

## **The Examination of NGOs' Survival Skills Programme for HIV/AIDS Orphaned Children in Kenya**

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**Abstract:** This study assessed NGOs empowerment of HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop life skills relevant for survival in Njoro Sub County. In Kenya, 2.5 million children under the age of 18 years are orphans. Out of these 2.5 million children, 1.5 million are orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS lack access to important life skills for survival due to poverty and illiteracy. This denies them better job prospects, economic independence and a general good standard of life. To ensure these children enjoy their rights, NGOs have been involved in empowering them by mitigating the challenge of lack of necessary life skills for survival. However, little has been done on assessment of NGOs empowerment of HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop life skills relevant for survival in Njoro Sub County. The study was informed by the Empowerment theory by Andrea Diane (1995). The study used descriptive research design. Purposive sampling was used to get a sample of 47 children respondents and 10 key informants comprising of 2 NGOs officials and 8 community volunteers. The study collected and analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data. The results obtained indicated that the NGOs have implemented programs to empower HIV/AIDS orphaned children on how to develop skills relevant for survival like taking the children to school. The study found that children respondents' lives have changed positively and they have access to important life skills and better job views. The study recommended that the NGOs should consider paying school fees and provide school requirements to HIV/AIDS orphaned children uniformly to avoid cases where some beneficiaries feel favored while others feel discriminated against by the NGOs.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, life Skills, HIV/AIDS Orphaned Child.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This study assessed NGOs empowerment of HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop life skills relevant for survival in Njoro Sub County. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the subsequent Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), hereafter to be referred to collectively as HIV/AIDS, remains one of the most significant public health challenges in our lifetime, and certainly one of the major obstacles to socioeconomic development especially in developing countries. All nations across the world, particularly, low and middle income countries are significantly affected by HIV/AIDS and Kenya is no exception [1]. Worldwide, it is estimated that 17.8 million children under 18 years of age have been orphaned by AIDS and this is prospected to rise to 25 million by 2020 [2]. Giving life skills to HIV/AIDS orphaned children through taking them to school and giving them vocational trainings can play a crucial role in improving their prospects and securing their future.

A good school education can give children a higher self-esteem; better job prospects and economic independence as well as lifting them out of poverty. Such an education can also give children a better

understanding of HIV and AIDS, decreasing the risk that they will become infected. Schools can also offer benefits to children orphaned by AIDS outside of education, such as emotional support and care [3]. The government of Kenya in collaboration with donor countries like USA have consolidated resources for supporting and empowering HIV/AIDS orphaned children today as compared to the previous decades when HIV prevalence was still low [4].

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

According to a study carried out by World Health Organization in 2011, Kenya has 2.5 million children under the age of 18 years who are orphans. Out of these 2.5 million orphaned children, 1.5 million are orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS lack access to important life skills for survival due to poverty and illiteracy. This in turn denies them better job prospects, economic independence and a general good standard of life. To ensure these children enjoy their rights, NGOs have been involved in empowering them by mitigating the challenge of lack of necessary life skills for survival. However, little has been done on NGOs participation in empowering HIV/AIDS orphaned children in Njoro Sub

County to develop life skills relevant for survival. This is the reason why this study sought after finding out the NGOs input in empowering HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop life skills in the region.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The 1989 convention on the Rights of the child (CRC) linked life skills to education by stating that education should be directed towards the development of the child's fullest potential [5]. The 1990 Jomtien Declaration on Education for All took this vision further and included life skills among essential learning tools for survival, capacity development and quality of life [6]. The 2000 Dakar World Education Conference took a position that all young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be, and included life skills in two out of the six Education for All (EFA) Goals. Life skills-based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of child and youth development and thematic responses including as expressed in UNGASS on HIV/AIDS orphaned children. Expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that related to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management, communication and inter-personal skills.

Giving life skills to HIV/AIDS orphaned children by supporting their schooling and other vocational trainings can play a crucial role in improving their prospects and securing their future. A good school education can give children a higher self-esteem, better job prospects and economic independence [7]. As well as lifting children out of poverty, such an education can also give children a better understanding of HIV and AIDS, decreasing the risk that they will become infected. Schools can also offer benefits to children orphaned by AIDS outside of education, such as emotional support and care [8].

Ensuring that households where a child has been orphaned by HIV/AIDS receive external care and support is therefore essential to ensure that the increasing number of HIV/AIDS orphans attend school [9]. Figures released in 2010 revealed that in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the gap between school attendance by orphans and non-orphans has narrowed although progress varies across the region [10]. Despite this fact, orphans, particularly those from poorer households remain less likely to attend school compared to non-orphans.

Training HIV/AIDS orphaned children in job and business skills and providing financial services will provide them with financial relief. Vocational education and job training prepare HIV/AIDS orphaned children

for specific careers and are most effective if they make strong labor market links and develop job placement. Training in enterprise skills is yet another survival skill that can be given to HIV/AIDS orphaned children. Planning, risk management, and decision-making have emerged as important components of many livelihood programs [11]. Financial services, including high-quality microfinance (credit and savings) efforts, are among the most promising approaches to mitigating the economic impact on HIV/AIDS orphaned children. Many microfinance organizations in the hardest-hit countries in sub-Saharan Africa now offer products specifically for HIV/AIDS orphaned children, although some of these products may have limited applicability [12].

## EMPOWERMENT THEORY

Andrea Diane Napier propounded empowerment theory in 1995. She defines the word "empower" as, giving authority, ability, enabling, giving strength and validity, process of gaining power, developing power, taking or seizing power. This study assessed NGOs empowerment of HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop life skills relevant for survival. The theory's principle of assuming personal responsibility and developing skills relevant for survival marries the study. HIV/AIDS orphaned children fall under the category of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) [13]. The fact that these children have lost parents renders them vulnerable, hence they need to assume personal responsibility as soon as possible to develop skills that will enable them survive. Linking HIV/AIDS orphaned children to relevant resources and programmes will boost their self-esteem and problem solving skills [14]. Supported and empowered HIV/AIDS orphaned children are likely to recognize and identify their own strengths according to empowerment theory.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken in Njoro Sub County. Njoro Sub County is located in Nakuru County of Kenya. This region was suitable for this study because the region experiences ethnic clashes during general elections, which are held after every five years in Kenya [15]. These clashes render most residents homeless and poor. In return, women opt for commercial sex work to earn a living, which exposes them to HIV/AIDS infections. These women in return infect their spouses and eventually both parents die leaving behind HIV/AIDS orphaned children [16].

The highest number of HIV/AIDS orphaned children in Njoro Sub County are supported and empowered by Family Aids Initiative Response (FAIR), an NGO funded by a USAID project APHIA which is an overall project [17]. This NGO works in collaboration with other NGOs like Deliverance Centre,

Jubilee Social Centre, and Action against AIDS, Catholic Diocese of Nakuru and Action in Focus. All these NGOs are under the APHIA project, which is funded by USAID. This study used descriptive research design and Purposive sampling method was used to get the sample size because NGOs in Njoro Sub County have registered the HIV/AIDS orphaned children in the region. The unit of analysis for this study was the eldest child among the HIV/AIDS orphaned children in the selected households. This child had to be at least 15 years but below 18 years because they were old enough to give information [18].

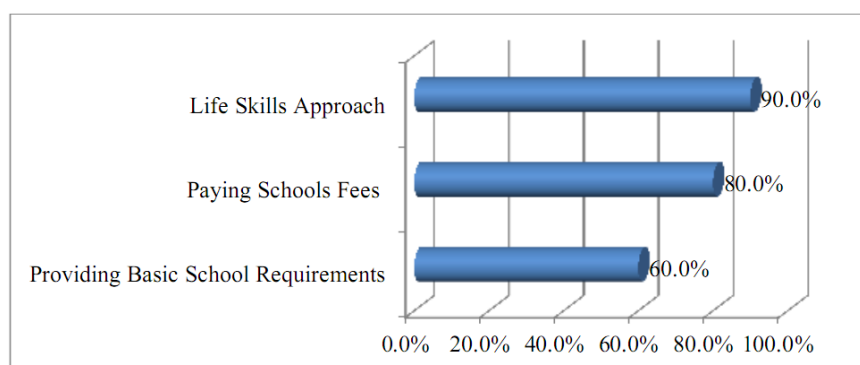
The number of HIV/AIDS orphaned children in Njoro Sub County is 118 according to the registers in the NGOs. Out of the 118, only 40% of them are 15-17 years. The study used 40% of 118 children (47 children) as the sample size. These 47 children came from different households. In case two or more of the 47 children came from the same household, the eldest child was interviewed. In addition, the researcher interviewed 2 NGO officials as key informants for this study. In addition, the study used Focus Group Discussion with 8

community volunteers as key informants to give data on this particular study. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were used to collect data.

The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. For qualitative data, the researcher sorted, coded and organized data into categories based on the themes to provide full description of empowerment and, life skills [19]. In addition, quantitative representation was required in some aspects. Ethical considerations were well thought out before conducting research. There was need to put more measures which were applied directly to the children respondents. These measures prevented or minimized harm, which came up during the collection of data from the respondents.

## RESULTS

The key informants were asked to indicate the different programs used by the NGOs to develop skills relevant for survival to the HIV/AIDS orphaned children in the study area. The following results were obtained;



**Fig-1: Programs Used By the NGOs to Develop Skills Relevant for Survival to the HIV/AIDS Orphaned Children**

Majority of the key informants (90%) noted that life skills approach was the most popular way that the NGOs were using to empower HIV/AIDS orphaned children develop skills relevant for survival. About 80% of the key informants cited that NGOs were developing skills relevant for survival to the HIV/AIDS orphaned children through paying of school fees while 60% of the key informants indicated that there was provision of basic school requirements.

The 90% key informants who cited life skills approach as the most popular way that NGOs were using to develop skills relevant for survival to the HIV/AIDS orphaned children, explained life skills approach as an interactive and educational method that not only focuses on transmitting knowledge but also aims at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills of the children. The 90% key informants argued that the primary aim of the life skills approach is to enhance older HIV/AIDS orphaned children's ability to

take responsibility, to make informed choices and avoid risk-taking behaviours.

According to (80%) key informants, the NGOs have intervened in various ways to ensure the HIV/AIDS orphaned children access education. The NGOs have achieved this by paying school fees for all children under their programs. The NGOs pay full amount of school fees for children from very poor families. The other portion of key informants that comprised of 60% informed the study that the NGOs buy the school items for HIV/AIDS orphaned children. Some of these items are the school uniforms, textbooks and exercise books and, pens among others. Moreover, the NGOs provide similar aid to HIV/AIDS orphaned children in vocational trainings. The (80%) key informants argued that the requirements for children in vocational trainings are a bit different from those in academic schools but still the NGOs provide these requirements to the children; they informed the study

that most of the children in vocational training are expected to have a tool pack depending on the course they are taking. Those taking tailoring course require items like needles, thread and cloth materials for practical classes. Those taking carpentry courses require items like saws and drills among others. A part from the tool packs, the children fees is paid by the NGOs, their school uniforms are bought for them by the NGOs and other practical requirements are taken care of by the NGOs.

All key informants (100%) informed the study that most vocational training programs prepare the children for hands-on work rather than academic work, and they are generally geared toward one career type. Vocational training takes a shorter duration than

academic education. The key informants (100%) reported that the NGOs send HIV/AIDS orphaned children to youth polytechnics, cosmetology and beauty schools. In addition, the NGOs have established a library and sewing institution of their own at FAIR NGO located at Njoro division.

**CATEGORY OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS THAT CHILDREN ARE ENROLLED**

The study sought after finding out whether the children respondents were enrolled in schools and the outcome was that every child (100%) is attending school. The table below shows the category of different learning institutions that the children respondents are enrolled in.

**Table 1: Category of different learning institutions that the children respondents are enrolled in**

Type of Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	7	14.9%
Secondary school	16	34.0%
Vocational trainings	24	51.1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The results in the table above shows that out of the 47 (100%) interviewed children respondents, majority of them were in vocational trainings as represented by 51.1%. About 14.9% were in primary schools while 34% were in secondary schools.

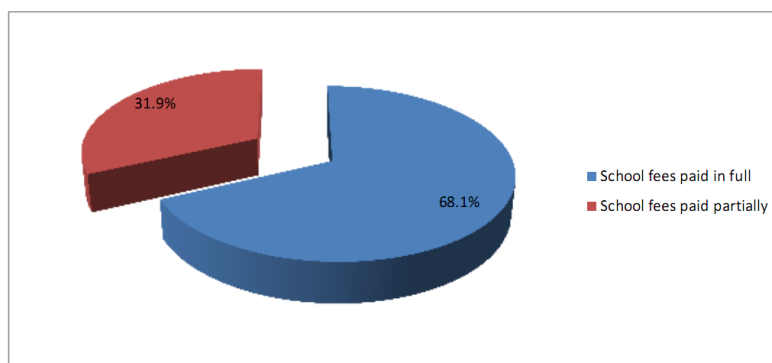
The enrolment of various children in vocational trainings is shown in the table below:

**Table 1: enrolment of various children in vocational trainings**

Type of vocational Centers	Frequency	Percentage
Youth polytechnics	11	45.8%
Beauty schools	13	54.2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The table above shows that majority (54.2%) of children who were enrolled in vocational trainings under the different NGO programmes were in beauty schools. However, 45.8% of children were enrolled in youth polytechnics. All the 47 interviewed children

respondents confirmed that the NGOs pay their school fees either partially or in full amounts. The figure below shows the distribution of school fees to the HIV/AIDS children under the NGOs empowerment programmes.



**Fig-2: Distribution of the Different Modes of School Fees to the HIV/AIDS Children under the Support of NGO Programs**

The figure above shows that majority of the children (68.1%) are paid for full amount of school fees by the NGOs while 31.9% are paid for some amount (partial) of school fees by the NGOs.

According to the argument of 80% of the key informants who mentioned that NGOs empower children through paying their school fees, those paid for school fees in full amount by the NGOs come from extremely poor backgrounds while those paid for partial school fees by the NGOs, come from families with a

fair income earning background hence their caregivers can afford the amount not paid by the NGOs. The study confirmed that most of those children whose caregivers chip in to pay some amount of their school fees are children living with their relatives (related by blood) as their caregivers.

The results in the table below shows people who provide learning materials and other school necessities (apart from school fees) to finance the children's education

**Table 3: Provision of the Learning Materials and other School Necessities**

People that provide school necessities to children	Frequency	Percentage
NGOs sponsoring the child	32	68.1%
Caregivers	12	25.5%
Others*	3	6.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*This includes well-wishers (non-relatives), politicians and churches

This study noted that 68.1% of the children respondents whose full school fees amount is paid by the NGOs reported that the NGOs provide all their learning materials and school requirements. Among the 31.9% of the children respondents whose school fees is paid partially by the NGOs, 25.5% reported that their caregivers provide their learning materials and other school necessities. However, 6.4% of the children were getting their learning materials and other school necessities from other sources (well-wishers, politicians and churches).

The 51.1% of the children respondents who were in vocational training said that they are sometimes paid some wages especially during practical lessons. Children respondents (45.8%) in youth polytechnics taking courses like car repair and construction argued that during practical classes, they offer their services to customers in various organisations, after which the organisations pay them some amount of money. The other portion of respondents in beauty schools (54.2%) reported the same idea. In addition, children respondents (51.1%) enrolled in vocational trainings stated that they usually make cash during school holidays and weekends when not in school; for instance, those in beauty schools (54.2%) argued that they visit salon and barber shops where they attend two to three customers a day, hence making some cash. Those in youth polytechnics said they spend their free time in garages or construction sites where they offer their services for pay.

Half of children respondents in vocational training (25.5%) argued that they give the cash to their caregivers to purchase food while the other half (25.5%) said that they use the cash earned to get school requirements like tool packs, school uniforms and

writing materials. The above results imply that there are HIV/AIDS orphaned children who do not get adequate school necessities from their respective NGOs or caregivers, hence are forced to work so that they can use the money earned to purchase the necessities.

All the 47 children respondents (100%) reported that the NGOs had established a library at the FAIR NGO. They further argued that the library has been of great help to them. A part from reading the books that aid them complete their schoolwork, they also read some of the books for entertainment and acquisition of general knowledge. They mentioned newspapers and magazines as some of the literature that entertain them and equip them with current affairs. A part from the children respondents from FAIR NGO (44.7%), the rest (55.3%) wished the NGOs would offer library services in their respective NGOs so that they do not have to walk the long distance to FAIR NGO to access library services. However, all the 47 children respondents (100%) confirmed that the library department at FAIR NGO allows them borrow books from the library under conditions like renewing the book or returning after two weeks and keeping the book in good condition. Similarly, children respondents in tailoring course were grateful to the NGOs for establishing a sewing institution. They argued that although the institution has not yet began to function officially, they are accessing the machines for practice on weekends and they are optimistic that soon the NGOs will no longer have to send children in tailoring courses to outside institutions.

**DISCUSSION**

The NGOs empowering HIV/AIDS orphaned children in Njoro Sub County have combined a variety of skills to ensure they produce children that are molded

all round; for instance, a part from the academic education and vocational training services given to HIV/AIDS orphaned children to prepare them for the job market, the NGOs also use the life skills approach. The aim of the approach is to ensure they establish an interactive and educational environment that will not only focus on transmitting knowledge but also at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills of HIV/AIDS orphaned children.

Majority of the key informants reported that the life skills approach is interactive and participatory. The children use methods such as role-playing, debating, storytelling and discussions to bring out the participatory and interactive elements of the program. According to the key informants (90%), the life skills approach has enhanced older HIV/AIDS orphaned children's ability to take responsibility to make informed choices and avoid risk-taking behaviours. UNGASS [20] argues that a child's expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that relate to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management, communication and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, this study found out from all children respondents (100%) their optimism for a successful future. WHO [21] argues that giving life skills to HIV/AIDS orphaned children by supporting their schooling and other vocational trainings can play a crucial role in improving their prospects and securing their future. A good school education can give children a higher self-esteem, better job prospects and economic independence.

#### SUMMARY

This study found out that every child (100%) enrolled by the NGOs benefited from the empowerment programs offered on how to develop skills relevant for survival. According to the findings, every child under the programs goes through primary school after which some proceed to secondary school and later higher education while others go to vocational trainings after primary education. Proceeding to secondary school or vocational trainings after primary education depends on various factors like the interest of the child in academics and the child's talent, among other factors. In addition, the NGOs have implemented programs of paying school fees and providing the school requirements for the children to ensure they are not in and out of school due to lack of school fees and other school requirements.

#### CONCLUSION

This study found out that the NGOs are empowering children to develop skills relevant for survival. The NGOs have achieved this by ensuring every child is schooling as reported by all children respondents. The NGOs ensure the children school up

to a level where they achieve their full potential and acquire skills which can enable them become independent (secure a job or employ themselves). This is achieved by the NGOs paying the children's school fees and providing their school requirements. The NGOs pay school fees for all (100%) children enrolled under their programs, although they pay for some children full amount (68.1%) and some children part of their school fees (31.9%). In addition, the NGOs use a life skills approach that aims at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills among HIV/AIDS orphaned children to develop skills relevant for survival.

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