

Government of Kenya; UNICEF Country Office, 2000. *The impact of HIV/AIDS on education in Kenya, and the potential for using education in the widest sense for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS*

---

The general objective of this research study was to investigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on education. The study also sought to find out how education can be used in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the impact of HIV/AIDS on children's learning experiences
- Determine the impact of HIV/AIDS on community's participation in education
- Find out how education can be used in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS
- Build local capacity in child focused research

The methodology for the study was qualitative and child focused. The study used a set of methods, which included written methods such as listings and essays, visual methods such as visual stimuli and drawings. Role-plays leading to focus group discussions were also conducted with children. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were used to collect background information. Data from written records available in the research sites and communities were obtained to cross check information given by informants as well as to help determine some of the impacts. Observation was also done throughout the study to capture the general context of the research sites. Data analysis was done qualitatively and descriptively, mainly using content analysis.

The study was national in scope, however, the criteria used to select study sites was designed to capture prevalence, variety of population characteristics, availability of information and resources as well as taking into account the existing HIV/AIDS interventions. Consequently, the study was done in depth in Mombassa, Thika Garissa and as supplementary in Busia, Kisumu, Kisii, Machakos, Nakuru, Turkana and Kilifi. In the process, at least one district was covered in each of the eight provinces.

The findings of this study show that HIV/AIDS has had wide spread effects on children's learning experiences. Children living in a world of AIDS experience many challenges. As parents, guardians and members of communities increasingly become infected by HIV/AIDS and eventually succumb to diseases, children are increasingly lacking basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and even education. Children are now becoming subject to many psycho-socio impacts of HIV/AIDS such as stigma, fear, worry, depression and hopelessness. All these impact negatively on their learning and development.

The study further revealed that children's learning has been affected by HIV/AIDS in many ways. Children's participation was reported to have been affected in that pupils themselves are getting infected and some of them infect others; attendance and performance in schools is affected; pupils are dropping out of school while some were reported to have died due to suspected HIV/AIDS related causes. All these are compounded by pupils' lack of love and guidance as well as material support as parents and guardians also become infected by HIV/AIDS.

The study also found perceptions, which indicated that the teaching force has also been affected by HIV/AIDS. Teachers' participation and performance in the learning process was reported to have been affected as some of the teachers have been infected and therefore are increasingly unavailable to the pupils. Pupils reported that they feared being taught by infected teachers. Teachers' participation in school is also being compromised by HIV/AIDS related commitments in the community. Teachers were also reported to be dying from HIV/AIDS related causes and they are not being replaced hence are lost to the educational system. The results of the study also indicate that the resources available to support education have increasingly been diverted to meet HIV/AIDS related needs.

The study also established that education is an important tool, which may be used to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Pupils and community leaders called for the integration of HIV/AIDS education into the curriculum at all levels. This is more so, when it is noted that children reported that as a result of education, children are able to take initiatives and look for more information about HIV/AIDS. The study however, found out that while there is a lot of information and messages, the children felt that these were not relevant to them, as they seemed targeted at adults. There seemed to be knowledge gaps and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS as pupils and students asked the researchers many basic and fundamental questions about HIV/AIDS.

The study found out several things which children said they could do to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. These included abstinence and having safe relationships. Children in most of the research study areas reported that there existed such social-cultural practices which expose children to HIV/AIDS infection as circumcision, early marriages, incisions on the body, wife inheritance, extended burial ceremonies among others.

The study also found out that some pupils were of the opinion that their learning had not been affected by HIV/AIDS. This was especially in Garissa, which may be indicative that there are areas where AIDS is still seen as not a reality.

The study came across some perspectives, which indicated that HIV/AIDS had also led to some positive impacts amongst children. These included the fact that, as children increasingly become aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS, they are now becoming more responsible and strict to themselves and uphold moral values.

The study recommends that listening to Children's voices is important in project design, implementation and evaluation. Since children are suffering psycho-social impacts as a result of HIV/AIDS, communities and institutions working with children should be sensitized on the needs of these children.

Communities should be encouraged to integrate safe procedures in those social-cultural practices. There should be immediate interventions in schools through guidance and counselling for infected and affected children. Mechanisms should be put in place for follow up in the implementation of HIV/AIDS in schools. School children should be educated in life skills, peer education and counselling. There is need for information and messages that are targeted at and are appropriate for children.

