Livelihood Complexities in Kenya from the Perspective of Youth Orphans

Gaozouapa Vue, McNair Scholar; Christopher Johnstone, Ph.D.; Nancy Pellowski Wiger, M.A.

Introduction

Background
- 2.3 million youth were unemployed in 2013, and 80% were youth 15-24 years old.
- In 2010, it was estimated that there were 2.5 million orphans in Kenya, yet few studies have documented the challenges or policy needs for youth orphan.

Challenges for Youth Orphans
- Stigma associated with HIV and AIDS
- Issues receiving inheritance
- Withdrawal from formal education (e.g., declined admission because of HIV status, lack of birth certificate, or lack of uniforms and books).
- Inappropriate care, especially because of HIV status, lack of birth certificate, or lack of uniforms and books.
- Inadequate livelihoods.

Ways to Address Challenges
- Cash transfer projects have been found to increase educational access for orphans.
- In addition, interventions such as ensuring access to health care (medications and home-based care), self-help groups that function as rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), and providing daycare to households with orphans, were found to support youth livelihoods.
- Non formal education programs have also been found to increase youth’s skills and employability (especially in the informal sector), improve youth’s financial literacy, and enhance youth’s standard of living.
- The Community and Progress-Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP-YEI) is a non-formal education program that provides youth basic employability skills training (BEST).

Definition

Definition of Youth
- The United Nations defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years.

Definition of Orphan
- The Kenyan government defines orphans as children who have lost one or both parents under the age of 18.

My Study

Research Question
What are the complexities that orphaned youth in Kenya face and the choices, strategies, and philosophies they use to manage such complexities?
- To answer this question, I conducted a secondary data analysis of interview data from youth in Kenya who completed the CAP-YEI program.

Methods and Analysis
- Interviews lasted 25-90 minutes and were conducted in English, Kiswahili and Sheng.
- Youth were asked open-ended questions about education, employment, savings and well-being.
- For my study, data from five youth orphans were analyzed in-depth to learn about the complexities in orphaned youth’s lives over four years.
- To analyze the data, descriptive categories were created to identify main themes related to youth choices and strategies.

Table 1. Interview sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of youth</th>
<th>Number of youth</th>
<th>Mother alive</th>
<th>Father alive</th>
<th>Both parents not alive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main Findings & Implications

Youth orphans desire new opportunities to learn entrepreneurial, life, academic, technical and practical skills.

“(CAP-YEI) is going lead me to a better place, it is going to add value to my life, the skills I will get”
(female youth, mother deceased, father deceased).

Implication: Formal and non-formal education programming could offer internships, attachments, or other opportunities for orphaned youth to connect and work with professionals in their communities to learn and practice new skills.

Real world provides expanding experiences for orphans.

“We have some trips to these places organized by (CAP-YEI) facilitators, the more we visit, the more we understand what is done in these companies”
(male youth, mother deceased, father alive).

Implication: Non-formal programs should work with other organizations to create affiliations and partnerships so that youth can apply the training and skills learned in CAP to different environments in the real world.

Youth have an increased sense of self esteem, ethics and internal motivation.

“…see there was a time before I joined there (CAP-YEI) I could not even face someone and talk to someone. But you see right now, I am gaining confidence. I can defend myself. If I see you are not doing the right thing, I can approach you”
(female youth, mother alive, father deceased).

Implication: Build a model based on relationships, networking and developing leadership skills.

Social supports are key to success.

“I’ll say my friends have really helped me in giving me moral. Let’s say, how can I say this, they even help motivate me. They’ve been motivating me in doing things that I didn’t know I would do”
(female youth, mother alive, father deceased).

Implication: The Kenyan government could create more positions specifically for youth workers so that orphan youth have more support throughout their lives. Universities and other diploma programs could also offer youth studies degrees to help prepare youth workers in the field.

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