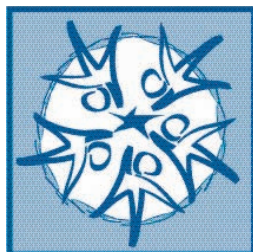


Social Safety Nets Primer Notes

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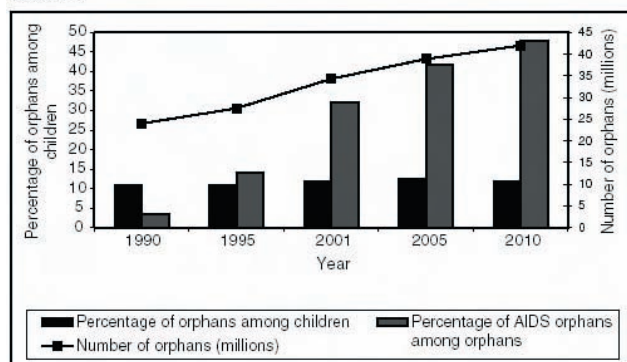


Reaching out to Africa's Orphans A Framework for Public Action

Conflicts and the HIV-AIDS pandemic are generating a major humanitarian crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa: the number of children who have lost one or both parents is expected to rise to 35 million by 2010. Even prior to the death of parents, children are vulnerable as prolonged sickness of a parent robs them of their childhood, often forcing them to become breadwinners. The risk of orphanhood is no longer a random shock affecting a few families; it is a systemic shock affecting whole communities and large segments of the population.

The recent Bank study, *Reaching Out to Africa's Orphans*, provides an overview of the particular risks and vulnerabilities to which orphaned children are exposed. Its primary aim is to collate and organize the available but scattered information, delineate a profile of orphans and the risks they face, assess the pros and cons of interventions and offer guidance on what might work in a given country context or situation.

Figure 1.1 Number and Proportion of Orphans Up to Age 14 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2010



Source: UNAIDS (2002).

While focused on orphans, the analytical content is relevant to all vulnerable children.

Sources of Risk

The study identifies five sources of risk for orphans in Africa. First, the death of an earning family member is likely to drive a family into penury because of the costs of the funeral, the loss of regular income, and the risk of losing one's property. Evidence also shows that care of orphans often tends to fall on the poorest homes – for example, those headed by the elderly or women. While fostering helps, evidence from panel data for Uganda indicates that the households fostering children often experience a significant reduction in consumption and income per capita, household savings and investment. Findings from Rwanda are similar, where the entry of an orphan induces a 21 percent decline in the estimated adult equivalent per capita consumption.

Erosion of human capital is another major risk identified from an analysis of various micro studies. Relative to other children in the household, fostered children are under-enrolled in schools, work longer hours doing household chores, have lower immunization coverage, and these disadvantages are more pronounced for fostered girls than for boys. Children who live with sick parents or whose parents are deceased are often exploited. Several micro studies confirm the risks of abuse, neglect and exploitation of orphaned children. Further, the psychological risks, though often not visible, are extremely high. The death of a parent often leaves the child in a state

of trauma, lacking nurture and guidance.

Interventions

Effective interventions depend on knowing the specific risks faced by orphans and their specific needs, which vary by age, gender, household and country circumstances. But the data needed to come up with specific conclusions are often missing, and so additional context-specific research is needed on the treatment of orphans, with particular emphasis on female orphans. Equally imperative is the need to assess current interventions to learn what works and does not work in different settings.

Prevailing interventions fall into two groups: household-based care and institutional care. Household care is provided by a living parent, the extended family, a household headed by an adolescent child, or by unrelated households. Institutional care is provided by a foster home or surrogate family group integrated into a community, a children's village or an orphanage. The study examines the pros and cons of each of these interventions. While a ranking of these interventions is difficult (because of quality variations and other comparability problems), placing orphaned children in household settings appears preferable to placement in institutional care. If institutional care is the inevitable solution in a certain situation, it appears best to place children in group homes located close to the community with which they are familiar. To facilitate the placement of an orphan in a desirable setting, public action should be supportive of community action: support for community-based intervention will contribute greatly to resolving the placement problem. Any arrangement is preferable to an orphanage, which must be the "last resort" option when no other arrangement is possible.

The study sets out some general principles for scaling up the more promising interventions. In countries where the access to basic services (education and health) is low, sectoral and economic policies including waiving of school fees and uniform obligations would have the desired effect of increasing enrollment rates of all children, including orphans.

When the average access to services is high, but the difference in access to services between the poor and the non-poor, and between orphans and non-orphan children is quite large, direct measures such as cash transfers conditional upon children attending the school seem appropriate. The appropriate delivery mechanism for such transfer assistance may vary from country to country – it could be the fostering household, the school, or the local non-governmental organization. Whatever the nature of the transfer, targeting method, and delivery channel, such transfers should be made in a non-stigmatizing manner. Appropriate checks and balances must be in place. This should include oversight by NGOs or community-based organizations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

One reason for the inability to assess what works and does not work is that past and current interventions have not kept credible monitoring and evaluation systems in place. The study provides a short outline of the issues related to an appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategy for programs aimed at assisting orphans and vulnerable children. It includes a check list of what needs to be monitored such as critical indicators for assessing the impact and outcome of interventions.

The World Bank Social Safety Nets Primer series is intended to provide a practical resource for those engaged in the design and implementation of safety net programs around the world. Readers will find information on good practices for a variety of types of interventions, country contexts, themes and target groups, as well as current thinking on the role of social safety nets in the broader development agenda.



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