

Parental Health, School Attendance, and Educational Enrollment for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children

Craig Gundersen, Iowa State University¹
Thomas Kelly, RK Development Consulting²

Abstract

Using data from a 2004 household-based survey of children and caregivers, we examine the impact of orphaning and parental illness on education in the context of Zimbabwe. After controlling for other factors, we find that orphans in Zimbabwe are less likely to be enrolled in school than their non-orphaned counterparts. Previous work has not addressed the effect of orphan status on another measure of attendance – the frequency of attendance. We find that, similar to school enrollment, orphans are less likely than non-orphans to attend school on a regular basis. We next investigate the extent to which household economic status affects the likelihood that an orphan will attend school. We find that orphans in better-off households are particularly disadvantaged in comparison to non-orphans. In contrast, orphans in worse-off households have similar probabilities of school attendance in comparison to non-orphans. Finally, we examine the impact of parental illness on children's education. We find that girls in households with an ill parent are less likely to attend school than boys in similar households and are less likely to attend than girls in households without.

Endnotes

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, 74 LeBaron Hall, Ames, IA 50011, 515.294.6319, fax 515.294.1765, cggunder@iastate.edu.

² Economist, RKDev Consulting, 10 Hawthorn Dr., Dalecross, South Africa, +27-72-332-4146, fax +27-11-884-9383, tkelly@rkdev.com.