

The impact of HIV/AIDS on schooling in Zambia

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Description:

Zambia is currently experiencing one of the worst HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world, one result being that between one-third and one-quarter of the children aged below 15 have lost one or both parents. The high rate of orphanhood and the demographic, economic and social effects of HIV/AIDS work synergistically to affect education in various ways. Demand is reduced. Supply and the resource base are jeopardised. A large section of the potential clientele for schooling is forced into activities that are not compatible with regular school attendance. Major adjustments are required in the process, content, role and organisation of education as traditionally provided. The planning and management of the system are placed under new strains. Donor support has to be re-thought. The presentation brings forward some evidence from Zambia on the HIV/AIDS impact on teacher supply and morale, on school participation, and on curriculum content. The limited availability of systematic information suggests the need for more focused research. The paper proposes a taxonomy for the guidance of such research. Noting that behavioural change is the only way currently available for dealing on a large scale with the pandemic, and that the ones most likely to be HIV-free are those in the primary and lower secondary school age-groups, the paper stresses the urgent need to make school systems in seriously affected countries proactive in communicating an unremitting series of messages and information about HIV/AIDS.

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