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Socio-Pedagogical Challenges facing Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in the Aftermath of the 2007-2008 Election Violence in Nakuru County, Kenya.

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Abstract

The conflict situations that have afflicted parts of Kenya every five years, in the wake of general elections, since 1992 were most prominent after the disputed presidential elections of 2007. The magnitude of the clashes, loss of life, destruction of property and internal displacement of people were hitherto unwitnessed. The situation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Kenya has continued to be of national and international concern. The 2007/2008 post-election violence exacerbated the dire situation of OVC in Kenya. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated the number of children displaced by the 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV) in Kenya at 100,000 and those orphaned at 300,000 high. Some of the OVC lost both parents during the violence. Many more were born during and after displacement, and have no knowledge of their homes or origin. They do not understand or even remember the circumstances that caused their parents to be displaced. A survey by UNICEF in 2010 noted that on the overall after 2007/08 post-election conflict, about 15% of orphans were 0-4 years old, 35% were between 5 and 9 years old while up to 50% were 10-14 years old. This paper identifies the challenges the OVC are experiencing in schools as absenteeism, lack of physical infrastructure, insecurity, psychological trauma, among others. The paper also proposes strategies and programmes that various stakeholders have, and should put in place to assist OVC.

Key Words: conflict, equity, gender, pedagogy, transition rates, truancy.

Introduction

The status of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the world is worrying. Accurate statistics are not available but the World Bank (2008) estimated that about ten percent of all children in the world live under vulnerable conditions. This translates into a substantial number of children. This vulnerability, according to the report, is occasioned by five major factors namely: One, being orphaned through natural attrition and HIV and AIDS. It is estimated that 43 million children are in this category in Africa. Second, children made vulnerable due to various forms of armed conflict. This category includes an estimated 200,000 war orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, 4.6 million refugees, 2.9 million internally displaced children, 200,000 child soldiers (out of 250,000 worldwide) and four million injured and severely traumatised. Third, about three million street children who have nowhere else to call home with the highest concentration in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria and Ivory Coast. Fourth, children engaged in worst forms of labour like trafficking, slavery, bonded labour, pornography, prostitution, mines, quarries, agriculture and domestic servants. Fifth, children living with disabilities. Apart from these five causes identified by the World Bank, gender was also found to be a contributor to vulnerability especially for the girl-child who is at risk of exploitation and discrimination.

In Africa the leading causes of OVC were identified as HIV and AIDS, armed conflicts and disability which accounted for 12 million, 10.9 million and 10 million orphaned and vulnerable children respectively (World Bank 2008).

Armed Conflicts in Africa including post- election violence in Kenya in 2008 have continued to put more children at risk.

The 1989-2003 civil war in Liberia led to the deaths of 50,000 children either on the battleground as child soldiers or killed by the combatants, others were injured, orphaned or abandoned. This left many children traumatised, despondent and vulnerable as most turned to crime and drug abuse.

The situation was similar but to varying degrees in Ivory Coast 2010; the 100 days of ethnic cleansing and orgy of violence in Rwanda in 1994 which left between 800,000 and one million people, including children, dead and many others displaced; In Uganda, the 26 year old Lords Resistance Army's insurgency left more than 800,000 children displaced while others became "Night Commuters" moving from their villages to sleep on shop verandahs and schools in town every evening for fear of abduction. The case of Sudan needs special mention as the most protracted conflict from 1983 to 2005 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed giving a time frame for the independence of South Sudan. About two million people died while another four million were displaced to neighbouring countries of Chad, Central African Republic, Uganda, Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo. The effect of this conflict put children at risk as more girls died of pregnancy complications

than complete school, lack of education, healthcare and severe malnutrition making South Sudan "the hungriest place on earth" (Save-the-Children). The resurgence of violence between Sudan and South Sudan over the disputed oil-rich Abyei province and the civil strife pitting former vice president Riek Machar against President Salva Kiir continues to make more children orphaned and vulnerable.

There are International Conventions, National legal and Policy frameworks and instruments that define the plan for action for OVC (Jacques et al, 1996). These include the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection, and Development of Children at the World Summit for Children (1990). Signatories to the convention were committed to a 10-point program to protect the rights of children and to improve their lives. The Millennium Summit reaffirmed international commitment to working towards a world in which sustainable development and poverty reduction had the highest priority (R O K, 2005). The summit also identified, as priority areas, the Millennium Development Goals that are relevant to the rights of all children. These were Universal primary education by 2015, which stipulated that all children, boys and girls, should complete a full course of primary schooling and achieve gender parity at all levels of education. According to Article 26 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

> Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the pre-eminent treaty dedicated to the protection of economic and social rights of all (R O K, 1996). It recognizes the right of everyone to social security and to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and the continuous improvement of living conditions.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a framework that guides programs for all children, including OVC. The four pillars of the CRC are: The right to survival, development, and protection from abuse and neglect; the right to freedom from discrimination; the right to have a voice and be listened to; and that the best interests of the child should be of primary consideration in all dealings with the child.

In Kenya, the Children's Act (2001, revised 2010) makes provision for parental responsibility, fostering, adoption, custody, maintenance, guardianship, care and protection of children. The Act also addresses the issues of safeguarding the rights and welfare of the child. These include the right to nondiscrimination, right to parental care, education, health care, protection among others (R O K, 2002). The Act stipulates that: "Every child shall be entitled to education, the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and parents…" and that basic education shall be free and compulsory in accordance with article 28 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child (R O K, 2002).

The World Summit for Children (ROK 2000) report states that late enrolment and repetition, especially for OVC has distorted age groups to the extent that the average age of children completing primary education is 17 years, which is the theoretical age of completion of secondary education.

 The conflicts that have afflicted parts of Kenya every five years in the wake of general elections, since 1992 were most prominent after the disputed 2007 presidential elections. The magnitude of the clashes, loss of life and property, and internal displacements hence internal refugees were hitherto un-witnessed. The wave inter-ethnic conflicts in the Rift Valley in 2007/2008 went down in Kenya's history as the worst since independence. The loss of life that was estimated to be over 1300 and the displacement of over 650,000 people was unprecedented. Many children were orphaned by this orgy of violence. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development (2010) estimated that over 300 children were orphaned, some of whom lost both parents during the violence (UNICEF, 2003). A large number were also born during and after displacement, in the temporary camps set up for internally displaced persons (IDP) where conditions, to say the least, were appalling. Moreover, with the death of a parent, children experience profound loss, grief, anxiety, fear, and hopelessness with long-term consequences such as psychosomatic disorders, chronic depression, low self-esteem, learning disabilities, and disturbed social behavior. This is frequently compounded by "self-stigma" and children blaming themselves for their family's misfortune. Orphaned children also suffer discrimination. Amutabi (1995) observed that when family members or peers reject orphaned children, their self confidence and self-esteem suffers, leading to a negative impact on their classroom work and negative behaviour patterns. Such students tended to become aggressive when bullied or teased by their peers, often inviting punishment from their teachers who have little knowledge of what these children are going through (MOEST & UNESCO (2005).

Violent experiences tend to have long-term effects on behaviour of children; Children often bear the brunt of the trauma and pain caused by a natural or man-made disaster. They are the most vulnerable, and their emotional scars can stay alive the longest. Usually children who experience war or witness their parents' death suffer from chronic post-traumatic stress syndrome (Schiraldi, 2000). Studies carried out on conflicts suggest that even where conflicts have been brought under control, fear and suspicion left behind are seldom healed, especially among school - going children (Nicolai, 2003). It is in light of the above scenario that this study sought to

investigate the challenges, orphans and vulnerable children in schools face in the aftermath of 2007/2008 election violence in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

The government of Kenya has committed to providing basic and quality education for all children (MoEST 2005a). The goals of education show the country's commitment to holistic development of the child. All Education Commission Reports in Kenya since independence have reiterated the same goals (R O K 1976). The Children's Act (2001) emphasises the importance of providing holistic education to all Kenyan children (Save the children Alliance, 2006). In addition, Kenya is a signatory to international treaties and conventions such as the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948), Millennium Development Goals, and the Dakar Conference on Education for All (UNICEF, 2010), all of which affirm the commitment to education of good quality for all. The Vision 2030 aims at making "Kenya a newly industrializing, middle income country providing high quality life to all its citizens in clean and secure environment by the year 2030". Within its Social Pillar, Vision 2030 indicates that the government will address needs of vulnerable groups, which include OVC, disabled, the aged, refugees and internally displaced persons through various strategies. These strategies include reducing deaths occasioned by HIV and AIDS, enhancing support to orphans and vulnerable children through policy development and support of safety nets such as cash transfer scheme.

This study therefore aimed at investigating the challenges orphans and vulnerable children face as they participate in primary education after the skirmishes of 2007/2008 in Nakuru County, Kenya. It also sought to establish how these challenges, if left unresolved, are likely to impact on the attainment of Millennium Development Goals and Vision 2030.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the status of OVC in terms of their participation in primary education in Kenya.

Objective

The major objective of this study was to investigate the challenges, orphans and vulnerable children face after the 2007/2008 post-election violence in primary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

Definition of Concepts

The following terms were used in this study as defined by UNICEF

- Orphaned and Vulnerable Children: orphaned and other groups of children who are exposed to more risk than their peers and who need special attention to participate fully in life.
- Child: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years…."
- Orphan: A Child whose mother, father or both parents are dead.
- Social orphan: Refers to children whose parents are alive but unable to fulfill parental obligation.
- Vulnerable Child: Child whose safety, wellbeing and development are, for various reasons threatened and is prone to various forms of physical and psychological exploitation.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Nakuru County. Nakuru County was selected because of two reasons: first, it is cosmopolitan area with all ethnic communities in Kenya residing there. Second, it has experienced ethnic conflicts and animosities repeatedly since 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007/2008. These conflicts resulted in loss of life and displacement of families which sought refuge in camps for internally displaced persons (IDP). The magnitude of the violence and effects in 2008 was unprecedented countrywide. Kenya tottered on the brink of a full-fledged civil war. In Nakuru, there were an estimated 3,500 IDP of which 2,090 were children, 560 men and 850 women. This number is believed to have increased to about 13,000, mainly due to influx of IDP from other parts of the country.

The study population was 59 Public Primary Schools in Nakuru County, which had 1280 displaced learners in after the 2007/2008 post-election violence (MoEST, 2008). Apart from pupils, other respondents were Primary school teachers, Head teachers and administrative officers. The study used stratified sampling to categorize schools as Urban, Peri-Urban and Settlement schools.   The number of schools sampled from each school category was 10, making a total of thirty schools. Purposive sampling was used to identify the OVC in the selected schools. This method was considered adequate to cater for different backgrounds and categories of OVC.

Survey research design was used to collect data and information from the respondents. The data collected therefore brought a wide range of views, opinions, attitudes and values, from which similarities were extracted

and comparisons made. Survey method also enabled the researchers to solicit views from a large number of respondents.

Data were collected by use of questionnaires, interviews and focused group discussions (FGD).

Secondary data was obtained from literature reviewed, which comprised of documentary sources on similar studies and policy documents from Kenya, and internationally.

Questionnaires were administered to head teachers in the sampled schools to collect data on school's enrolment of OVC by age, gender and primary school levels. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to collect data from teachers and OVC. FGDs were used to generate data on the status of OVC in Kenya, identify barriers to access, retention, quality and learning achievements and recommendations on how to redress the situation for ensuring full participation of OVC in FPE in Kenya. Open-ended questions were used to elicit qualitative open responses.   Interviews were conducted with local administrators, leaders and government representatives to collect data on security in schools. The data collected were analysed qualitatively by use descriptive statistics.

Findings

TABLE 1: Number of OVCs by school categories

Percent	Urban		Peri-Urban		Settlement		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
PEV	8	6	10	9	8	8	49	24.1
HIV/AIDS	5	7	7	6	17	12	54	26.6
Normal Attrition	16	13	16	17	18	20	100	49.3
TOTAL	29	26	33	32	43	40	203	100

Table 1 shows the number of OVC in the 30 schools studied were 203. Out of these, 49 (24.1%) OVC were as a result of 2007/2008 post-election violence, 54 (26.6%) were as a result of HIV and AIDS while 100 (49.3%) were categorized as due to natural attrition.

The socio-pedagogical challenges OVC face in schools
Absenteeism
The teachers interviewed reported that cause of absenteeism was said to be that of insecurity on the way to and from school especially for those traversing the settlement and agricultural plantations. Girls were especially said to be vulnerable as they travelled to and from school. Teachers cited cases of girls who came to school late and left early so that they do not travel alone especially in the aftermath of the violence because of general insecurity. Cases of school girls being sexually molested on their way to and from school were reported.

It was also reported that most girls missed school during their menses as they could not afford the sanitary towels. It was observed that lack of adequate toilets and sanitation was a major challenge to girls in their menses, for example lack of water in school compounds. The sanitation carrying capacity of some schools had been exceeded and strained due to in migration of OVC from other parts of the country. The school infrastructure was found to have a gendered impact, negatively affecting the girl-child's attendance of school.

Child labor was another factor that hindered children from attending school. It was reported that often the labor of a girl-child was required to support the family in many ways including looking after other siblings, helping with domestic chores, assisting in running small-scale businesses, and caring for the sick. Because the girl's labor was critical, taking her to, and keeping her in school appeared to be costly to poor parents. The option was to engage her in petty income generating activities to augment family income. This phenomenon was reported from nearly all the schools. The boy child on the other hand, tended to go for the common "boda boda" business of ferrying passengers either using bicycles or motorcycles. This activity started first as a stop gap measure to earn some money but became the only source of livelihood in the absence of more plausible alternatives due to lack of employable skills. Teachers cited examples of orphans being treated as laborers by their guardians. The guardians often insisted on their attending to domestic chores before proceeding to school. This scenario had far reaching psychological impact on the OVC as some of them became attention seekers in school to make up for what they missed at home. **Parental/Guardian perceptions and attitudes towards schooling**
Teachers were asked to state some of the out-of-school factors that precluded OVC from school. They cited lack of cooperation from parents and guardians of the OVCs a cause of low retention. They reported that whenever they summoned the parents/guardians to school to discuss issues affecting the children, the percentage turn-out

was pathetically low. Some parents/guardians claimed that unlike teachers, they were not trained to handle children.

Negative attitudes from the community and other pupils towards the OVC were also found to impact negatively on retention in school. OVC were shunned by friends and classmates and those with special needs were doubly disadvantaged. To some extent, the school was not the safe haven it was supposed to be. Similarly, teachers reported that members of the community held some stereotypical views about OVC that manifested in discrimination.

Poverty

Poverty was found to adversely affect participation of OVC in school. Poor households were unable to access and avail basic needs like food, education and health. The girl-child in such a household was reported to be more disadvantaged than the boy-child. It was reported by teachers that where resources were scarce and fell short of the school requirements, the girl child was more likely to be excluded from school. The girls who dropped out of school ended employed in low paying domestic or menial agricultural jobs. In general most children, and girls in particular, failed to enroll in or to complete primary schooling because their parents/guardians were illiterate. The implication was that girls would not be accorded the opportunity to go to school. Poverty also diminished chances of OVC getting a decent meal, which also impacted greatly on their participation in school. Most pupils in particular, expressed the desire to have meals, especially lunch provided in school, regardless of who funded the programme.

Truancy.

Teachers reported that both girls and boys stayed out of school due to getting into 'bad ways' influenced by their peers. Many respondents indicated that children did not go to or finish school due to what they called "bad behavior." The boys were said to be more prone to truancy. The boys who played truant were also reported to exhibit violent behavior.

Insecurity and distance from school

Insecurity and distance from school were reported as 'twin' factors', by both teachers and pupils as inhibiting their participation and attendance of school. They both indicated that distance from school coupled with insecurity in their regions made them hesitant to go to school. This was because the post-election violence made the school a key target for the hooligans and protesters alike. Insecurity, caused by the post-election skirmishes, particularly eroded parents' confidence in sending their children to school, some even withdrew their children altogether.

Physical infrastructure for the OVC

It was observed that there was a general lack of appropriate facilities for children with diverse challenges especially the physically and mentally challenged. There was no provision in all the schools visited, for adaptive learning aids for the OVC. Without disability responsive resources the school environment was hostile and structurally unfriendly to the physically and visually impaired. There were no records for OVC in all schools visited.

Transition and Achievement of OVCs

In all the schools visited, data on pupils' achievement and transition was not delineated into the various categories found in school such as OVC. Some schools had, albeit, had categorized the data on academic achievement and transition in terms of gender. The respondents could not, therefore, provide the actual data on the transition of pupils especially of the OVC. In the absence of empirical data, teachers were noncommittal on comparison of academic performance between OVC and other children.

Recommendations for practice and policy

This study came up with findings that had important ramifications for efficiency and equity in education especially for OVC. To address the key findings, the following recommendations were made for educational practice and policy.

   (a) Recommendations School based strategies

At the school level the following intervention strategies are recommended by this study as a matter of priority, to forestall OVC dropping out of school.

1.   To create a supportive environment for OVC through increased awareness and training on all matters concerning OVC by addressing children, parents, caregivers, service providers, decision makers, and the general population.

2.   Provision of appropriate facilities in schools that take into consideration the needs of OVC.

3.   Enhance guidance and counseling in primary schools to help OVC to understand themselves and the environment around them.

   (b) Recommendation for Policy strategies

1. There is need for proper data collection of OVC to know the extent of the problem in Kenya.

2. Provision of basic needs especially food, shelter and clothing. Many respondents recommended   the introduction of school feeding programmes as part of FPE so that the poor and vulnerable children benefit.

3. Deployment of trained special needs teachers to all schools to handle the OVC cases.

4. Government to increase funding for OVC beyond the basic FPE allocation for individual students.

5. To ensure a protective environment for OVC through enhanced policy, legislation, procedures and regulations to make the school environment friendly, accommodating and welcoming.

6. To provide protection, care, and support to OVC by establishing and strengthening family and community-based support structures

7. To ensure access to essential services for OVC, including housing, education, health, and nutrition, social protection, water and sanitation, and birth registration

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