

ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THEY DEPRIVED OF THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

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Introduction

With the outbreak of the HIV scourge in Uganda in the early 1980s, AIDS has claimed so many adult lives and this in the long run gave rise to a considerable number of Orphans. However we cannot also forget the LRA war (early 1990s) in Northern Uganda as being one of the major contributors to a high proportion of orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Northern Uganda. While so many studies have examined the risks faced by orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), few have studied the extent to which these OVCs have been deprived of the different social and economic benefits. These benefits include, school attendance, possession of basic items residence with siblings and nutritional status.

Objectives

Examining the extent to which orphans and vulnerable children are deprived of their social and economic benefits

Methodology

The data collected was mainly based on secondary data from secondary data sources, compiled data bases, reports, journals and publication.

Using data from the 2006 Uganda demographic and health survey (UDHS), at bi-variate stage, cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between the dependent and independent variable.

Statistical Analysis

The analysis aimed to explore a range of OVC demographic characteristics, proportions of OVCs enjoying social and economic benefits.

Results

Out of all the children interviewed in the different households in this study, 45% of them belonged to the category of OVCs. The study showed that urban children were more likely not to be living with both parents than their rural counterparts, (54% compared to 44%) this could probably be due to high cases of separation and broken marriages among urban parents.

However, this study does not include children who were not living in households at the time of the study, and this includes children in institutions (babies homes, vocational learning institutions and boarding schools), children on the streets.

The findings reveal that the OVCS were less advantaged than their non-OVC counterparts, for example, OVCs are less likely than non-OVCs to attend school (76% versus 83%) and they are less likely to have basic needs than their non OVC counterparts to have basic needs (25% versus 29%) just slightly disadvantaged compared to their non OVC counterparts.

School Attendance

The school dropout pattern in Uganda, dictates that OVCs are usually at a higher risk of dropping out of school than their non-OVC counterparts because probably they lack school fees to foster their school education and others had to look after their young siblings. However, there was no variance in school attendance between the OVCs and the non-OVCs because they were all rated at 86%, this was among OVCs in the 6-12 age category. And for the OVCs in the 13-17 age category, there was a variance in school attendance between the OVCs and non-OVCs, that is, for the OVCs it was 75.5% and 83% for the non-OVCs. There variance among the older children could be because usually older OVCs are always accorded the responsibility to look after their younger siblings and also take care of the sick relatives back at home and also indulge in child labor in order to fend for their younger siblings, hence missing school, or even completely dropping out.

Basic Needs

Basic requirements are a fundamental aspect to every growing child. According to the study, basic needs were considered to be met if a child had at least a pair of shoes, two sets of clothes and a Blanket

In the study, OVCs were more likely than their non-OVC counterparts to be deprived of basic requirements/needs. And this is especially true for their rural counterparts because they were less than half as their urban counterparts to have all the 3 basic needs (21% and 50% respectively)

For example possession of mosquito nets is a very vital requirement especially when it comes to prevention of malaria, since they have a right to good health, but very many children are deprived of this aspect and this is regardless of whether one is an orphan or not. Looking at the study findings, only 22% of the children under 5yrs had slept under a mosquito net on the night preceding the day of the interview.

Residence with Siblings

Overall, half of orphans under the age of 18 were not living with all their siblings. Maternal orphans and double orphans are less likely than paternal orphans to be living with all siblings under age 18. The likelihood that an orphan is not living with all other siblings under age 18 increases with the child's age, and this is somewhat greater among urban than rural children, and tends to increase with wealth quintile, although the pattern is not uniform. East Central region had the lowest proportion of orphans living apart from other siblings under age 18 (40%), while proportions exceed 60% in Central 2, Kampala, and Western regions.

Nutritional status

From the analysis, it showed that OVCs had a lower percentage of underweight compared to their non OVC counterparts, 15% of OVC were underweight compared to 16% of their non-OVC counterparts.

However, looking at just the OVCs, female OVCs were more likely to be underweight than their male counterparts, that is 19% underweight female OVCs compared to the 11% males.

Discussion

Table 1: OVCs by their Demographic and social Economic Characteristics

Variable	Percentage (%)	Number (n)	Total
Age			
0-4	18.66	2,662	8,398
<2	6.18	882	3,293
2-4	12.49	1,781	5,106
5-9	24.41	3,482	7,653
10-14	26.94	3,842	6,986
15-17	11.32	1614	2,669
		14,263	
Gender			
Male	48.78	5,661	12,781
Female	51.22	5,945	12,926
Sub Total		11,606	
Residence			
Urban	20.85	1,502	2,778
Rural	79.15	5,701	12,929
Sub Total		7,203	
Region			
Central 1	12.54	1,454	2,644
Central 2	11.80	1,368	2,515
Kampala	5.38	624	1,121
East central	9.98	1,157	2,724
Eastern	11.44	1,327	3,816
Northern	17.99	2,086	4,439
West Nile	5.55	644	1,390
Western	14.10	1,635	3,893
South west	11.23	1,303	3,164
Sub Total		11,598	
North Sub regions			
IDP	65.88	954	1,981
Karamoja	34.12	494	979
Sub Totals		1448	
Wealth quintile			
Lowest	20.00	2,320	5,334
Second	17.96	2,083	5,170

Middle	19.72	2,288	5,248
Fourth	20.78	2,411	5,301
Highest	21.53	2,498	4,653
Sub Totals		11,600	

From Table 1, the percentage of OVCs increases with age, and basing on residence, urban area had less OVCs compared to the rural areas, that is 20.85% compared to 70.15.1% from rural areas, this could probably be due to the high prevalence of HIV among the rural areas and the low uptake of PMTCT services.

The Northern region had the highest number of OVCs (17.99%) compared to all the other regions probably due to the LRA insurgency that hit the Northern, and claimed a big percentage of adults, leaving a big number of OVCs.

In the Northern sub region, IDP has a higher percentage of OVCs compared to Karamoja (65.88% compared to 34.12%) has a very high OVC rate (IDP-48.2%, and Karamoja-50.5%), this is still in line with the LRA insurgency that hit the Northern, and claimed a big percentage of adults,.

Table 2: Showing School attendance of OVCs and Non OVCs by their demographic and social economic Characteristics.

Variable	OVCS		Non OVCs	
	Percentages (%)	Number(n)	Percentage (%)	Number (n)
Sex				
Male	49.61	2,122	50.08	5,798
Female	50.39	2,155	49.92	5,779
Sub Totals		4,277		11,577
Age				
6-12 Yrs	58.38	2,497	69.78	8,079
13-17 Yrs	41.62	1,780	30.22	3,498
Sub Totals	100.00	4,277		11,577
Residence				
Urban	12.13	519	10.38	1,202
Rural	87.87	3,758	89.62	10,375
Sub Totals		4,277		11,577
Region				
Central 1	13.44	575	9.67	1,112
Central 2	9.75	417	10.33	1,188
Kampala	3.55	152	4.74	545
East Central	8.42	360	11.33	1,303

Eastern	10.97	469	15.80	1,817
Northern	23.47	1,004	14.06	1,616
West Nile	4.28	183	6.06	697
Western	13.40	573	15.67	1,802
South west	12.72	544	12.32	1,417
Sub Totals		4277		11,497
North Sub-regions				
IDP	74.52	503	62.33	700
Karamoja	25.48	172	37.67	423
Sub Totals	100.00	675		1123
Wealth Quintile				
Lowest	22.19	949	18.61	2,155
Second	19.48	833	18.86	2,183
Middle	18.62	796	21.56	2,496
Fourth	19.50	834	21.96	2,542
Highest	20.21	864	19.01	2,201
		4276		11,577

From the above table, Basing on gender, the male non-OVCs were more like to attend school compared to their non-OVC counterparts (that is, 50.8% compared to 49.61%). Yet among the girls, OVCs were slightly more likely than their counterparts to attend school (59.39% compared to 49.92%). This is likely so because, usually most scholarship funding opportunities, usually target the girl child, and especially those who are orphans.

Looking at age, among the older children, OVCs were more likely than their non-OVC counterparts to be in school (41.62%, compared to 30.22%), whereas, among the younger ones (6-10), OVCs were less likely to attend school compared to the non-OVCs (58.38% compared to 69.78%) This could be because usually funding opportunities, target older children, for example, Fawe targets children from Primary Five.

Basing on the different regions, school attendance varied across regions, in most of the regions, OVCs were less likely to attend school compared to their non-OVC counterparts. Out of the 9 regions, it's in about 3 regions, where non-OVCs were less likely to attend school compared to their OVC counterparts, and these regions were Central 1 (13.44% compared to 9.67%), Northern region (23.47% compared to 14.06%). This could be explained in line with the fact that, knowing that they are orphans, children in these regions zealously embrace the scholarship funding opportunities.

In the North sub regions, among the IDP, OVCs were more likely than their non-OVC counterparts to attend school (74.52% compared to 62.33%) whereas among the Karamajong, OVCs were less likely to attend school compared to the non-OVCs (25.48% compared to 37.67%).

In regard to wealth Quintile, OVCs in the lowest and second quintile, had a higher school attendance rate compared to their other non-OVC counterparts. This could probably be because usually some scholarship funding opportunities mainly target OVCs and yet even among the non-OVCs, there is that group that cannot afford an education

Table 3: Showing access to basic material needs by OVCs and Non OVCs by their demographic and social economic Characteristics.

Variable	OVCs		Non OVCs	
	Percentages (%)	Number(n)	Percentage (%)	Number (n)
Gender				
Male	49.55	2,238	49.97	6,392
Female	50.45	2,279	50.03	6,399
Sub Totals		4,517		12,791
Age				
5-9	33.42	1,510	48.03	6,143
10-14	45.93	2,075	38.40	4,911
15-17	20.65	933	13.57	1,736
sub Total		4,518		12,790
Residence				
Urban	11.98	541	10.32	1,320
Rural	88.02	3,976	89.68	11,470
Sub Totals		4,517		12,790
Region				
Central 1	13.28	600	9.64	1,233
Central 2	9.67	437	10.29	1,316
Kampala	3.41	154	4.60	589
East Central	8.50	384	11.34	1,450
Eastern	11.36	513	15.75	2,015
Northern	23.67	1,069	14.82	1,896
West Nile	4.21	190	5.93	758
Western	13.33	602	15.48	1,980
South west	12.57	568	12.15	1,554
Sub Totals		4517		12,791
North Sub-regions				
IDP	75.07	542	62.30	780
Karamoja	24.93	180	37.70	472
Sub Totals		722		1252
Wealth Quintile				
Lowest	22.63	1,022	18.65	2,386
Second	19.44	878	19.18	2,454

Middle	18.71	845	21.30	2,725
Fourth	19.13	864	22.15	2,834
Highest	20.10	908	18.71	2,393
Sub Totals		4,517		12,792

From Table 3, in regard to Gender, there was no major disparity as far as basic necessities are concerned between the male OVCs and their non-OVCs and also vice versa for the girls, males (49.55% for OVCs and 49.97% for the non-OVCs), Females (50.45% for OVCs and 50.03% for the non-OVCs).

For the age categories, Older OVCs were more likely to be deprived of basic necessities compared to the younger OVCs, Just like it is depicted in the table above, younger OVCs (5-9) were less likely to be deprived of basic necessities compared to their non-OVC counterparts (33.42% compared to 48.03% respectively).

From the study, in context with residence, rural OVC were more like to be deprived of basic material needs compared to their non-OVC counterparts (that is 88.02% for OVCs and 89.68% for non-OVCs). Urban OVCs were slightly more likely to have access to basic material needs compared to their non-OVC counterparts. (11.98% and 10.32% respectively)

By region, the only major, significant observation was in the central region 1 and Northern region, saving for the other regions it is only in these two regions where OVCs had higher access to basic material needs compared to their non-OVC counterparts. (For central 1, OVCs-13.28%, and for Non-OVCs-9.64%. For Northern region, OVC-23.67%, and non-OVCs-14.82%) For the other regions, OVCs more likely than their non-OVCs to be deprived of access to basic material needs.

For the sub regions, OVCs in the category of IDP were more likely to have access to basic material needs compared to their non OVC counterparts (75.07% for OVCs and 62.30% for the non-OVCs). This may be attributed to the fact that by the time of the study, there was adequate donor support for IDPs. And among the Karamajongs, OVCs had limited access to basic material needs compared to their non-OVC counterparts.

Basing on the wealth quintile, OVCs in the lowest wealth quintile had more access to basic material needs compared to their non-OVC counterparts (22.63% for OVCs, and 18.65% for non-OVCs). This is likely so, because OVCs from the lowest and second wealth quintile usually because they receive hand outs from well wishers.

Conclusion

With the high extent to which OVCs are deprived of their social economic benefits, the results therefore emphasize the need for a holistic approach to further address the social and economic needs of the OVCs in order to ensure proper growth and development of the children, who are tomorrow's future.

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