

Policy Brief: Negative Education impacts for Children in AIDS-sick homes

Citation: Cluver, L, Operario, D, Lane, T, Kganakga, M (Online First 2011). Educational shortfalls among ‘Young Carers’ in the South African AIDS Epidemic. *Journal of Adolescent Research*.

No studies to date have examined educational impacts for children in AIDS-affected, other-sick, and healthy homes. This is the first known study in Africa, interviewed 818 children, and took place in urban (56%) and rural (44%) South Africa. This study is a collaboration between South African government, the National Action Committee for Children Affected by AIDS (NACCA), Oxford University, and Cape Town Child Welfare.

The Questions:

- What educational impacts do children living in sick and healthy households identify?
- Are child educational impacts associated with adult illness (AIDS-related and/or other illness) and the amount of care provided by children?
- Do educational impacts differ between children caring for an AIDS-sick or other-sick adult?

The Research:

- Interviewed 818 children aged 6-20 in urban and rural areas of Western Cape
- Children were 1) living with an AIDS-sick adult, 2) living with an other-sick adult, or 3) living in a healthy home
- Combination of qualitative and quantitative methods

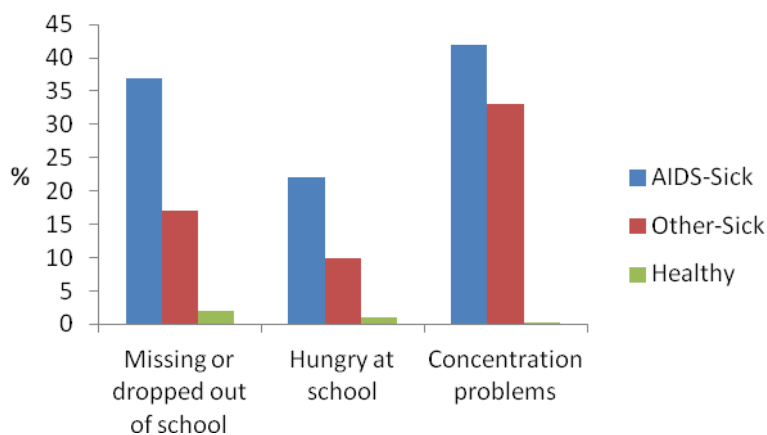
Finding 1: Educational impacts identified by children

Qualitative interviews identified 3 major themes among children in sick homes:

- Missing or dropping out of school to care for sick adults (**AIDS-sick = 37%, other-sick = 17%, healthy = 2%**)
“When she is in pain I call the ambulance. We go together to the hospital, then I don’t go to school until she comes back. I take care of my mother, always, when she needs me to help” (Girl, 10)
- Hunger at school due to household-level poverty (**AIDS-sick = 22%, other-sick = 10%, healthy = 1%**)
“Since my mother is sick I don’t bring nothing at school. I eat nothing. I just drink water during the lunch break” (Girl, 11)
- Concentration problems due to worrying about the sick person (**AIDS-sick = 42%, other-sick = 33%, healthy = 0%**)
“I don’t concentrate at school. I am worried about my mother. She looks as if she is going to die like my father” (Boy, 12)

Finding 2: Educational impacts are worse for children caring for an AIDS-sick adult

- Children in AIDS-affected homes were at higher risk of all negative school outcomes than children in other-sick or healthy homes
- This was true *independently* of age, gender, household size, caregiver type and amount of time spent in care work.



Conclusions:

- Children in AIDS-affected homes have major negative educational impacts.
- **Children** in other-sick homes also have negative educational impacts, but not to the same extent.
- Policies supporting ‘young carers’ in continuing their education should be developed.