

# **Orphanhood Prevalence, Living Arrangements and Orphanhood Reporting in Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe**

## **Introduction**

The orphanhood magnitude, measured from the orphan prevalence is old and has been necessitated by the upsurge in adult mortality levels in human history due to wars or epidemics. Children's orphanhood status form the basis of some important child indicators and therefore the understanding of its measurement is crucial. The reliability of orphanhood estimates is dependent on the quality of the data used to derive the estimates. The sources of orphanhood data are largely model estimates and surveys; the latter which include censuses and sample surveys. The model estimates have been criticised for overstating the underlying adult mortality and the subsequent orphan estimates but have been continually updated by the Joint United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) Reference Group on Estimates, Models and Projections. Maternal and paternal orphan model estimates are computed using Spectrum's Estimation and Projection Package modules; Demographic Projection (DemProj) and AIDS Impact (AIM) Models. They are based on the demographic-epidemiological model projections of mothers/fathers fertility and mortality and the mortality of children using a method developed by Grassly and Timæus (2005). The survey estimates have been shown to either under-or-overstate orphan prevalence because of the bias known as the *adoption effect or absenteeism effect* wherein foster parents are substituted for biological parents that are dead and absent parents reported as alive or dead. The survey orphanhood estimates are obtained from two separate parental survival questions on whether or not the index persons' mother/father is alive. The discourse on the quality of the survey orphanhood data have been on going at least since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and there is evidence suggesting that children's living arrangements may affect orphanhood declaration. The study is an

examination of the relationship between living arrangements, orphanhood reporting and orphanhood estimates; the relationship which remains largely underexplored.

## **Data and Methods**

The study uses the Demographic Health Survey data for Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe for 2009, 2010 and 2010 respectively and the model orphan estimates for the same periods and the 2006, 2008 and 2012 census orphan estimates for Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe respectively. The orphanhood definition used is consistent with international standards for children under 18 years and non-mutual exclusivity for maternal and paternal orphanhood. The survey and model estimates are compared for maternal, paternal and double orphans. Assessment of the quality of survey orphanhood data is done by checking the quality of age data and the proportion of data with missing parental survival information both which can affect the quality of the orphanhood data. Internal consistency checks are also done between mothers' reports of children present in the household with them and children's reports of their mothers which should be comparable except in cases where the mother was not successfully interviewed. Also the association between orphaned children (maternal/paternal) and children co-resident with the respective parent is examined to check if there was association between the two to investigate any systematic misreporting of orphans.

## **Results**

The analysis is ongoing.