Development implications of HIV/AIDS, the case of AIDS orphans and caregivers in Addis Ababa

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Description:
Children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS are those with broken families, beyond their control they are vulnerable to various kinds of survival and human rights problems. Their problems are so complex, multi-dimensional and very serious and have been increasing in the sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia, as one of SSA country, is most seriously affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic with the estimated number of AIDS orphans between 720,000 to 1,200,000 while this number, in the study area is estimated to be about 20,000 to 30,000. There are different reports indicating the problems of AIDS orphans yet adequate documentation is lacking in Ethiopia. Thus, studies on the developmental impact of AIDS orphans are very rare in the country. Therefore, this study, which is the first of its kind in the country, gives a glimpse of how these children are surviving after losing their parents. The objectives of this study, therefore, are to reflect and describe on the major survival problems and factors aggravating the orphans' problems; to describe the roles of extended family, community and institutions in caring for the AIDS orphans, and to find out who is the most vulnerable orphan in the community. To achieve its objectives, this exploratory study used qualitative research method (plus a quantitative method) by triangulating methods, information and the respondents. The study covered a total of 71 AIDS orphans, 27 caregivers, 20 key informants, 11 focus group discussions with 78 participants of different categories, one anecdotal account and observation method. The children (study subjects)- the units of analysis were selected using purposive sampling method. The results of this study showed that the orphaned children and their families were confronting the economic, psychological and social problems, which are hindering them from accessing basic needs and services. The findings also revealed that girl orphans and those orphans heading their household are the most vulnerable to various kinds of problems and they are overburdened by shouldering the responsibility of care giving to the siblings and other members of the family. Based on the findings of this study and due to the fact that the impacts of having many AIDS orphans are multidimensional and complex, it is suggested that a combination of intervention strategies and approaches of reducing the
vulnerability, preventing infection and premature mortality, impact mitigation and provision of adequate care and support for the AIDS orphans and their families, intensified and integrated plan of actions targeted both on poverty alleviation and HIV/AIDS, social mobilization and the like are imperative in order to ameliorate the problems of AIDS orphans and the consequent implications on local and national development.

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