



EVALUATING NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS TO HOUSEHOLDS LIVING WITH ORPHANS AGED 6-59 MONTHS IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA

*Mary Mutete Muema, Ruth Simiyu and Edward Neyole

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, P.O.Box 190-50100, Kakamega Kenya

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 22nd June, 2018
Received in revised form
16th July, 2018
Accepted 22nd August, 2018
Published online 30th September, 2018

Key Words:

Orphan, Malnutrition,
Household, Pot- Logging Technique.

ABSTRACT

Child malnutrition is globally the highest risk factor for illness and death. It contributes to more than half of deaths in children worldwide. Children who lose their parents may face many hardships including food insecurity and poor child care resulting into malnutrition. However, in Kenya and the entire sub-Saharan Africa the problem of orphan-hood is expected to increase in the coming years due to more deaths from HIV/AIDS and other disasters. The objective of the study was to evaluate the intervention strategies used to enhance nutritional status of orphans in Kakamega County. It was a cross sectional study where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. A structured questionnaire was administered to 306 care takers of orphans and non-orphans. The nutritional status of the children was determined by use of anthropometric measurements; weight for age (underweight), height for age (stunting) and weight for height (wasting), Focus Group Discussions and key informant interviews were also conducted. Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Emergency Nutrition Assessment (ENA) were used to analyze the data. Pearson chi-square was used to test the significance of the relations while ranking was used to compare proportions of occurrence. The study revealed that very few organizations provided support to the households and the support provided was not adequate. Orphans living in households which received support were found to have equal chances of becoming malnourished with the other orphans who never received any support. It is recommended that Potential organizations and individuals and especially the business community be sensitized on the need to provide nutrition support to the community. The pot- logging technique could be used to mobilize nutrition support from different stakeholders and individuals as it will allow individuals to provide support through a central point in a coordinated manner. It will motivate many individuals and organizations within and outside the community to donate food, clothing and any other items for upkeep of the orphans. The County Government of Kakamega should also come up with policies to promote nutrition support to households living with orphans in the county.

Copyright © 2018, Mary Mutete Muema. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Mary Mutete Muema, Ruth Simiyu and Edward Neyole, 2018. "Evaluating nutrition interventions to households living with orphans aged 6-59 months in kakamega county, Kenya", *International Journal of Development Research*, 8, (09), 22892-22895.

INTRODUCTION

World over, the number of orphans is growing at an alarming rate and globally, nearly 140 million children are orphaned where, every two seconds, another orphan dies from malnutrition (UNICEF, 2015). Every eighth child is an orphan and the orphan crisis is projected to worsen in the coming years (Mishra *et al.*, 2008). Between 1990-2000, the number of orphans in Sub Saharan Africa rose from 30.9 Million to 41.5 Million and projections were that 53.1 Million children would be orphaned by the year 2010 (Mario, 2006). The African orphan crisis exacerbated by HIV and AIDS epidemic will have important negative intergenerational effects (Kathleen *et al.*, 2008).

*Corresponding author: Mary Mutete Muema,
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, P.O.Box 190-50100, Kakamega Kenya.

When a child loses one or both parents, different vulnerabilities become evident. Basic needs may not be met hence the risk of malnutrition. The nutritional status of young children is one of the most sensitive indicators of sudden changes in health status and food availability acting as an early warning sign of distress and a proxy indicator of socio economic development (UNICEF, 1998). Kenya's most vulnerable families caring for orphaned and vulnerable children are unable to uphold many of the basic needs like nutrition security to orphans households (Embleton *et al.*, 2014). This calls for support which could help alleviate or minimize incidences of malnutrition in children living in such households. Nutritional support improves the nutritional status of children and their families and address community food security. This may be through direct food supplements or community or school feeding programs. Support can also be through social protection measures such as cash transfers to

increase access to food or household economic strengthening activities. While food and nutritional support is often offered as a time-limited strategy to address food insecurity or malnourishment, combining direct food supplements with household economic strengthening may improve nutritional status for longer periods (PEPFAR, 2009). It is in view of this that this study was carried out to generate information which could be of use in the efforts of generating and implementing relevant interventions by different stakeholders in Kakamega county. Support for some orphans is normally provided by a variety of stakeholders who include the government, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Churches and non-governmental organizations but this assistance reaches only a small percentage of those who need it (Stover *et al.*, 2007). According to Vincent *et al.*, (2005), corporate social responsibility is based on the understanding that businesses are not just economic institutions management social responsibility goes beyond making profits to include protecting and improving society's Corporations therefore increasingly do plough back to society by funding various social and developmental projects. Many corporations are today seriously taking corporate social responsibility as a strategic issue thereby allocating significant amount of money for this purpose. Companies like Safaricom and Barclays Bank of Kenya give a lot of resources on social causes. Increasingly, corporations are emerging as significant sources of local funding agents. This study evaluated whether households living with orphans in Kakamega county benefited from such corporate social responsibility.

Statement of the Problem: Malnutrition is one of the root causes of illiteracy, disease and mortality of millions of children in developing countries. Many of these children die from a handful of treatable infectious diseases including diarrhea, pneumonia, malaria and measles. They would survive if their bodies and immune systems had not been weakened by hunger and malnutrition (FAO, 2005). Like many other countries in Africa, Malnutrition in Kenya is still a public health problem which requires attention (Ngare *et al.*, 1999). Different vulnerabilities become evident when a child loses one or both parents. Basic needs like food may not be met and therefore the risk of malnutrition increases for the orphan (UNICEF, 1998). The Kenya AIDS indicator survey (KAIS) 2007 indicated that HIV and AIDS prevalence among persons aged 15-49 years in the former Western Province of the Republic of Kenya had increased from 4.9% in 2003 to 5.7% in 2007 (GOK, 2008). As these numbers die, together with deaths related to other natural disasters, the problem of orphanhood is expected to rise in the future and hence increased risk of malnutrition (UNICEF/UNAIDS, 2005). Over 2 million orphans (many who lost parents to Hiv/Aids) and vulnerable children in Kenya live in Kakamega County with 90% of them being food insecure (Elite CBO, 2011). It is in view of this that this study evaluated the intervention strategies used to enhance nutritional status of orphans aged 6-59 months in Kakamega County with an aim of establishing the type and adequacy of the nutrition support provided.

Objective of the Study: The overall objective of this study was to evaluate the intervention strategies used to enhance nutritional status of orphans in Kakamega County, Kenya

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kakamega County in Kenya which was purposively sampled because of its high levels of

high rates of poverty and malnutrition among the children. This study adopted a cross sectional study design. The study targeted 149 of households who had orphaned children aged 6 to 59 months who formed the basis of the study. A questionnaire was administered to them and anthropometric measurements of the study children were taken. 149 children were studied. The study also targeted stakeholders who participated in the study as key informants. A total of twenty key informants were selected for the key informant interviews. Individuals who participated in group discussions were also included in the survey. They included; opinion leaders in Kakamega County, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) leaders, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) leaders, County administrators, health workers, nutritionists, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) leaders and women group leaders among others. Thirty participants for the FGDs divided into four groups were included in the study.

Analysis: SPSS and Emergency Nutrition Assessment (ENA) computer packages were used to analyze the data. Means, percentages and standard deviation were also used. Frequencies were used to run frequency tables being used for numerical data. Graphs including pie and bar charts were used for purposes of displaying distributions. The independent sample t-test was used to compare continuous dependent variables for two groups of cases (orphans and non-orphans. In order to investigate the association between two categorical variables Chi square test was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Support given to Orphan households in Kakamega County

Table 1.1. Households living with orphans who received support

	Frequency	Percent
yes	37	25.7%
no	109	74.3%

Table 1.2 Type of support provided to the households living with orphans

Type of support	Frequency	percentage	Rank
Food	2	5.3	4
Money	24	63	1
Farm inputs	7	18.5	2
Nutrition education	0	0	5
Clothes	5	13	3
Medication	0	0	5
Total	38	100	

Source:(Field Data, 2015)

Table 1.3. Stakeholders who provided support to the orphan households

Organization	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Government	13	32%	1
CBO	12	29%	2
Church	3	7%	3
NGO	13	32%	1

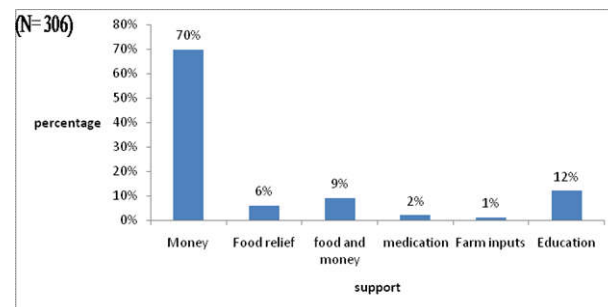
The study results revealed that majority (74.3%) of households living with orphans did not receive any support to help them cope with the risk of malnutrition. A small proportion (25.7 %) however received some support from different organizations in the County. The study findings are similar to those of a study done in Kenya (Lee *et al.*, 2014) which also revealed that the

support given to orphans by different organizations was reaching very few households living with orphans. As cited by Muthoni, 2016, many orphans remain unreached and the situation demands for targeted and more sustainable and concerted synergies focused on addressing the plight of these orphans and other vulnerable children. The low coverage of support to the needy households could be explained by the fact that the organizations may lack adequate information because of scanty available data on the estimates of required amounts of support and therefore unable to plan for adequate intervention to the affected households. It could also be attributed to the fact that such organizations are not prepared to reach the ever increasing number of such households.

Type of Support Provided: The study also sought to establish the kind of support which the households received from different stakeholders and from the results it was found that majority (63%) of the beneficiaries received support in form of money while only a few (5.3%) were supported with food stuffs. Ranking of the different types of support was done and money ranked number one while nutrition education and medication were ranked last as shown in Table 1.2. Farm inputs followed while clothes were number three and then food and medication which were not provided at all in the community. The study results also revealed that many other stakeholders did not participate in providing support to the orphans. These include individuals and also the local business communities who can support the communities as a way of giving back to the communities. The study findings are similar to those of a national orphans study done in Kenya (Lee *et al.*, 2014) which found that support in form of medication and material support was very low. Support in form of cash could be more common because of the presence of a cash transfer programme by the Government which targeted orphans and other vulnerable children in the community. As obtained from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) the support in form of money was not effective. Households could sometimes divert the fund into other needs like school fees and hence access to food was comprised in such incidences.

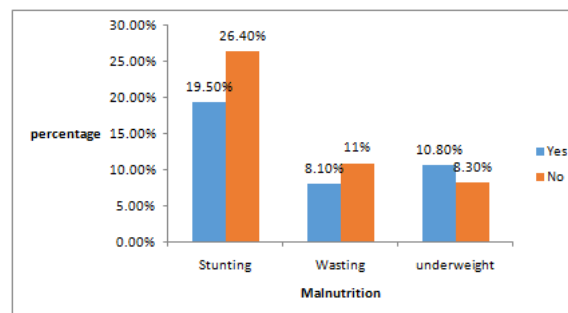
Stakeholders who provided support/assistance households living with orphans: The study again sought to establish the organizations which provided assistance to the orphan households in Kakamega County. The study results revealed that support was provided to households by; the government of Kenya (National government), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Churches. Majority of the orphan households received support from the Government (32%), NGOs (32%) and CBOs (7%). A few (7%) were supported by local Churches in the communities. It was evident from the FGDs that there were several potential stakeholders who could provide support if there was an organized structure to mobilize the available resources. Such an arrangement would go a long way in availing more resources to support the orphans in providing for their nutritional requirements.

Suggested Support by the Households: The study sought to establish how the households expected to be supported in order to reduce orphans vulnerability to malnutrition in the County. The results revealed that majority (70%) of the households preferred to be given support in form of money while the least suggested support as farm inputs (1%) as shown in Figure 1.1.



Source; (field data, 2015)

Figure 1.1. Support suggested by beneficiary households



Source; (Field data, 2015)

Figure 1.2. Distribution of malnutrition by type of assistance provided to orphan households

The preference for farm inputs being low could be attributed to the fact that the households could not be aware that use of proper farm inputs could translate to higher production and productivity to their food crops translating to availability of food and hence reduce food insecurity. This therefore calls for community sensitization on the use of appropriate farm inputs which can unlock the burden of malnutrition by ensuring increased food production and hence reduced hunger among the households. The reason for majority of households preferring to be supported with money could be attributed to inadequate knowledge on the importance of ensuring good nutrition for the children. A participant in the FGDs observed that;

“The people think that money can sort out all their issues not knowing that provision of support in form of money may not be sustainable and may be just short lived. Majority of households will use the money to buy other items after buying very little food which may last a day or 2. let the very needy households be supported with food stuffs otherwise the young children will continue suffering.”

Relationship between the Nutritional status of the Orphaned Children and Support/assistance received: The study sought to find out if there was any relationship between support provided to orphan households and incidence of malnutrition among the orphans. The results revealed that prevalence of stunting and wasting was more pronounced in children whose households did not receive any assistance as shown in Figure 1.2. A chi-square test was conducted to establish if the difference observed was statistically significant. This test revealed that there was no statistically significant (P value < 0.05) difference and therefore orphans in households who received support did not have less chances of becoming malnourished. This could be explained by the fact that most of the households received support in form of money and the

money could have been diverted to finance other needs like school fees and therefore have no impact on the nutrition of the orphans. The support provided could also be inadequate to make a difference on the nutritional status of the children.

Conclusions

The study revealed that few organizations provided support to the households living with orphans in Kakamega County yet there was a huge opportunity for various stakeholders to participate in supporting the orphans. The community lacked an organized structure which could mobilize the resources from the various stakeholders including potential well-wishers living in the communities and successful business men and women. The nutrition support provided in the County was also not adequate as the children who received it were not in any way advantaged nutritionally compared with other orphans. The potential individuals and organizations who could provide nutrition support may not be aware of the need to support the young children in the communities. Data and information on the magnitude of the malnutrition in the county is required in order to help advocate and mobilize for nutrition support from potential supporters in the county and the region.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

- Potential organizations and individuals and especially the business community be sensitized on the need to provide nutrition support to the community.
- The pot- logging techniques can be used to mobilize nutrition support from different stakeholders and individuals as it will allow individuals to provide support through a central point in a coordinated manner. It will motivate many individuals and organizations within and outside the community to donate food, clothing and any other items for upkeep of the orphans. Pooling the donated items together will help to minimize wastage of resources as there is less duplication of the materials during donations.

- The County Government of Kakamega should also come up with policies to promote nutrition financial support to poor households living with orphans in the county. County Cash transfer to the affected households is highly recommended.

REFERENCES

- Embleton L, Ayuku D, Kamanda A, Atwoli L, Ayaya S, Vreeman R, Nyandiko W, Gisore P, Koech J, Braitstein P 2014. *Models of care for orphaned and separated children and upholding children's rights: cross-sectional evidence from western Kenya*. BMC Int Health Hum Rights., 14 (1): 9-10.1186/1472-698X-14-9.
- FAO. 2005. *The state of food insecurity in the world*. Rome
- G.O.K 2008. *Kenya Aids indicator survey report 2007*. Nairobi: Government Press
- Kathleen, Beegle, Deweerdt, Joachim, Dercon, and Stefan. 2006. *Orphanhood and Human Capital Destruction: Is there persistent into Adulthood*.
- KDHS 2008. *Kenya Demographic And. Health Survey report*. Nairobi: Government Press
- Lee V., Muriithi P., Gilbert N., Kim M., Schmitz E., Odek J., Mokaya R., Galbraith J. 2013. *Orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya: results from a nationally representative population-based survey*.
- Mario, Q. 2006. *A continent of orphans* Inter press services News Agency.
- Mishra, V., Bigram, S. 2008. *Orphans and vulnerable children in high HIV prevalence countries in sub Saharan Africa*. Maryland U.S.A.
- Ngare, D., Mutunga, J. 1999. *Prevalence of Malnutrition in Kenya*.
- PEPFAR. 2009. *Celebrating life. Fifth annual report to congress on PEPFAR*.
- UNICEF 1998. *The state of World's children: Focus on Nutrition*. New York. USA.
