



Association François-Xavier Bagnoud

ORPHAN ALERT 2

*Children of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic
The Challenge for India*

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Migration and its Effects on HIV/AIDS Orphaning	5
Chapter 2: Household Orphan Study, Jaipur District	11
Chapter 3: Orphanhood and Widowhood Among a Stone Mining Community	15
Chapter 4: A Rural Area Already Affected by HIV/AIDS, Pali District	21
Chapter 5: Household Labour Time Consumption	26
Chapter 6: Children Who Live on the Streets	31
Chapter 7: Children of Commercial Sex Workers	40
Chapter 8: Child Vulnerability in Urban Slums	43
Chapter 9: Institutional Care	47
Chapter 10: Conclusions and Recommendations	53
References	62
Acknowledgements	63

CHAPTER TWO

Household Orphan Study: Jaipur District

A total of 35 households with orphans were interviewed among five villages in Jaipur District. The villages were chosen because they were situated close to main highways and are, therefore, at risk of HIV being introduced into the villages by truck drivers and migrant sex workers. At the time of research there were no known deaths to AIDS in any of these villages. Questions were asked to determine which parent had died (or if the children were double orphaned); under whose care the child(ren) were living now; whether or not the children were, or had ever been, in school, and if drop outs were due to orphanhood; as well as general questions about living standards and the effects of adult mortality on this. In the latter category an assessment was made on domestic labour with reference to how much time is consumed by this, and who does the work. Although there were problems of accuracy of the data collected (see chapter 5) this provided an insightful picture of the impact of adult mortality within the poorer households.

2.1 Paternal Orphans

Case study 2/1: Widow headed household, Jaipur District

The widow's husband died three years ago. She has been left with five children.

1. 11 year old girl
2. 9 year old boy
3. 7 year old girl
4. 5 year old boy
5. 4 year old boy

Before her husband died he had been working as a labourer. Since his death, she has taken over his job and works 8 hours each day for 500 rupees per month. This is half the amount that her husband had been earning, doing the same work.

Her biggest financial problem is putting the children through school. The two oldest boys are reported as attending school, but their mother is uncertain as to whether she can continue to send them, or whether her four year old son will ever be able to attend. They are sent to a state school, but this does not provide the free education promised, as books, materials and school uniforms still have to be bought.

The eldest girl was withdrawn from school, while the youngest has never been to school at all, as education is considered a priority for boys and the girls are needed for domestic chores.

The case study above typifies the situation of paternal orphanhood in India. The children here have remained in the care of their mother however, as a widow, her capabilities for taking care of material needs are severely limited. It is common for widows in India to take over their deceased husbands' work. This provides some kind of safety net, however the case above is very typical in that the widow is paid half of the wages of a man doing

the same job. This case also highlights a further problem; that once the widow goes out to work she will have less time available for her domestic duties. Usually, responsibility for this is passed over to the girls.

Female literacy is already very low in Rajasthan, at 28.69%, compared to a male literacy rate of 64.83%^{vi}. Increases in paternal orphanhood may not make a large impact on girl's opportunities to attend school in the short term, as it is clear that many families are not interested in educating their daughters, whatever the situation. However, in the long term, programmes aimed at improving female literacy and increasing education for girls may well find that paternal orphanhood is a major obstacle to overcome. It will be difficult to encourage families to send girls to school when they are depended on for household labour.

Paternal orphanhood can also have a negative effect on education for boys. In some cases, where there were no girls in the household, it was found that boys were taking over household chores while the mother went away to work. It was also very common for boys to miss out on school in order to carry out wage labour. Child labour is very common in India, and so it is impossible to assess how many orphaned children in paid work would have been doing this anyway. What is clear is that paternal orphanhood does increase the pressure on families to send their children to work instead of to school.

There was one case found in Norangpura, a small village 50km outside of Jaipur, of a paternal orphan who had been abandoned by his mother once she had remarried. This situation is by no means unique to India. In Uganda, cultural law dictates that paternal orphans should be passed on to paternal uncles, rather than become the responsibility of new husbands. However, as HIV/AIDS has depleted extended families, this has led to high numbers of grandparent fosterers, where paternal orphans can no longer be found. It may also prove to be the case in India that paternal orphans rejected by their stepfathers will become the responsibility of more elderly relatives, as this boy was now living with his grandparents. He was visibly malnourished and his elderly guardians were barely capable of taking care of themselves, let alone a young child.

My previous research for FXB, carried out in Uganda^{vii}, demonstrated that paternal orphans should be a special target group for any interventions that aim to tackle the orphan problem. This research project found that the same should be argued for India. As can be expected, when a father dies this deprives the family of the main, and often only, breadwinner. This means that quite often the children, especially girls, drop out of school to earn cash income, or to take over household chores as the mother goes out to work. Typically the widowed mother will have to carry out household work and seek cash income outside the household. Therefore, widowhood for a mother means increased burdens of time consumption. Much of this is often passed on to the children, while the mother's child-care capabilities will be affected, and care of younger children may fall to their older siblings. This time consumption burden can have the greatest effect on people of low caste, who often have to travel further than higher castes to fetch water or firewood, etc. In the next section we can see how this can also affect maternal orphans.

2.2 Maternal Orphans

Case study 2/2 Maternal orphanhood in Jaipur District

Gita is a 12 year old girl whose mother died nearly two years ago. She lives with her father, as well as her 8 year old brother and 3 year old sister. Her brother is at school but she had to drop out when her mother died to take over the household chores, and to take care of her young sister.

Typically she will spend between 5 and 6 hours each day preparing and cooking food, as well as general household cleaning. She also has to collect firewood, which takes another 1-2 hours each day. Water can usually be collected from a handpump nearby, only 1km away. However, because of queues this still takes up another 2 hours. Quite often this well dries up and then she has to go to another well, 3 kms away.

Apart from the psychological effects of losing the mother, the biggest problem for maternal orphans is that someone has to take over the role of domestic work. The father will not do this because it is culturally inappropriate, and because he has to work for household income. Thus, the mother's domestic role may be taken over by an elderly relative, usually a grandmother. This is bound to put unwanted strain on many elderly women. In addition to grandmothers, in some cases a daughter may take over this role, thus increasing the numbers of girls who are forced out of school by orphanhood, as is illustrated by the case study above. Therefore, maternal orphanhood also serves to undermine any programmes that may be aimed at improving female literacy, in the same way as it affects paternal orphans.

As well as general household chores, where there are young children in a family that has lost its mother, someone else will have to take over child-care duties. This inevitably falls on older girls if they are present in the household. When a young child does not have an older sibling to take care of them, child-care duties may be spread around neighbours and relatives, and so the child lacks the usual one-to-one relationship between itself and its caregiver. Where older sisters are in the household, the child-care duties given to them add to the burden of domestic chores, reducing opportunities for a normal childhood further. There is also the possibility that the relationship between older sister and younger siblings becomes more like that of mother and child. Should the older sister leave the household to marry, her younger siblings may experience feelings of parental loss for a second time in their childhood.

Another problem faced by maternal orphans is that they may face difficulties with stepmothers in cases where their father remarries. It was reported in Jaipur that many of the children living on Jaipur's street runaway from home because of disagreements with their stepmothers (see chapter 6).

2.3 Double Orphans

Only two double orphans were found among those households visited in Jaipur District. In the first case the child, a 12 year old boy, lived with an older brother. The older brother was married with a 1 year old child, and found that fostering his younger sibling was a big financial burden so early on in his marriage. In order to compensate for this the 12 year old orphan was working on his brother's farm (one third of a hectare) up to six hours each evening after school. In the other case, the double orphan was also a boy, this time 16 years old. He was living with his uncle, but often stayed away from the household for long periods of time, reported to have "fallen into bad company". The boy did not contribute to the household at all, but had to find his own food. It appeared that the uncle's responsibility was perceived as having to provide a roof to sleep under, but nothing else. He seemed not to want anything to do with the boy at all.

As orphaning caused by HIV/AIDS takes hold in India we can expect increases in double orphans. The situation that was found in the first case is typical of many that are found in Uganda's worst HIV/AIDS affected areas. Where young couples are needed to foster younger siblings, the fostered child can become an enormous burden for the fostering family. Typically, young couples from poor families live in small houses, perhaps renting only one room, with plans to move to somewhere more spacious when finances improve. The arrival of a foster child can cause child-care costs that prevent the family from being able to save money to expand their living space. In the case found in Jaipur District this means that the fostered child has had to make sacrifices to his education in order to pay for his keep. Although this boy was reported to be attending school, his capabilities to achieve at school are certain to be diminished while working for six hours each day. It is certain that many other children in this situation will have to drop out of school completely, as they will not have the relative "luxury" of being able to fit working hours around their school days.

The second case demonstrates how a child has fallen into a life of delinquency, quite possibly because of a lack of parental or fostering support. India, generally, does not appear to have the same culture and tradition of extended family child-care found across Africa. Unless greater encouragement is offered to relatives to foster double orphans as fully integrated members of the nuclear family, then it is likely that many double orphans will become vulnerable to the same situation of a delinquent and transient lifestyle as observed in this case.