting the dilemma of children so classified; ensuring that they receive the much needed support. Yet again, what does vulnerability among

Chapter 1
AIDS-Related Vulnerability among Children in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview

Lyndsey McMahan, Chiedza Mufunde, and Margaret Lombe

Introduction and Background

The issue of HIV/AIDS has received considerable attention worldwide. The past two decades have seen progress made on the scientific front including tools and services aimed at prevention as well as treatment. Since 2011, the number of people worldwide newly infected with HIV and AIDS has decreased by 33 percent (UNAIDS, 2013). In addition, thanks to the development of life-saving antiretroviral therapies, the number of AIDS-related deaths have decreased from 2.3 million in 2005 to 1.6 million in 2012 (UNAIDS, 2013). However, the drastic consequence of the epidemic, especially in countries where access to prevention, treatment and care is severely limited, continues to grow. More than 20 years have passed since the first deaths from AIDS occurred. Most of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the regions hardest hit by the epidemic. The disproportional loss of individuals in their most productive years raises concerns over the welfare of surviving members of affected families and social, political, and economic institutions. One consequence of the rapid increase in adult mortality is an increase in the proportion of children who are orphaned (Stover et al., 2008). According to AVERT (2005), at the end of 2001, an estimated 14 million children worldwide had lost a parent or both to AIDS or related causes. As of 2012, that number had reached 17.8 million (UNICEF, 2014). Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly 90 percent of these orphans (UNICEF, 2014).

In recent years the phenomenon of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) has received some attention in academic circles. However, there has not been stringent academic examination of the issue partly because the impact of the epidemic on children has proven to be particularly hard to quantify, confront, and even harder to put on the agendas of researchers. Due mainly to the staggering toll of HIV/AIDS, research effort has focused on treatment and prevention. Children have received attention mainly in relation to "mother to child transmission" and pediatric AIDS. These issues are important and compelling but fail to capture the whole story. The other part of this story is the orphan crisis that has engulfed the region in the past few years.

Before delving into the scope of the problem it is important to acknowledge the definition of OVC. According to Skinner et al. (2004), the term "orphaned and

Chapter 4
The Living Arrangements of Vulnerable Children in Zambia

Margaret Lombe and Theresa Lungu

Introduction: Country Profile

Zambia is a landlocked country in south-central Africa. It covers 752,618 km^2. The country, formerly known as Northern Rhodesia, was a colony of the British government from 1886 until 1960 when it gained its independence. The country's official language is English. Zambia borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Tanzania to the north-east, Malawi to the east, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, and Angola to the west. The country's population stands at 13.8 million and is comprised of approximately 72 ethnic groups, most of which are Bantu-speaking. About 61 percent of the population are young people aged between 10 and 29 years. This sizable young population presents unique challenges in that future wellbeing is linked to the healthy development of people in this group.

Zambia is a democratic country with a multiparty political system. It has enjoyed relative political and economic stability since independence. Unlike many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Zambia is highly urbanized with 44 percent of its population concentrated in a few urban areas such as the capital city (in the south) and in towns along the Copper-belt in the north-west. This information is noteworthy in that available data suggests that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Zambia varies significantly according to geographical location, with the cities recording higher rates.

Zambia is endowed with mineral resources including copper, cobalt, zinc, lead, coal, emeralds, gold, silver and uranium. In fact, at independence it was classified among the richest nations in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the country's economy declined considerably in the years following independence. With the privatization of the mining sector in the 1990s, Zambia experienced a boom in foreign investment, leading to economic growth. This growth was further augmented by the government's support of the agricultural sector. As of October 2011, Zambia was classified as a lower middle income country (World Bank, 2013). Despite this, social conditions for most people remain challenging. Poverty is widespread, life expectancy is among the lowest in the world and the mortality rate is one of the highest—largely due to the prevalence of chronic illnesses such as HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Indeed, the country's life expectancy on average

Chapter 8
Children Speak Out: Is Anyone Listening?

Margaret Lombe and Alex Ochumbo

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter supplements the literature reviewed with evidence from research conducted from children in Zambia and Kenya. Data were collected from children in institutional care as well as child-headed households (N = 178). Our goal was to fully capture the children's perception of their situation and experiences; hence, the data is mainly descriptive.

Description of the Data

As noted, data were collected from children in institutional care in Kenya (N = 88) and in child-headed households in Zambia (N = 90). The questionnaire covered a wide range of issues, these are reviewed below.

- Demographics: This included age, gender, place of residence, school enrollment and grade level.
- Respondent and HIV/AIDS: This question addressed issues around a respondents' knowledge, perception, status, and acquaintance with HIV/ AIDS.
- Respondent's Family (Relationship with family members): This question looked at whether/or not a respondent's parents are dead, cause of death, age at parent's death, feeling about parents' death and reasons for feeling that way.
- Relationship with Relatives (Relationship with community): The focus is on whether or not a respondents is visited by relatives, feelings when visited or not visited, reaction to the visit, what relatives say, how they relate, explanation of relationship, what they want to hear from relatives, why they want to hear this, what they would like their relatives to do for them and why.
- Respondent's Education (Experiences with the home/institutions): This addressed a respondent's reasons for going to school and whether or not school is important to them and why.

Chapter 9

Vulnerability among Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Margaret Lombe and Harriet Mabikke

This chapter addresses the issue of vulnerability among children as this relates to the rights that are guaranteed under Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the extent to which these rights have been realized by children in sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, the chapter presents a synopsis of the situation of vulnerable children and their experiences within the context of CRC. Key areas covered include:

1. the situation of vulnerable children in the region;
2. the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its historic evolution;
3. the meaning of the Convention on the Right of the Child to a vulnerable child in sub-Saharan Africa;
4. a review of mechanisms that may enhance attainment of rights guaranteed under CRC by OVC; and
5. an overview of why this discussion matters.

The chapter attempts to articulate the vulnerability experienced by OVC and its correlates including children's street living, child labor, trafficking in children, child soldiering and poverty. The authors review challenges children face in attaining their provision, protection and participation rights. Attention is given to show that while considerable progress has been made toward attainment of the rights guaranteed under the CRC, a lot still needs to be done to make these rights a reality for the African child.

The chapter touches on the concepts of convivencia and Ubuntu. The authors argue that OVC is a problematic terminology borne out of defective social institutions. The authors posit that the terminology, OVC, reflects the failure of social institutions to guarantee children rights that are primary to their wellbeing and healthy development. The term also stands in contradiction to familial and extra-familial systems of care that embody the African adage "it takes a village to raise a child." Indeed, the idea of community in which children matter—where every child belongs, is valued, loved and cared for—is refuted. The chapter closes with a reflection on why the CRC matters to children in sub-Saharan Africa, especially OVC.

Chapter 10
Conclusion: Closing Thoughts

Margaret Lombe, Harriet Mabikke, and Alex Ochumbo

This book set out to develop a comprehensive understanding of the plight of children classified as vulnerable in sub-Saharan Africa. It attempted to bring together in one place data regarding OVC based on a systematic review of literature along with supplemental data drawing upon studies conducted by the authors with children that have been made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS in Kenya and Zambia. The first section of the book highlighted the HIV/AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa and presented an overview of the adult mortality and resultant disproportionate numbers of orphaned children in the region. The book, in the second section, took an in-depth look at the different living arrangements of OVC in Botswana, Kenya, and Zambia. Governmental and community responses to the plight of children in sub-Saharan Africa were highlighted in the third section. Effort was made to situate this conversation within the context of human rights, with specific focus on the rights of the child.

Our goal in writing this book was to provide an overview of existing responses to the phenomenon of OVC. We hope to prompt a reflection and dialogue on the plight of the African child who has been classified as vulnerable. For the authors, this question is a serious moral issue pointing to broad societal malaise. How did the phenomenon of child vulnerability take hold in sub-Saharan Africa? What happened to the familial and extra-familial systems of care that define the spirit of "ubuntu"? How does this experience impact Africa's future? In this book, we have extended an invitation to the reader to grapple with these questions.

This book is also intended to be a platform from which to push African policy-makers, capacity-building and civil society agencies, the African child, the international community and anyone who cares about the welfare of children to provide effective responses to the plight of OVC in sub-Saharan Africa. In essence this is an invitation for the reader to act.

In the closing chapter of this book, we acknowledge that the subject of OVC is highly complex and is rooted in socio-economic, political, and cultural dynamics. We struggle with these dynamics as we try to make sense of the situation of children classified as vulnerable. We recognize the significant effort that has been devoted to understanding this issue. We especially acknowledge the effort of well-intentioned individuals and organizations committed to enhancing the welfare of OVCs.

As we grapple with this subject, we are reminded that the global community has a strong history of rallying together in pursuit of justice, combating diseases and climate challenges. An example in place is the global unity in the fight against