

Census Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Palapye and Letlhakeng, Botswana

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Key finding: The findings indicate that the majority of households are vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. A high percentage of both orphans and non orphans aged between six to eighteen years are in school. However, a large number of school going age children are not in school due to financial constraints and distance from school. Though on average households reported having two meals a day, there are those who indicate not having meals on some days.

Context: The study was conducted at two sites: Palapye in the Serowe/Palapye sub-district and Letlhakeng in the Kweneng West district in Botswana.

- Palapye is situated in the Serowe/Palapye district. It is one of the largest villages in Botswana, with a population of 26 293, of whom 12 087 are men and 14 206 are women (Central Statistics Office, 2001). This means that women comprise 54% of the population. Palapye is in Central Eastern Botswana, about 275 kilometres north of the capital city, Gaborone. Palapye is built around a coal-driven power station called Morupule. The local mine, Morupule Colliery, supplies the coal for the power station. Most of the people living in Palapye are employed by either the power station or the colliery. Many of the population are employed by the government in the ministries of health, education and in local government. However, most families still depend on farming for survival.
- Letlhakeng is situated in Kweneng West District. It shares borders with the Khutse Game Reserve in the west, Lentsweletau Sub-District in the north, Kweneng District in the east and Southern and Kgalagadi Districts in the south-west. Letlhakeng is the capital of the sub-district. It is about 120 km west of Gaborone. The population of Letlhakeng is 6 032 with 3 339 women and 2 693 men (Central Statistics Office, 2001). Women comprise 55.3% of the population. Letlhakeng is primarily a rural district and the communities depend on farming for survival. In some cases, families depend on hand-outs from government provided under its destitute policy.

Objective

- To determine the exact number of OVC in the two sites and to obtain a sampling frame for the baseline survey of the psychosocial status of OVC. Additionally, the census was conducted to obtain data that is to be used to

develop community capabilities to produce, coordinate and disseminate relevant, accurate and timely statistics to meet the information needs of various users in relation to the problem of OVC.

Method

The population census in Palapye and Letlhakeng involved enumerating people at their places of residence. A house-to-house (only persons who usually live in the same household) approach of all the households in the village was employed using an OVC census record sheet. The head of the household was the only one interviewed.

Major findings

It is evident that the OVC problem is serious given that a third of households had an orphaned child. Some of the key findings were:

- Of the 4 906 households, 91.2% were successfully interviewed.
- The information from the survey data showed an imbalance in the sex ratios and the dependency ratio of less than 100
- A majority of households were female-headed households (55.3%) while child-headed households comprised a small percentage (0.5%) of all households.
- A third of children aged 18 years and below had lost at least one parent
- Though most children were in school, there was a small percentage that were not in school. Reasons advanced for this were financial constraints, school too far, ill and other reasons.
- Among the adult population, 28.9% of adult heads had never attended school.
- 97.2% of households at both sites had access to safe drinking water. About 58% of households used wood for cooking while 38.2% used gas. 58.8% used paraffin for lighting, while 32.8% of households used electricity.
- On the subject of waste disposal, 88% of households had sanitation for waste disposal, while 65.9% used pit latrines and 12.5% had no sanitation.
- On household's vulnerability, about 66% of households had less than three meals a day, 65% were unable to pay medical fees, and 51.4% reported having an ill person in the household. This pattern was observed in both Palapye and Letlhakeng.

Recommendations

1. The current system of identifying orphans needs to be strengthened to allow all orphans to have access to the orphan care programme. The programme can be strengthened through employing more people and purchasing more vehicles. Furthermore, communities should be educated in order to encourage them to register orphans without fear of stigmatisation.
2. There is a need to educate school authorities about the orphan care programme to address the current practice where some OVCs have been sent back because they did not have uniform and other school needs; a process that has encouraged some OVC's never to return to school.
3. There is a need to train service providers to include those in the government and non-governmental organisations in providing psychosocial support to

orphans. In many cases, orphans are not provided with counselling to assist them to cope with the loss of a parent, stigmatisation, isolation and neglect.

4. There is need to train service providers in the government and non-governmental organisations in identifying child headed households and providing all the necessary assistance to such households. This could include assisting child heads to complete school, as well as care and support of other household members.
5. There is a need to educate communities on orphanhood and its implications.
6. There is a need for a countrywide orphan census as this would allow for generalisation of the results of the study, to better inform policy and intervention programmes.