

Mortality, mobility, and schooling outcomes among orphans. Evidence from Malawi

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Organizations:

International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI

Description:

More than 30 percent of school-aged children have lost at least one parent in Malawi. Lack of investments in human capital and adverse conditions during childhood are often associated with lower living standards in the future. Therefore, if orphans face an increased risk of poverty, exploitation, malnutrition, and poorer access to health care and schooling, early intervention is critical so as to avoid the potential poverty trap. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of orphanhood/parental death on children's mortality risks, migration behaviors, and schooling outcomes, by using household panel data from Malawi, which has the eighth-highest HIV prevalence rates in the world. A number of studies have analyzed the relationship between parental death and children's school enrollment, but very few have considered mortality and mobility of orphans. Empirical results show that maternal orphans, as well as double orphans, tend to face higher mortality risks and lower schooling outcomes than paternal and non-orphans do. This is especially so for boys. Similarly, maternal and double orphans tend to move to other households more frequently. Compared to adolescent orphans, the impact on younger orphans who enrolled in school after the introduction of universal free primary education in 1994 is more muted, suggesting that free primary education policies may have mitigated adverse shocks from parental death. More interestingly, the impacts of orphanhood on schooling outcomes are significantly gender dependent: boys face severer negative impacts of being orphans than girls do. These empirical results are robust to sample attrition due to mortality and mobility.

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