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Evaluating the impact of community-based interventions on schooling outcomes among orphans and vulnerable children in Lusaka, Zambia

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Description:

In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 12 million children under the age of 18 have lost a parent to AIDS. Despite this situation, the evidence regarding effectiveness of interventions targeting these children remains scant. This paper contributes to the literature by evaluating the impact of a community-based program implemented by a Zambian nongovernmental agency (NGO) on educational outcomes among orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Lusaka, Zambia. These outcomes included school enrollment and being at the correct age-for-grade. Our study design included two rounds of post-intervention data collection, in 2003 and 2006. There were 2,302 children, ages 6-19, interviewed in 2003; and 3,105 children or young adults, ages 8-22, interviewed in 2006. We used a sub-sample of 2,922 orphans and vulnerable children, ages 8-19. The effectiveness of Bwafwano Community Home-Based Care Organization, an NGO working in Lusaka, was evaluated, first using the individual cross-sectional samples and then using a differences-in-differences model on the pooled sample. Both cross-sectional analyses found positive and statistically significant effects of the intervention on school enrollment, with marginal effects of 0.104 and 0.168 respectively. The differences-in-differences estimates for

school enrollment were positive, but small and not statistically significant. For the estimations of the effects of Bwafwano on the outcome of appropriate age-for-grade, only the difference-in-difference models showed positive program effect, with participation in the program being associated with a 15.7 percentage point increase in appropriate age-for-grade for intervention children, relative to control children. This study suggests that the Bwafwano program is a promising approach to improving educational outcomes among orphans and vulnerable children in urban Zambia.

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