

EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

**SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ORPHANED CHILDREN IN
NYANG'OMA SUB-LOCATION, BONDO DISTRICT,
WESTERN KENYA**

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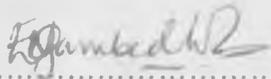
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**A Thesis submitted to the Institute of African Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Anthropology of the University of Nairobi**

2000

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

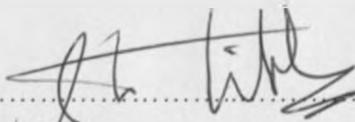


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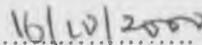


Date

This thesis has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.



Prof. Simiyu Wandibba



Date

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late father, Andrew Nyambedha Omondi, who would have loved to live and see me climb the academic ladder but death cut him short before he could send me to school,

And

My late grandfather, Stephen Ondwasi Lutta, who always encouraged me to work hard in school but who, unfortunately, died when I was collecting data for this thesis and whom I miserably missed to give a farewell.

To both of them I pray that their souls rest in peace.

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ABSTRACT

This study was on the support systems for orphaned children in Nyang'oma sub-location in Bondo District of western Kenya. It was carried out in Nyang'oma sub-location and its environs in Bondo district. Bondo district is located on the shores of Lake Victoria and is surrounded by quite a number of beaches.

The study, therefore, aimed at examining the conditions under which orphaned children live. The study sought to investigate and describe people's attitudes towards orphanhood as well as the various forms of support systems and coping mechanisms for dealing with orphanhood in the study area. Specifically, the study aimed at describing people's attitudes towards orphanhood, investigating the social networks and cultural institutions for supporting orphans in the study area, and at examining the coping mechanisms adopted by the orphaned children to deal with their situation.

The study subjects mainly included orphans and their caretakers. However, people who were knowledgeable in the topic of orphanhood and who had knowledge of the community were also interviewed.

The study design was cross-sectional and adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection where both interview guides and structural questions were used. Qualitative data was analysed using non-computerised methods while quantitative data was analysed using Epi-Info computer software to give tables of frequencies and percentages.

The findings suggest that the attitude of the people towards orphaned children has changed significantly due to the forces of modernity originating from outside the community and reinforced by some cultural traits within the community. This change of attitude was found to affect the orphaned children negatively as far as the question of their support is concerned.

Social institutions within the study area were found not to be sensitive to the needs of orphaned children and were only concerned with helping their members meet funeral expenses. Cultural institutions, on the other hand, were trying everything possible within their means to support orphaned children. Unfortunately, their efforts are frustrated by

poverty, increased cost of living, the prevailing adult mortality rates and the large number of orphaned children left behind. The main coping mechanism for orphaned children was involvement in income generating activities and getting employed by people in the village who are relatively stable economically. The money they get goes towards meeting household subsistence needs and acquisition of personal effects.

On the basis of the study findings, it was concluded that modern living conditions in which people are forced to depend on resources outside the community, coupled with the escalating levels of poverty, were responsible for the changes in the people's attitudes and support systems for orphaned children. These changes have affected the orphaned children negatively, most particularly their access to education, food, clothing and health care.

It is, therefore, recommended that policies designed to improve orphaned children's access to education should strive to improve their household living conditions. Non-governmental organizations, such as churches, as well as the Department of Social Services, should sensitise the people about the declining support for orphaned children and help come up with community-based initiatives to assist orphaned children as well as empowering orphans themselves. The findings of this study should be communicated to the people studied to sensitise people on the plight of orphaned children.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	-	Community-Based Organizations
CHW	-	Community Health Workers
DBL	-	Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GOK	-	Government of Kenya
HIV	-	Human Immune Virus
KEDAHR	-	Kenyan-Danish Health Research Project
K. C. P. E.	-	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
NASCOP	-	National AIDS/STDs Control Programme
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organizations
STD	-	Sexually Transmitted Diseases

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Orphanhood is not a new phenomenon in African cultures. Indeed, African cultures in general, and the Luo culture, in particular, possessed structures which took care of the orphaned children by fully integrating them into the egalitarian mode of life within the community. This was possible because of the fact that children in the traditional set up were regarded as belonging to the community and not to individuals, or their parents for that matter. Therefore, they looked upon the entire community for support and protection even when the parents were still alive (Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984).

Orphaned children in this study were taken to mean children under 18 years of age and whose either one or both parents were deceased. These were further categorised as double orphans to mean those with both parents dead, paternal orphans for those whose fathers are dead, and maternal orphans for those whose mothers are dead. The three categories were considered as leading to different situations and experiences, thus affecting the quality of life of the orphaned children differently. Orphanhood, therefore, means the state of being bereft of either one or both parents and the situation created by such bereavement for the children in question.

In the past, orphaned children presumably faced fewer problems. Suda (1997) argues that the kin based support systems served to ensure that the death of one or both parents did not necessarily spell destitution for orphans or other family members in deprived and difficult circumstances. These support networks had the potential to reduce destitute children in the family or community. Such children did not have to be left to cope on their own or to turn to the streets to beg, or to be taken into institutions. However, there are some economic and

social changes that have made the situation of orphanhood more problematic today than was the case in the past. This, therefore, makes the situation of orphanhood an issue of concern to national governments as well as the international community. The problems associated with modern economic conditions and the diminishing functions of the extended family system in caring for and protecting orphaned children, leave such cases with little or no safety nets (Berger 1977; Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984; Kilbride and Kilbride 1993; ROK 1994).

In this study, support systems refer to the various forms of assistance available within the community for orphaned children. Such support systems could be either cultural, economic, or social in nature. These systems have been distinguished as kinship-based, that is, how extensive the feeling of responsibility among nearby as well as distant relatives is, non-kin based neighbours and friends, charity organizations such as NGOs, churches, women groups and formal government institutions such as schools. The problem of orphanhood is further aggravated by the increased incidence of high adult mortality rates due to such diseases as AIDS and cholera. For the purposes of emphasis, AIDS was singled out as the prospective main killer of productive members of households and which is expected to leave the world with large numbers of orphaned children (UN 1990; UNICEF 1994; ROK 1994). A large number of these orphaned children will be found not only in poor urban areas of sub-Saharan Africa but also in the rural areas. In Kenya, according to the National AIDS/STDs Control Programme (NAS COP), most of the infections are in the rural areas where over 80% of the population reside and the HIV prevalence rates have been rising rapidly (NAS COP 1998). These unfortunate sequences of events should, therefore, be seen as a challenge to the health and social sectors in the community that would face the task of basic care and provision of social services.

This study was carried out among the Luo of Nyang'oma sub-Location, Central Sakwa Location, Bondo District. The Luo have a patrilineal kinship structure and, like a number of

other African ethnic groups, are polygynous (Hauge 1974). As Whisson (1964) puts it, kinship, rather than territory, was the charter for the social organization, although kinship could be adapted to give validity to a territorial pattern. Among these people, there are two classes of intra-familial relationships. The first ones are those which exist within the homestead and immediate locality (within *kakwaro*), or lineage, while the second relations are those which exist with those outside the locality, that is, with matrilineal kin and with the affines of a man. The relationships between clans and groups of clans were seen in the context of the relationships between their ancestors. Thus, it was not uncommon to see conflict between people of different clans who were descended from co-wives who, traditionally, are jealous of each other. As Ominde (1952: 69) has argued, the relationship between children of different mothers among the Luo is much less close, because the mother in each house thinks first of the future of her own children even if they share the same father. For this reason, the undue wealth of any one particular house is viewed with alarm in other houses and a mother will maintain a constant watch on the other sections of the family because their success could overshadow her own children.

However, the community was traditionally homogeneous in set-up, with an egalitarian social system which rested on the mutual social responsibility under which support was readily available for the disadvantaged members of the community, including orphaned children. Assistance of all kinds and hospitality were given to members of the family and the clan. This hospitality and generosity was also extended beyond the family and no one was ever allowed to starve as long as there was food to share.

Children were greatly valued and people who had many children commanded a lot of respect and honour. The head of the family was naturally the most revered and respected member, and his social position was partly judged according to his age and the number of children and grandchildren he had. Hauge (1974) further argues that, in addition to the

prestige this affords, a large number of offspring ensures that a man will be comfortably supported in his old age.

Following the genealogical rule that the senior had power over the junior, the relationship between a man and his father's brothers was similarly one of deep respect and fear by the younger men. Brothers were expected to help each other during times of crisis. According to Luo customs, the eldest brother was given first priority by his parents in terms of material assistance to gain economic independence, but this eldest son was, in return, expected to help bring up the younger brothers to an economic status similar to his own. The "wicked uncle" for the Luo was the father's brother who neglected his orphaned nephews. The younger brothers of one's father were expected to be kinder to their nephews and nieces, and they would also be respected and feared if they entered into leviratic union with the widows of their elder brothers and took control of the sons. However, complications in this relationship were created by the leviratic rules. The children that a woman bore belonged to the man who had paid cattle for her, regardless of whether he was still alive or not, and they would inherit his land and property. The levir might use the land to which the widow had rights while her husband was alive, but he could not pass to his children by the wife to whom he had paid cattle. This could lead to tense relationship between an orphan who had more rights to that land and his uncle who had fewer rights (Whisson 1964). Furthermore, relations between full brothers who share the land dug by their mother, was characterised by tension which could arise from economic competition.

Children of co-wives were more likely to be rivals for land. This, according to Whisson (1964), raises suspicions which, in a crisis, reveal themselves in accusations of witchcraft (*juok*) or black magic (*ndagla*). This is an indication of an underlying tension which emerges in the crises of life, death and sickness. Since no sickness or death could be wholly ascribed to natural causes, a member of the home was always blamed for causing the trouble.

Children among the Luo were born to a ready-made pattern, that is, a pattern formulated by their ancestors and they were forced to follow that pattern, as happened with Luo girls (Ominde 1952). There were communal sleeping places, such as *simba* for boys who had reached "puberty" under a senior bachelor, while the girls slept in *siwindhe*, an old grandmother's house (*pim*) (Ominde 1952; Whisson 1964; Hauge 1974). During the stay in the *simba* or in the *siwindhe*, the boys and girls were taught the customs, manners, history, and religion of the community. This period was, therefore, important for education in the olden days. However, this has since changed due to the setting up of modern schools within the area, with the result that the old educational function of the *simba* and *siwindhe* has completely vanished (Hauge 1974).

Members of the community had a clear pattern of expected behaviour between people who stood in certain relationships to each other. However, with the rapid expansion in the number of relationships outside the context of the traditional society which a person contracts today, relationships have tended to become more idiosyncratic, and less determined by the traditional structure, churches, schools and paid labour inside and outside the locality.

1.1.2 The AIDS situation among the Luo

The Luo, like many other people around the world, are becoming affected by the AIDS epidemic at an alarming rate. According to the National AIDS/STDs control programme, HIV prevalence rates are divided into four zones and adjusted to be representative of the total population. The districts geographically inhabited by the Luo have been classified as very high HIV prevalence zones. These districts include Kisumu, Siaya, Homa Bay, Rachuonyo, Bondo, Migori and Nyando. HIV prevalence rates among people in this community who are aged between 15 – 49 years is 30 – 39%. This implies that the HIV-epidemic is very advanced in this zone and the socio-economic impact of AIDS is evident to the average person in the

village (NASCOP 1998). According to NASCOP (1998), one of the worst impacts of AIDS deaths to young adults is an increase in the number of orphans who may lack the proper care and supervision they need at this critical period of their lives, implying a tremendous strain on social systems to cope with such a large number of orphans.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although orphanhood is not a new phenomenon, this situation has, in recent times, raised concern across many nations. This concern is because of the projected large number of orphaned children expected to be left without anybody responsible to care for them. Furthermore, the few responsible members of the community who could be in a position to assist fear taking responsibility because of the large number of orphans who could be in dire need of assistance. In fact, it has been projected that the number of orphaned children will tremendously increase by the end of the decade and that the traditional caring mechanisms will not be able to cope with the increasing demands of long-term care (Manguyu 1991; Barnett and Blaikie 1992; UN 1994; Forsythe and Rau 1996). Related to this problem is that a proportion of these orphans are HIV positive, with a short life span and, therefore, not "attractive" for assistance. However, personal communication from a senior staff member at the Nyang'oma Children's Home indicates that there is evidence of HIV positive orphans being cared for and assisted to live with AIDS to puberty.

Most of the cases of orphaned children will be found in developing countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations 1990; UNICEF 1994). For instance, it has been projected that by the end of the decade, there will be 10 million orphaned children in Africa. The ability of those remaining behind, and the community at large, to care for this large number of orphans is highly doubtful. This is because most of those affected are young and productive people who are also parents of very young children, leaving a large number of

orphans to be cared for by grandparents and other sick surviving parents who, in most cases, are incapable both economically and socially (Poonawala and Cantor 1991).

There is concern that if these orphaned children are not cared for, they may run into the streets where they will be exposed to conditions that may make them vulnerable to HIV infection, among other risks. This makes the problem of orphaned children require urgent remedial measures so that children on whose well-being nations depend are not ruined.

This study, therefore, intended to answer the following research questions:-

- What is the attitude of the communities towards the situation of orphanhood within the study area?
- What social networks and cultural institutions are available for supporting orphans in the study area?
- What coping mechanisms do orphaned children in the study area adopt to deal with their situation?

1.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 General objective

To investigate and describe attitudes towards orphanhood as well as the various forms of support systems and coping mechanisms for dealing with orphanhood in the study area

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To describe attitudes towards the situation of orphanhood in the study area.
- To investigate the social networks and cultural institutions for supporting orphans in the study area.
- To examine the coping mechanisms adopted by orphaned children in the study area to deal with their situation.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Apart from road accidents and diseases which have been causing adult deaths, the problem of AIDS is set to leave various communities with large numbers of orphans. Bearing in mind that children are the most valuable resource of any nation, research is needed to define the needs of the children and, most importantly, the needs of orphans, in order to give them a meaningful future. This would enable the affected nations to replace the skillful and productive young adults who are lost due to AIDS and other causes of death.

Nyang'oma was selected for this study because of its closeness to Lake Victoria and therefore prone to malaria-causing pathogens. The area falls under the category of very high HIV seroprevalence areas and is more likely to report high adult mortality rates. The area also faces other problems such as lack of adequate and reliable rainfall, lack of drinking water, a high incidence of cattle diseases and prolonged periods of drought (ROK 1994). These conditions are likely to worsen the poverty situation in the area and further complicate the problem of orphanhood. Apart from these, Nyang'oma was selected because it falls within KEDAHR's study area, and the fieldwork was sponsored by the Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory (DBL) through KEDAHR.

The extended family can no longer bear the burden of caring for the large number of orphans. There have been a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that try to assist the extended family system by providing material and social support. However, due to lack of appropriate information and guidance in the provision of community-based interventions, coupled with the problem of poor funding from donors, such assistance has largely been rendered ineffective.

The Nyang'oma study site lies within a region which has a poor subsistence economy due to unreliable rainfall. It also faces numerous health hazards given its proximity to the

shores of Lake Victoria and the high prevalence of malaria. Orphans in this area are most likely to face the double tragedy of being orphaned in a poor community. Therefore, while the extended family members could be willing to assist, their ability to cope may be further hampered by the prevailing harsh environment. Thus, this calls for a study which could inform the donor community and, maybe more importantly, policy makers and the communities themselves to enable them formulate a broad strategy within which resources could be more effectively focused.

From a health perspective, the problem of uncared-for orphans could lead to a sharp increase in children being infected with HIV and this could put an added strain on healthcare services, especially during this time when most African governments are reducing their budgets on health and other social services and introducing cost sharing measures. This situation could lead to a sharp reversal of progress in child survival efforts and serious health implications for maternal and child health services.

The findings of this study should help governments, policy-making bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations and donors to formulate and design strategies that could alleviate the suffering of orphaned children. Health research institutions could also base on these findings to institute intervention programmes that could improve the living conditions of orphans so that they are not left vulnerable to preventable health hazards. Finally, social workers could also use the report to enable them understand the difficulties faced by orphaned children and be able to effectively monitor their progress.

1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to lack of adequate time and financial resources, this study could not carry out a full scale survey of households within the study area to establish the rate of prevalence of orphanhood there. Instead, the study utilized information from census books at the Nyang'oma study site which was carried out in mid 1997 to get respondents and a rough estimate of the rate of prevalence as at the time of the census.

Because of the nature of the study population (orphans) who fall under the category of difficult-to-find information rich cases (Patton 1987), this study found it equally impossible to adopt a random sampling strategy to get respondents. The study, therefore, adopted the purposive sampling method in which the snowballing or chain sampling strategies were used to get respondents. This implies that only respondents who were in the census books and those who were known to the respondents already recruited into the study had a chance of participating in the research. However, due to the fact that co-researchers have established close links with the community during a 4 year period, it is believed that a reasonably realistic picture was achieved even better since most of the study population were easily identified.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Most works on the subject of orphans in the recent past mainly focus on AIDS orphans. This is because a large number of uninfected and quite a few infected, especially small children, are going to be left behind with no one to provide for them upon the death of their parents. It is also estimated that the majority of such cases will be found in both urban and rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa (UN 1990; UNICEF 1994). Ntozi (1997) is emphatic that the problem is increasing daily and reaching crisis level in sub-Saharan Africa. In the past, the problem was mostly due to the civil strife present in many countries in the region and high adult mortality rates. However, in the last decade, the number of orphans has increased dramatically because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Preble (1990) has projected that between 1.5 and 2.9 million additional deaths due to AIDS of women aged 15 to 49 in the 1990s will increase the number of orphans to between 3.1 and 5.5 million, accounting for 6 to 11 percent of all children under 15 years, by the year 2000 for ten high HIV seroprevalent countries of East and Central Africa. On the other hand, UNICEF (1994) estimates that there will be 10 million uninfected orphans in Africa by the end of the decade. These will be themselves vulnerable to HIV infection as they take to life in the streets.

This situation, if not controlled, will be a great challenge to the society at large. What will be of concern to governments and other organizations is who is going to face the problem of provision and care for these orphans, including payment of their school fees. This problem should be looked at against the background of the fact that most governments in the

developing world have reduced their budgets on the provision of social services (Poonawala and Cantor 1991). According to UNICEF (1994), AIDS is robbing nations as well as families of their able-bodied workers who are also parents of young children. For instance, in Malawi the income lost already amounts to 7% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). Beyond the immediate impact AIDS has on infected individuals, those who survive, that is, children and elderly people, have to struggle to cope with the loss of loved ones and caretakers. In fact, the United Nations estimates that in high fertility countries in East Africa, for every mother dying of AIDS, three children are orphaned (UN1994). The epidemic, therefore, threatens to undermine development efforts, depleting workforces and striking many sectors of the economy. This is why Barnett and Blaikie (1992) have argued that the orphans created by the epidemic in Uganda should not be doubly penalised by exclusion from the best education available as this would help replace skilled and trained people lost due to AIDS.

2.1.1 The situation of orphanhood in Kenya

UNICEF (1994) estimated that there would be 300,000 children under the age of 15 left orphaned by AIDS by the year 1996 in Kenya. In fact, if the trend is not checked, the number of orphans due to AIDS is projected to increase to 600,000 by the year 2000 and reach nearly one million by the year 2005 (Forsythe and Rau 1996). This is the same as the Kenya Government's own estimates (ROK 1994). According to the National AIDS/STDs Control Programme's latest release, 200,000 Kenyans are expected to die of AIDS in the year 1999. This number is expected to increase to 300,000 a year by 2005 unless a cure is found. Because of this, more than half of all beds in hospitals are occupied by people suffering from AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses. The report further adds that 1.5 million people in the country are already infected and living with HIV. Most of these people still look healthy and are not aware they are infected (NAS COP 1998). Additionally, the Kenya National Human

Development report (GOK/UNDP 1999), argues that AIDS prevalence has been high and continues to grow in Western Kenya, especially in areas immediately North and South of Lake Victoria and along the road corridor to Nairobi. Nyanza province accounted for 29% of the total reported AIDS cases in the country. It is also claimed that escalating poverty levels seem to increase the incidence of the epidemic and the epidemic intensifies poverty.

Such estimates show the urgency with which the problem of orphans needs to be addressed. This increase in the number of disadvantaged children is set to outstretch the traditional caring mechanisms of accommodating orphans, which used to be carried out by the extended family system. It is argued that the extended family system will no longer be adequately prepared to meet the orphans' needs for education, health, clothing and nutrition (ROK 1994; Forsythe and Rau 1996). In fact, in some places Kenyan families are headed by children as young as 10 to 12 years old, while in other cases, children are living completely outside any family structure, either in orphanages or in the streets (Forsythe and Rau 1996).

2.1.2 Support systems for the child, family and community

As has been argued by a number of scholars, the problem of orphanhood cannot be left to individual households and the extended family system for support and protection. This is especially because the extended family systems are declining as a result of modern economic and social changes (Whisson 1964; Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984; Kilbride and Kilbride 1993). Arguing on the same lines, other scholars have pointed out that this large number of orphans far more outstrips the meager resources the traditional caring institutions could manage to provide (Cattel 1986; Barnett and Blaikie 1992; ROK 1994; Forsythe and Rau 1996). This means that if public and private efforts are not strengthened, the traditional support systems, such as the extended family, and the existing health care infrastructures, will be overwhelmed and rendered insufficient to meet the demands for long-term care (Poonawala

and Cantor 1991).

The implication of the above argument is that supporting orphaned children will require resources which may not be available in many developing countries. The AIDS crisis, for instance, is already making enormous demands on the scarce financial resources, which further worsens the efficiency of the already underdeveloped health care and social services. Moreover, debt and low prices of exports from these countries have led to dwindling economic resources. This economic problem, coupled with the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), has made governments drastically reduce their budget on social services (Poonawala and Cantor 1991). Furthermore, the AIDS epidemic is crippling those segments of the society most relied upon to rejuvenate economies, for example, productive adults and their children.

Most Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), because of their direct link with the grassroots people, have insights into the type of programmes needed and desired by the local community and this connection could be crucial to the effective delivery of services. However, lack of information on the implication for involvement, lack of appropriate guidance in providing community-based interventions, and lack of financial resources, have rendered the non-governmental organizations ineffective in addressing the problems facing various communities. Due to underfunding and other related problems, these NGOs have implemented projects without sufficient co-ordination or direction. In the past, donor commitment has been on a small scale and this commitment has traditionally been directed to specific projects. However, the spread of HIV infection will require a broad strategy under which resources can be more effectively focussed (Poonawala and Cantor 1991). This focus should formulate a way through which families and communities affected can be given assistance (UN 1990).

Poonawala and Cantor (1991) see the most urgent problem faced by those concerned with the fate of children orphaned by AIDS as finding and supporting appropriate caretakers for the orphans. The desire to ensure the survival is weighed against the household economic factors since these have ingrained influence on the ability of the households to adapt in cases of crisis (Forsythe and Rau 1996).

2.1.3. Social and cultural institutions

The assumption that some cultural institutions, such as the extended family, will always provide assistance when disaster strikes no longer holds. This is because most of the "traditional societies" have undergone significant changes over the past century as the forces of modernity penetrate the traditional structures. Whisson (1964), Cattell (1985) as well as Barnett and Blaikie (1992) further argue that even in societies whose custom is, or was, supposed to dominate as is the case with the Baganda, people did not always obey it. Instead they made their individual and household decisions with regard to their own social and economic conditions, as is done in many human societies. The importance of this observation is that in Buganda, and in Africa as a whole, "custom" does not dominate to the exclusion of the individual, household or familial choice. Hence, what to do and how to do it is always an important element of individual choice.

Related to the above argument is Potash's (1986) contention that among the Luo, there is belief that brothers should help one another. However, she also observes that there are always strong competitive and individualistic tendencies in Luo culture. Therefore, while it is regarded as a good thing if a man helps his brother, such men are not really blamed for concentrating their resources on building their own families. In fact, in some cases, brothers appropriate the deceased's wealth for their own use. However, a wealthy man might suffer a loss of public esteem for neglecting a sibling's needy children (Potash 1986). It is, therefore,

important to observe that social changes in attitudes and responsibilities are matched and reinforced by the changes in the economy, and which are related to the individualistic tendencies brought into being as the effects of urbanisation and introduction of the monetary economy take root (Whisson 1964, Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984, Potash 1986, Kilbride and Kilbride 1993).

On the issue of the extended family and its functions, Kilbride and Kilbride (1993) argue that this kind of family system in Africa was widespread and efficient, and this ensured that everyone - from the youngest to the eldest - was cared for. It was within this system that social, ethical, and traditional values were taught. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) reinforce this argument by asserting that, traditionally, social security measures consisted of collective solidarity through mutual assistance within the family, clan and tribe. This solidarity was manifest during times of crisis. Besides this, everybody contributed to the growing of whatever food they consumed (Whisson 1964; Kayongo-Male and Onyango 1984). Kayongo-Male and Onyango further observe that at times of death, the children of the deceased are looked after by members of the extended family, often the uncles and the aunts. Such orphaned children when brought into the households of relatives, were treated equally with those of that household (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984:80).

The above argument by Kayongo-Male and Onyango shows that children were given an equal chance to grow, develop and look after others when they themselves became adults. Children belonged to everyone in the system and anybody of adult age in the system could discipline them. Similarly, Kilbride and Kilbride (1993) argue that they, that is, the family, clan, lineage or ethnic group, collectively took precedence over the individual. The parent, therefore, literally had children for the social group. Children were raised as social persons who were to be properly oriented to the group, its ancestors and the needs of their own parents (Kilbride and Kilbride, 1993:84). For this reason, having children and raising them as

group members was a religious activity with a strong spiritual orientation. Having children was a religious duty which linked not only the individual but also the creator, the spirit of the ancestors and the biological parents, in each procreation. In this way, the chain of humanity is continued (Bahemuka, 1983:101).

The penetration of the modern life style and its economic implications has led to a breakdown in the institution of polygynous marriage. In this traditionally important cultural institution, men considered having several wives as security against being left alone with children to care for if the wife died. In this arrangement, child-rearing proceeded according to fixed ideas of kinship and gender hierarchy. Polygyny was, therefore, part of a wider kinship ideology of sibling duty, co-wife co-operation, and male economic "provider" capability (Kilbride and Kilbride, 1993:204). Traditionally, these polygynous families were ideally wealthy families, with a large labour force, where more food was available for consumption (Potash 1986; Kilbride and Kilbride 1993). In such arrangements, marital co-operation was mainly manifested in family affairs such as division of labour, sharing of income and raising of children. In fact, the institution of polygyny was expected to reinforce the spirit of communal solidarity which was essential for the controlled exploitation of local resources to improve the welfare of its members and, in the event of the death of a mother, this institution provided the deceased's children with emotional and psychological comfort (Whisson 1964; ROK 1994).

A number of studies have shown that orphaned children are left to be cared for by their grandparents but who, apparently, do not have a meaningful economic livelihood to shoulder such a burden. Kilbride (1985) observes that there is a contradiction of grandmothers who are expected, and often desire, to help their grandchildren (a traditional value) while monetary and other constraints in modern life do not support this traditional value. It has further been found that grandparents are less able to provide discipline and adequate socialisation or even to address the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and healthcare (Manguyu 1991; Poonawala

and Cantor 1991; Barnett and Blaikie 1992, Forsythe and Rau 1996). In addition, Poonawala and Cantor (1991) argue that even in cases where such caretakers are able to tend their fields, the burden of additional children will force them to stretch the productivity of their holdings, thereby bringing about environmental degradation. However, some vocational schools run by religious orders are accepting a limited number of orphans because they believe that the future of orphans will depend on their having marketable skills (Barnett and Blaikie 1992).

In Uganda, specifically within the Ganda family system, clans acknowledge common descent in the male line. This has enabled the practice of exchanging children between households which are related through networks of clanship. This is done under the dominant principle that children belong to and are the responsibility of their father's clan. Such arrangements offer a range of responsibilities for the care of orphans (Barnett and Blaikie 1992). Although possible caretaker will now include extended family, foster or adoptive parents or institutions, many studies in East Africa have shown that the extended family members are the best caretakers (Preble 1990; Hunter 1990; Valleroy et al. 1993).

2.1.4. Problems faced by orphans

Although some caring mechanisms have already been mentioned, some orphans are still left to cope on their own. In fact, some have had to take to life in the streets. Most often, the impact is too profound for children of HIV infected parents since their basic health and socialisation needs are inadequately met. Instead, the children themselves become caregivers for sick parents. In most cases, it is the father who dies first and his death is preceded by a series of changes and adjustments by the mother, which makes her divert her attention towards caring for the sick husband and not the children (Barnett and Blaikie 1992). This means that the death of one or both parents triggers a host of sociological, economic and psychological effects on the orphaned children (Forsythe and Rau 1996).

Orphans are in actual sense vulnerable to a number of problems such as malnutrition due to scarcity of food, or the weak position they occupy in the household production process. Some of them may be withdrawn from school as a result of the family's inability to pay school fees and meet other educational needs. In fact, UNICEF (1999) adds that many of the orphans risk never completing basic schooling, which is attributed to lack of resources which limit responses from the would be caretakers. Orphaned children also have heavy domestic responsibilities wherever they stay and this too impacts negatively on their education. They suffer from loss of social security as well as the lack of parental attention and supervision (Barnett and Blaikie 1992; Forsythe and Rau 1996).

Paul Saoko (1995) [quoted in Forsythe and Rau 1996] explains that orphans are also in need of shelter, clothes and proper bedding. He also argues that there are legal, social and emotional needs. For instance, legal needs pertain to issues of land and property rights. There have been arguments that orphaned children and widows are denied the right to inherit land while, sometimes, brothers-in-law acquire the deceased brother's property to care for their own families (Potash 1986; Barnett and Blaikie 1992; Forsythe and Rau 1996). Access to healthcare for the orphans is also minimal or non-existent. Moreover, female orphans are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and are at the risk of contracting HIV and continuing the spread of infection.

Susan Hunter (1990) asserts that delinquency is not limited to urban areas. Witnesses in rural areas describe the formation of small groups of orphans, as is the case among the Baganda, who wander "from village to village committing havoc". She summarises the effects of the large number of uncared for orphans on a rural community in a high-impact area of Uganda as follows:

Those over the age of eight (44%) constitute a major social problem. Ignorant, deprived, poorly socialised, jobless, their opinion of society is so low that their ability or motivation to contribute to the rebuilding of Uganda is minimal or non-existent. In the near future the chiefs fear famine and starvation (Hunter, 1990:683).

Studies in the Rakai district of Uganda have shown that orphaned children, contrary to the general assumption that they do not have psychological problems, generally continue to experience emotional problems and little is being done in this area of emotional support. This is because there is lack of adequate information on the nature and magnitude of the problem. The death of parents makes children vulnerable and predisposes them to physical and psychological risks over which they have no control. The feeling of helplessness is very costly in terms of psychological well-being and may be reflected in lack of concern and involvement in social and school activities. Emotionally, it is indicated by sadness and depression (Sengendo and Nambi, 1997:108).

2.1.5 Coping strategies

In some cases, male orphans are rejected by their kin while their sisters are viewed as more useful household resources. Although the desire to survive as a family is strong, prevailing economic and social circumstances have led to the separation of some orphans (Forsythe and Rau 1996). As a result, orphaned children have had to earn a livelihood in four broad categories of households:-

- (i) **Foster Families:** These are children fostered by a paternal aunt or uncle and generally remain within the extended family network.
- (ii) **Third generation caretakers:** These are primarily parentless orphans and children who have lost their mothers and are, therefore, supported by their grand parents.
- (iii) **Orphan-headed household:** This is a situation where fostering is not possible and orphans are left to survive on their own. The situation forces the young prematurely

into an adult life. Paul Saoko and Roselyne Mutemi (1996) have argued that the female orphan becomes responsible not only for her siblings, but also for her own children.

- (iv) Households employing orphans: There are some households that employ orphans as house girls or herds boys (Forsythe and Rau 1996).

The survival of social networks in whatever coping mechanisms orphaned children adopt depends on the different levels of wealth found among the households receiving orphans, since this will influence their adaptability, level of care and provision. This implies that the social and economic strength of such families have is a critical element in the survival of the orphans (Barnett and Blaikie 1992).

Certain features seem to be conducive to the survival of those orphan-headed households that do survive more or less intact as compared to others. For instance, in terms of holding the siblings together, it makes a difference if the eldest is a girl. Girls learn early how to perform household and nurturing chores. The proximity of relatives is also important because it provides psychological and social support for the orphans through their inclusion in family gatherings and celebrations. This ensures that orphans remain integrated into the local community, much as they would be if their parents were still alive. This means that involvement of orphan headed households in community funeral activities builds up a system of reciprocal entitlements, which are very important in the survival of orphans (Barnett and Blaikie 1992).

2.1.6 Policy matters relating to orphans

What is emerging from the situation of orphans is that decisions now need to be taken and policies developed to deal with the problem of how best to achieve care within and in relation to the community without producing a generation of children who are institutionalised and alienated from their society (Barnett and Blaikie 1992). Susan Hunter's study in Uganda reveals that guardians of children orphaned because of AIDS prefer assistance programmes

which allow children to remain in their homes and communities (Hunter 1990). In addition, local social service providers can take responsibility for monitoring the status of orphans absorbed into the extended family or foster families.

Other studies have also supported arguments by Hunter that orphaned children should be absorbed into the extended families because this is traditional (Manguyu 1991, Poonawala and Cantor 1991). Institutional solutions are rejected because they do not provide proper care, make children more vulnerable to loss of their land and homes and reduce the ability of the community to regenerate itself in the future (Barnett and Blaikie 1992). Manguyu (1991) suggests that orphanages and children's homes should only act as crisis intervention institutions while awaiting adoption in a family set-up. According to this argument, homes exclusively for AIDS orphans should never be contemplated as this would stigmatise the orphans even more and lead to their rejection. Such residential options may only be required if a child does not prosper in the home of his family. However, Barnett and Blaikie (1992) suggest that arguments against institutionalisation ignore the fact that most of the AIDS orphans will probably grow up with non-relatives anyway, and there is an urgent need to establish institutional care which will be community based but run by professionals in education, nutritional health and child care.

In Malawi and Uganda (UNICEF 1999), measures have been put in place to secure educational prospects for orphaned children. Such measures include free primary education policies. A similar policy is also in place in Kenya (ROK 1997a). Furthermore, Malawi has also developed a national orphans policy and is focusing on community care approaches while South Africa is testing community-based care initiatives. According to UNICEF (1999), far more needs to be done to meet the crisis, and ensuring the right of orphans to education must be an essential part of the policies formulated (p. 34).

In conclusion, it could be stated that the problem of orphans can no longer be dealt with by the traditional caring institutions because of the projected large number of orphans to be brought about by the AIDS epidemic. This problem, if not addressed adequately, will result in a reversal in development efforts already achieved in the developing countries, especially in the economies of the affected countries. Governments, donors and non-governmental organisations, therefore, need to urgently develop policies and systems to accommodate these orphans, and to develop culturally acceptable models for child care.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilised the theory of delocalization. This theory was coined by Pelto (1973:166) in his ethnographic study of the Skolt Saami (formerly Scolt Lapps) of Northeastern Finland. The theory summarises in a single term a large number of interrelated processes that are brought about when people stop depending wholly on locally produced resources and technology, particularly in previously non-industrialised (and “non-westernised”) societies. That is to say, various social and economic aspects of “modernization” are best understood by a very generalised loss of local autonomy through the growth of dependence on a world wide system of resource allocation and political power.

For instance, among the Skolt Saami, Pelto (1973) notes that one significant result of this delocalization was that the entire Skolt Saami population was “pushed sharply into the direction of cash dependency and debt” (p. 137). He further argues that aspects of modernization penetrated the lifeways of the Skolt people as they increasingly adopted Finnicized life styles and that this response to outside influence and the necessity of adapting to the new situation introduced socio-economic inequalities in a society which had otherwise been largely egalitarian in make-up. Pelto, therefore, stresses that whatever their origins, technological changes that shift production processes from local autonomous sources of

energy to a dependence on outside sources will almost certainly have wide-ranging consequences on the social and cultural patterns of the affected people.

Pelto (1973) and Benard and Pelto (1987:360) further summarise the effects of change brought about by delocalization in the following terms -

Social change refers to changes in the patterns of recurrent behaviors in human interaction. On the other hand, cultural change refers to modification, loss, addition or transformation of values, beliefs, attitudes, or other ideational elements relating to behaviors in societies (Benard and Pelto, 1987:360).

In addition, Pelto (1973) argues that this delocalization came into existence through colonialism, with its "cash-using outside world" and capitalistic elements of monetary relations and this created dependence outside, as Kilbride (1992) puts it. It is this local dependence on the outside world that Poggie and Lynch (1974) describe as "economic delocalization", a term which they define as:-

A chain of complex events that results when food, energy resources and services which had formerly been provided within the local setting are transferred into market exchange commodities, most of which originate from outside the local area (Quoted in Kilbride, 1992:187).

In a study of symbolism, Munn (1973) has observed that all members in a household are affected by processes of change, with delocalization leading to the general loss of "socio-moral values".

2.2.1. Relevance of the theory to the study

As has been stated above, delocalization creates dependence outside the survival areas of the subsistence based societies and this implies that people in the subsistence based societies, among whom the study population falls, have to invent coping strategies based on values outside the local setting. However, the adaptive successes of the people with regard to the new technology and its associated effects must also be weighed against the future

consequences. For instance, in this case, the study investigated how delocalization has affected the indigenous institutions that were in place for the support of orphaned children. Nangendo (1994) has argued, for example, that delocalization created dependence which is beyond the confines of the Bukusu boundaries and thoughts. This was accompanied by social and cultural change as economic delocalization brought with it social stratification and socio-economic inequalities.

As a consequence of this, individualism became a very important feature of non-western societies' life styles, an aspect that completely transformed societies which otherwise had been egalitarian. According to Cattell (1985), these changes have devalued traditional knowledge as is the case with the Abasamia of Western Kenya, where control of material resources, of persons and of knowledge, has shifted substantially from Samia elders to younger people, to international business and market forces, and to the new African elites. Wandibba (1997) has also argued along the same lines in describing how, during the colonial era, the introduction of formal education and cash cropping, together with wage labour migration, not only changed the roles of men and women but also affected the training and socialization of children among the Bukusu community of Bungoma District. According to him, these changes ensued when people started sending their children to school in large numbers in the 1920s as was the case with the northern parts of Bukusu land. Consequently, the high levels of educational attainment and the need for money have resulted in migration elsewhere for cash employment, the net effect of all these being an almost complete breakdown in the traditional system of feeding the family (Wandibba 1997). Moreover, Cattell (1985) further argues that while the extended family system could be willing to assist its disadvantaged members, the present economic conditions have not enabled it to do so.

As Kilbride and Kilbride (1993) argue, delocalization is a product of a "world system" based on a capitalist economy and this accounts for a world process known as a "feminization of poverty", where children too have suffered greatly as women's status suffered from global poverty (Warner 1979). While using this theory, the specific interest in children, particularly their life situation, was looked at in consideration of the child's daily life from a historical perspective. This is to say that orphaned children and their caretakers were studied in relation to the social, cultural and economic changes that have affected household units, the extended family system and the community over time as the impact of modernization is felt globally. While describing the effects of modernization on the pre-modern societies, Berger (1977) has argued that modernization has not generated appropriate "caring" institutions similar to those of the pre-modern family and community. One such important institution under threat in East Africa is the extended family, which used to provide for and protect the disadvantaged members of the community, including orphaned children. In fact, this social unit has been identified globally as the "most basic human moral net" known to mankind (Naroll 1983).

Among the Luo of Western Kenya, the effects of delocalization and, therefore, the suffering of many vulnerable groups such as children, women and the disabled, were first felt when the colonialists created monetary employment which could only be found in the few existing urban centres and this forced the men to out-migrate from their rural areas. This capitalist penetration has transformed the domestic economy of the Luo which had strong tendencies towards egalitarianism to individualism. For instance, Mbuya (1965) argues that the Luo people traditionally ate together in groups at the court (*duol*) and a male, married or unmarried, who did not eat together in groups at the court was looked down upon and considered a glutton. It was at the court that orphans as well as those children whose parents did not have food ate (Mbuya, 1965:39). However, Whisson (1964) has argued that with the introduction of the monetary economy and migrant labourer, there is no longer a clear focus of

unity in the domestic economy of the Luo. Instead, each woman controls her own segment of the economy for herself and her children. He further argues that for widows or abandoned wives who have small children and not enough strength to cultivate very much, malnutrition-related diseases are thought of more as being inevitable, or even hereditary, diseases rather than as preventable conditions. These changes in the domestic economy of the Luo illustrate the breakdown of interdependence, and the development of an individualistic system in a society which is basically poor and which lacks institutionalised social services to replace family obligations (Whisson, 1964:107). This means, therefore, that delocalization has influenced the Luo people's attitudes and perceptions.

It is shown in this study that delocalization, especially economic delocalization, has introduced social and cultural changes in the way the people of Nyang'oma and its environs look at the question of who and how orphaned children should be supported. The findings suggest that the people studied, like any other non-western, non-industrialised community, have been affected by the introduction of the monetary economy, with its accompanying forces of social change and modernity. For instance, a number of indigenous cultural institutions that were of importance in the support of orphaned children are no longer viable. Such institutions include the central pool eating arrangement which is now not functional because of socio-economic stratification and, consequently, individualism which has transformed people's lifeways. As a result, the people of Nyang'oma have lost local autonomy and the means of livelihoods has shifted from local resources where people could freely get food reserves, locally known as *kisuma*, from others who had more than they needed during times of food crisis, to the use of money for acquisition of resources and services that were otherwise locally produced and abundant. The implication of this to the study population is that the means of acquiring money, a foreign concept, came with more demands such as schooling for gainful employment which originally was not the society's lifeway. This means

that the study population has lost local autonomy which has made it expensive to adopt orphaned children, as will be shown in the later sections of this work.

2.3 HYPOTHESES

1. Changing living conditions have negative effect on attitudes towards orphanhood in the study area.
2. There are no adequate and efficient social networks and cultural institutions for supporting orphans in the study area.
3. Orphaned children in the study area face a lot of difficulties in trying to cope with their situation.

2.4 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

In this study, key terms have been defined as follows:-

Support systems:- These refer to the various structures within the community which facilitate the activities relating to assistance of the orphans within the community.

Social networks:- Refer to any form of relationship or alliances that develop out of social interests and which can be used to assist orphaned children.

Cultural institutions:- Refer to the traditional mechanisms that are available for the care and provision of orphans.

Orphaned children:- Refer to children under the age of 18 years and whose either one or both parents are deceased.

Coping mechanisms:- Refer to the ways and means through which orphans in the study area contribute to earning their livelihood. These include schooling, food, clothing, healthcare, shelter and the status of orphans in the adopting households.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research site, study design, study population and unit of analysis. The chapter also describes the sampling strategy and sample size, as well as the methods and instruments of data collection and problems encountered in the field as well as data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH SITE

3.2.1 Location

This study was carried out within Nyang'oma Sub-Location and its environs in Central Sakwa Location of the newly created Bondo District. Bondo District is situated in Nyanza Province of Western Kenya. It is bordered by Siaya District to the North, Busia District to the West, Kisumu District to the East and Homa Bay District across the Winam Gulf to the South. The district lies along the shores of Lake Victoria and covers a total area of 1,069 km² (ROK 1994).

3.2.2 Topography, Soils and Climate

Nyang'oma Sub-Location lies within the Lake Victoria basin. The soil type is of vertisol and verlic sub-groups of phaeozones and luvisole, commonly known as black cotton soil. This is very important in relation to the ability of households within the study area to successfully provide for orphans through subsistence activities which apparently is an important aspect of economic life of the people. The sub-Location experiences an equatorial climate with strong influence from local relief and Lake Victoria. The Sub-Location is mostly

dry due to its low altitude and closeness to the lakeshore. The area experiences low rainfall of between 996 - 1106mm per annum and which is mainly of convectional type.

3.2.3 Socio-economic Activities

Most people grow crops such as maize, beans, cassava and sorghum basically for subsistence but these are sometimes sold to small-scale businessmen and women. People also engage in small-scale gold mining. They also do fishing at the Wagusu beach and in other nearby beaches, primarily to supplement their subsistence activities but also for commercial purposes. Other commercial activities within the study area include, trading in mining and fishing products as well as the provision of services such as *Boda Boda* a transport based on bicycles. These commercial activities are manifested in the existence of market centres, such as Kopolo, Nyang'oma, Wagusu and Nango. However, the Nyang'oma area has a potential for horticultural production using irrigation. Livestock rearing is done and animals commonly reared include cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. Donkeys are used for carrying luggage and also water from the lake in case of water shortage, while cattle, goats and sheep are reared for milk, meat, ghee and dung for smearing the floors of houses and as manure for increasing soil fertility and also for paying bride-wealth. However, because of persistent drought, a lot of cattle die and this, in turn, affects the value of property the deceased leave behind and which can be used by people looking after orphans to provide for them. Employment opportunities in the study area are mostly found in the neighbouring boarding schools and the local catholic mission.

The area is served with six primary schools, one of which offers boarding facilities for primary girls within the mission complex. There is one boys' secondary boarding school and a technical school for the deaf but which also admits normal students interested in vocational training.

3.2.4 Population size and composition

The majority of the inhabitants of Nyang'oma are Luo. According to the Siaya District Development Plan for 1997-2001, Bondo division, in which Nyang'oma falls, had a total population of 66,811 in 1989. This is projected to increase to 96,108 by the year 2001. This represents an increase of 3.1% per annum. This could be attributed to the fact that Bondo is close to fishing villages and is likely to attract people from other areas. However, Kenya has been known for a high population growth rate nationwide.

3.2.5 Health Situation

The area lacks adequate water resources, which aggravates the health situation. This poor health situation is further compounded by lack of adequate health facilities within the area. There is Nyang'oma mission clinic which is quite good but local people complain that it is relatively expensive. However, there is a government clinic at Nango but this frequently lacks drugs. The only good government health facility is the Bondo District Hospital, which is 12 km away from Nyang'oma, but accessibility to it is hampered by lack of adequate transportation and the poor state of roads. These are the only government health facilities. In reality, therefore, people go for local community health workers (CHWs), injectionists, and drug retailers, among others.

3.3 STUDY DESIGN

The design of the study was cross-sectional and, to a large extent, aimed at collecting qualitative data, although quantitative data were also collected towards the end of the study. The first phase of the study, therefore, involved conducting key informant interviews with elderly people within the community and members of staff at the Nyang'oma orphanage, the

Catholic Parish at Nyang'oma and members of the Anglican Church of Kenya within the study area. The purpose of the interviews with the elderly people was to confirm some information on what were considered to be gray areas in the community's understanding of an orphaned child, how the community handled or took care of orphans and the changes that have taken place. This helped further to refine instruments of data collection, especially for in-depth studies. Staff of the Nyang'oma orphanage, especially the head of the orphanage, was interviewed to provide information on the possible causes and the magnitude of orphanhood within the study area and other catchment areas. Church leaders, on the other hand, were interviewed to give the position of the church on the problem of orphanhood, that is, if there are any efforts the church has initiated or is supporting to address the problem of orphanhood within the study area.

After key informant interviews, in-depth interviews were done using interview guides for orphans and their caretakers. These interviews included taking case histories of five orphaned children and their caretakers. The first phase also involved conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) to obtain qualitative data and to explore some of the issues that emerged during the in-depth studies and which needed some clarification. During this phase, questions pertaining to attitudes of the study population towards the situation of orphanhood, the social and cultural institutions available in the study area and any efforts they make to address the situation of orphanhood, what orphans do in trying to cope with orphanhood and suggestions on how they can be assisted, were asked.

The second phase of this research involved the use of structured interviews to collect quantitative data using a questionnaire with closed questions. In this phase, data were collected on such issues as age, household size, household economic indicators and education levels.

3.3.1. Study population and unit of analysis

The study population included various groups of people in Nyang'oma Sub-location. Among these were elders in villages within and around the sub-location, teachers, local administrators, religious leaders, members of women groups, caretakers of orphans and the orphans themselves. The unit of analysis was the household which was taken to mean people who live together and eat from the same kitchen. In the households, the heads and, in cases where applicable, spouses and orphans were interviewed.

3.3.2. Sampling strategy and sample size

Because of the nature of the study, random or stratified sampling could not be used as this would have needed a longer time to obtain the targeted sample size. Therefore, the study adopted the purposive sampling strategy where the snowballing method, and information from the Nyang'oma children's home's records and the Kenyan-Danish Health Research Project (KEDHR) within the study area, were used to get the required number of orphans and their care-takers. In using the snowballing or chain sampling method, a field assistant from within the community and other key informants were used to identify the respondents and then the respondents themselves were requested to identify people within the community with the same problem, that is, "information-rich cases", for in-depth study. Snowball sampling is an approach for locating information-rich informants or critical cases. It is useful in finding difficult-to-find populations such as orphans (Patton 1987). In all 100 respondents were interviewed using a standardized questionnaire

3.3.3 Methods/Instruments of data collection

3.3.3.1 Key informant interviews

Key informants in this study were people who were knowledgeable about the situation of orphanhood and who occupy influential positions within the study area. These included elderly people, church leaders, teachers and staff members at the Nyang'oma orphanage. Ten key informants were interviewed this way. The elders gave light on the past situation of orphanhood, the changes that have taken place, and the contrast between how the orphans were supported in the past and in the present. Staff at the orphanage gave information on the prevalence of orphanhood in the area and the possible causes of the situation. Church leaders, on the other hand, were interviewed to give the position of the church as far as the question of support for orphaned children was concerned. They also gave their contribution on issues concerning how the community treats orphaned children and widows and the efforts the church is making to create awareness on the need to support orphans. Religious leaders from both the Catholic and Anglican churches, which dominate Nyang'oma Sub-location and its environs, were interviewed. All key informant interviews were done by the researcher himself who is a native speaker of Dholuo. Interviews were conducted in Dholuo and recorded in English. Some few phrases or key words were recorded in Dholuo and presented in the text in two versions, that is, in English and Dholuo. The field assistant helped in locating the key informants.

3.3.3.2 In-depth/Open-ended interviews

In this study, 20 orphans and their caretakers were purposively sampled for open-ended in-depth interviews. Standardized open-ended interview guides were used to collect the necessary data. The data from this were also qualitative and consisted of direct quotations

from the informants to help strengthen their arguments about their views, opinions, feelings and knowledge about the situation of orphanhood within the study area. All the in-depth interviewing was done by the researcher with the field assistant being instrumental in locating the informants.

3.3.3.3 Narrative method

In using this method, orphans were asked to recite their experiences since the death of the parents and the consequent adoption into the present accommodating households. They were asked to tell a story of the different experiences in life when the parents were alive and after their death. The narrative method produced qualitative data on the life histories of five orphans.

3.3.3.4 Focus Group Discussions

This method of data collection was central to this research. In setting up these groups, attention was paid to the homogeneity of the participants to give ample room for a free discussion atmosphere. This gave qualitative data on various themes on the topic of support systems for orphaned children. Such themes included the present attitude of the people towards orphans and the explanations for such attitude, how the cultural and social institutions operate within the study area to help orphaned children and the coping mechanisms that orphaned children adopt to cope with their situation. Apart from these, emerging themes on the issues arising from the open-ended and in-depth individual interviews were explored for the purposes of clarification. Two sets of group discussion guides were used in this study, one for women of different socio-economic backgrounds, and community leaders and another one for orphaned children. In total, three focus group discussions were held. Participants in these discussions were selected on the basis of their experience with orphaned children, their

knowledge of changes that have taken place in relation to support for orphaned children and their ability to adequately trace that change. Orphaned children themselves were selected because they can best explain their situation.

3.3.3.5 Survey technique

In using this method, structured questionnaires with closed questions were administered to caretakers of orphans to obtain quantitative data. Through this method, information pertaining to household size, age, household economic conditions and education levels, was collected.

3.3.3.6 Participant observation

This was the main strategy employed in collecting qualitative data. However, in this research, full participant observation was not done because of the limited time available. Therefore, informative participant observation was done in which the investigator took advantage of his knowledge of the local language to immerse himself in some of the orphaned children's activities during the routine home visits that were done during and after collection of the qualitative data. Thus, the researcher got an opportunity to actively participate in charcoal burning activities that orphans within the study area carry out extensively as a coping strategy.

3.3.3.7 Direct observation

This method was used to get information on the respondents' behaviour, actions and the full range of human interactions that explain the situation of orphanhood. This was done through routine home visits to some of the identified typical orphanhood situations, and to observe various issues such as the household division of labour, disciplinary procedures taken

by caretakers, and household eating arrangements. This method was also used to gather information on how the community integrates orphaned children into community gatherings such as funeral activities, and how they interact with other people. In addition, the method was used to get information on the physical conditions of the environment in which orphans live, for instance, housing conditions, hygienic standards and their health condition as could be seen from their physical appearance as well as confirming information given by informants.

3.3.3.8 Secondary data

Secondary data in this study was accessed through records obtained from the neighbouring orphanage and census books from the KEDHR Project. These helped in identifying households with orphaned children for the purpose of sampling and interviewing. On the other hand, library sources were used to shape the arguments and/or shape the study.

3.4 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

High incidences of disease within the study area proved problematic to the smooth collection of data. Some informants that had been recruited into the study fell sick and some even died after being identified and initial contacts made. To solve this problem, other households were identified and recruited into the study to replace the ones that had problems. Some informants initially expected favours out of this study in terms of financial donations. To such informants, the purpose and nature of the study was clearly explained to them before the interviewing began.

3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

This study adhered to the code of ethics in conducting anthropological research. Names of the people who participated in the research were anonymised and pseudonyms were instead used to present the results where necessary. At some stages, such as the quantitative data collection stage, the respondents were not asked to give their names. This was done to ensure that the research does not harm the safety, dignity or privacy of the respondents.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The two sets of data (qualitative and quantitative) were analysed separately. Non-computerised analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. Separate code sheets were created for key informant interviews, in-depth studies and focus group discussions. The responses were then interpreted by looking at trends within the responses and formulating ideas which account for the trends within those responses. The methods used included content analysis, ethnographic summaries, direct quotations and selected comments from informants to give consideration to actual words used by the informants. Folk taxonomies were used to help understand how informants select words to describe a situation, as happened with orphaned children. In a number of instances where the recording was done in Dholuo, direct quotations were first presented in Luo language and translated into English while those quotations that were directly recorded in English have been presented in English without their Luo version in the text.

Quantitative data were analysed using the Epi-Info software. The responses given by the informants were assigned codes before data entry. After data entry, tables were produced by the computer and the information presented in the text in the form of frequencies and percentages.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONCEPT OF ORPHANHOOD AND PEOPLE'S CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS ORPHANED CHILDREN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study on issues pertaining to socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the study population as well as their concept of orphanhood. From a historical perspective, it gives a description of how the attitudes of the people studied have changed over a period of time in relation to the support for the orphaned children.

4.1.1 Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the study population

4.1.1.1 Socio-economic characteristics

The results from the qualitative data indicate that six out of twenty caretakers interviewed had secondary education, two did not attend formal schooling while the remaining twelve caretakers had up to primary level education (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Biographical information of caretakers interviewed in-depth

House No.	Age of caretaker	Education level	Household size	No. orphans	Relations to orphans
1	68	Upper primary	6	1	Grandfather
2	32	Upper primary	8	3	Father/step mother
3	44	Upper secondary	7	3	Grandmother
4	41	Upper secondary	6	5	Father
5	16	Upper primary	6	6	Sibling
6	32	Upper primary	3	2	Mother
7	30	Upper primary	6	4	Mother
8	31	Upper primary	7	1	Nephew
9	26	Lower secondary	10	4	Mother
10	41	Upper secondary	5	4	Mother/step mother
11	71	Illiterate	5	2	Grandmother
12	32	Upper secondary	7	1	Sister-in-law
13	28	Upper primary	8	7	Mother/step mother
14	30	Upper primary	7	5	Mother
15	45	Lower secondary	11	3	Father/step mother
16	12	Lower primary	2	1	Stays alone
17	26	Upper primary	6	3	Siblings
18	20	Upper primary	4	3	Siblings
19	72	Illiterate	9	7	Grandmother
20	54	Upper secondary	4	1	Father/step mother

Key:

Father/step mother - Refers to maternal orphans who stay with their step-mother and are supported by their biological father.

Mother/step mother - Refers to a surviving co-wife who stays with her deceased co-wife's children after the death of the husband in addition to her own

Upper primary - Refers to caretakers who attended primary education beyond

Class 4 but never had access to secondary education.

Lower primary - Refers to caretakers who attended primary school education but never went beyond Class Three.

Upper secondary - Refers to caretakers who accessed secondary education up to Form Three and above.

Lower secondary - Refers to the caretakers who accessed secondary education but did not reach Form Three.

Similarly, as shown in Table 4.2, quantitative data shows that the majority of the caretakers (65%) attained primary level education, twenty-five percent were illiterate and the remaining 10% had access to secondary school education.

Table 4.2: Education level attained by caretakers

Education level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Illiterate	25	25.0	25.0
Primary	65	65.0	90.0
Lower secondary	5	5.0	95.0
Upper secondary	5	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0

Of the twenty orphaned children studied in-depth, six of them dropped out of school without completing primary education, two of them sat for the primary certificate examinations but did not proceed while the remaining twelve orphans were attending primary school at the time of the interview (Table 4.3). On the other hand, of the twenty households covered in-depth, eighteen of them had children attending primary schools within the Nyang'oma study area and its environs. However, in eleven of these eighteen households, orphans and caretakers reported facing various problems originating from household economic

conditions. For instance, interviews with caretakers showed that in three households, there were problems regarding the acquisition of school-books, two households had problems with school uniforms while eleven households faced problems with payment of school levies. In five other households where orphans were reported to be going to school, others in the same households did not go to school for various reasons ranging from poverty-related ones and lack of parental supervision to commitments with household chores (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Summary characteristics of orphaned children studied in-depth

House No.	Age of orphaned children	Education level	Type of orphanhood	Relation to household head
1	14	Std. 5 on	Paternal	Grandmother
2	10	Std. 3 on	Maternal	Father/step- mother
3	13	Std. 5 on	Paternal	Mother
4	14	Std. 5 lft	Maternal	Father
5	16	Std. 7 lft	Double	Household head
6	17	Std. 7 lft	Paternal	Mother
7	12	Std. 2 on	Paternal	Mother
8	15	Std. 8 sat	Double	Paternal Aunt
9	13	Std. 4 on	Maternal	Step- mother
10	11	Std. 4 on	Double	Step- mother
11	13	Std. 3 on	Double	Grandmother
12	12	Std. 6 on	Double	Sister-in-law
13	12	Std. 4 on	Double	Step- mother
14	16	Std. 6 on	Paternal	Mother
15	16	Std. 4 on	Maternal	Father/step- mother
16	12	Std. 7 on	Maternal	Stays alone
17	15	Std. 5 lft	Maternal	Sibling
18	15	Std. 7 on	Double	Sibling
19	14	Std. 6 lft	Double	Grandmother
20	14	Std. 8 sat	Maternal	Father/step- mother

Key:

- On - Refers to cases where orphaned children are continuing with schooling.
- Lft - Refers to cases where orphaned children left schooling before completing primary education.
- Sat - Refers to cases where orphaned children sat for primary certificate examinations but never proceeded to secondary school.

Most of the caretakers studied in-depth were doing subsistence farming. For instance, of the twenty households studied, sixteen households carried out subsistence activities. However, in four households, there was no evidence of subsistence farming for various reasons. In one of these households, the caretaker does the business of ferrying people from Nyang'oma to Bondo, a business locally known as *Boda boda*. His other sibling, fifteen years old, works for other people in the village to supplement what the brother provides. In another household, orphaned children explained that they cannot do subsistence farming because it is taboo to do that before the after burial-rituals (*duogo liel* and *sawo*) are done. In the fourth household, the old grandmother explained that she was psychologically disturbed and that she had no strength to cultivate. As she put it:

Ka aparo ni tie ndara kaye ema mtoka jachung' gaye kalorona chiemo ka owuok Eldoret, kata kelonaye pesa mag pur, to awuok puodho adhi mana nindo eyi ot. (If I remember that it is on this road that vehicles used to stop to bring me food from Eldoret or bring me money for cultivation, then I stop digging and go to sleep in my house).

In one other household of the four that do not carry out subsistence activities, the orphaned boy (12 years old) who stays alone attends a local primary school and wholly depends on remittances from his working father.

Among the households that carry out subsistence farming, two of them were found to combine subsistence farming with small scale gold mining within the study area. Various forms of small business activities such as selling fish, second-hand clothes, and vegetables, dealing in small-scale household merchandise, alluvial mining and brewing *chang'aa* were done in nine other households that also carry out subsistence farming, while salaries or wages were earned in five households. Charcoal burning was also reported as another way through which caretakers help boost their household financial base and this was done in three households that

also carry out subsistence farming

Quantitative data indicate that ninety-nine percent of the caretakers are self-employed. Self-employment in this study refers to such activities as subsistence farming, engaging in income generating activities such as fishing, small-scale business, charcoal burning, cutting firewood and selling, among others. Only 1% of the respondents were earning a salary. Such information points to the fact that the level of income among the sample population is very low. Data contained in Table 4.4 supplements information provided on the respondents' means of livelihood within the study area.

Table 4.4: Caretakers' sources of livelihood

Sources of Livelihood	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Subsistence farming	25	25.0	25.0
Subsistence farming and business	36	36.0	61.0
Subsistence farming, business and mining	8	8.0	69.0
Subsistence farming and others	14	14.0	83.0
Subsistence farming and mining	11	11.0	94.0
Subsistence farming, mining and others	2	2.0	96.0
Subsistence farming and fishing	1	1.0	97.0
Subsistence farming, business, mining and others	1	1.0	98.0
Business	2	2.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0

4.1.1.2 Demographic characteristics

In this study, key informants of varying ages were interviewed. The oldest key informant was 80 years old while the youngest was 54 years old. In total, six men and four women of varying socio-economic backgrounds were interviewed. The oldest caretaker interviewed in this study was seventy-two years old, a woman heading a household of nine people, seven of whom were orphaned children, while the youngest caretaker was sixteen years old, a boy who is now taking care of his five other double orphaned children (his siblings).

From the quantitative data, half of the caretakers fell between the age bracket of 30 - 49 years old, while those 50 years and above were almost a third of the sample population. Those who were below 30 years of age comprised 23%, with two percent of the caretakers falling below the age of 20 years (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Caretakers' Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20	2	2.0	2.0
20 - 24	9	9.0	11.0
25 - 29	12	12.0	23.0
30 - 34	15	15.0	38.0
35 - 39	12	12.0	50.0
40 - 44	12	12.0	62.0
45 - 49	11	11.0	73.0
50 - 54	6	6.0	79.0
55 - 59	6	6.0	85.0
60 and above	15	15.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0

Orphaned children who were interviewed in-depth ranged between ten to seventeen years old. Nine of them were between ten to thirteen years old, while seven of them were between sixteen to seventeen years old. Of the twenty households studied in-depth, five of them had paternal orphans, seven had maternal orphans and eight had double orphans. From the quantitative data, the results show that 49% of the orphan households studied had paternal orphans, 32% had maternal orphans while the remaining 19% supported double orphans. Of these households, the largest household had seventeen people while the smallest had 2 people. The mean household size was computed at 6.02. Overall, information from KEDHR census books carried out in late 1997 shows that out of the 792 households that were covered in the census, 103 had orphans being supported. This brings the rate of prevalence of orphanhood in the study area to be 15.2% as at that time. However, this should not be taken to be the present prevalence rates as the incidences of adult mortality have been increasing tremendously, as shown in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. The implication of the above argument is that another study will need to be carried out if the current prevalence rates are to be documented.

Table 4.6: Year of parents' death

Year of death	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
76 - 83	7	7.0	7.0
84 - 91	13	13.0	20.0
92 - 94	19	19.0	39.0
95 - 96	21	21.0	60.0
97 - 98	39	39.0	99.0
Missing	1	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0

Because of the high HIV seroprevalence rates within the study area, the number of orphaned children has been increasing tremendously due to high adult mortality rates. Of the households that were covered during the questionnaire survey, 60% had experienced the death of either one or both parents between the years 1995 and 1998, another 32% had experienced death between 1991 and 1994, while seven percent of the households recorded death of the parent(s) between 1976 and 1983 (Table 4.6).

Table 4.7: Incidences of double orphanhood

Year(s) of death	No. of incidences
94	1
95	1
96	1
97	1
98	15
Total	19

Table 4.7 shows the number of incidences of double orphanhood from the survey results in the study area. From the table, it is shown that at least 15 cases out of the 19 became double orphaned in 1998, with seven of the fifteen cases losing both parents in 1998. The years indicated on the table show when the last parent died, thus making the child double orphaned. The results point to an increasing trend of double orphanhood within the study area.

4.2 THE CONCEPT OF ORPHANHOOD AMONG THE LUO

In this study, orphaned children were identified as children under the age of eighteen years and whose either one or both parents are deceased. During key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, informants were able to categorise the level of need of various orphaned children. For instance, the most needy ones were identified as double orphans, that is, children whose both parents were deceased, locally known as *kich masidagwa*. The second ranking in area of need were maternal orphans (mother dead), while paternal orphans (father dead) were ranked last. Maternal orphans are considered more vulnerable than paternal orphans because when the mother dies, the father marries another woman who treats them with suspicion and jealousy because she would be happier if her line became more prominent than the dead co-wife's line.

Among the Luo, there were also vulnerable children, that is, children from extremely poor families and those born out of wedlock, especially boys. Data obtained from key informants and focus group discussions show that the community did not consider such children as orphans because the term orphan (*kich*), to a greater extent, exclusively applied to situations where a parent or both parents are dead. However, children born out of wedlock and abandoned by their mothers when they get married elsewhere and whose fathers are either unknown and/or cannot be approached for assistance, were considered as "orphans".

Leviratic rules among the Luo complicate further the concept of who is an orphan or not. Culturally, children born by the levir were considered to belong to the deceased husband and inherited the deceased's property alongside his own biological children. According to both men and women elders who participated in this study, this was so because the dead man was the one who had paid the bridewealth and the levir was considered to be giving birth on his behalf, as they locally phrase it: *gweno otoko egoch wadgi* (literally: A hen laying eggs in another's brooding nest). By implication, these children were also considered as orphans since

the levir did not have control over them, it was but the brothers of the deceased who had. The levirs instead concentrated on their own families and only occasionally visited the deceased's wife and her children.

The key informants explained that members of the community were encouraged to assist children under difficulties and in situations where there were irresponsible parents, extended family members prevailed upon them to take care of their children. This means, it was the concern of the community that all children were taken care of. Boys born out of wedlock and brought into the marriage were not treated as the main children of the marriage. They were discriminated against in various aspects of life, especially when they grew up and wanted to construct their own houses and get married. This was done because it was believed that such boys brought misfortune to the children of the marriage while they prospered. However, interviews conducted with key informants showed that this was an individual's decision to discriminate against such children as there was no cultural framework that sanctioned such discrimination.

From the key informant interviews, focus group discussions and individual house-to-house in-depth studies, it was explained that orphaned children have different needs depending on their age. For instance, if the father dies, the child faces problems when he/she reaches school going age because mothers can only afford to feed them, while a child below school going age needs the mother's attention more than the father's. This means that parents play vital roles to fulfil the needs of their children in their changing stages in life.

4.3 CHANGING ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE TOWARDS ORPHANED CHILDREN

Data obtained from the key informants, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews show that the attitudes of the people of Nyang'oma have changed significantly in relation to the situation of orphanhood as compared to what was there in the past. There were various reasons given for the change and, to a large extent, the change is attributed to forces of modernity originating from outside the community, but reinforced by some cultural traits within the community. There is evidence of a shift from locally produced resources to purchased resources from outside the community. A lot of emphasis is placed on money as the key element in the study population's livelihood. This, coupled with the high levels of poverty within the study area, has had enormous influence on the attitude of the people towards orphans.

The argument above closely relates to the information gathered from quantitative data where only 7% of the respondents stated that the people's attitude towards orphans was positive and that they were willing to assist but could not owing to economic constraints. Twenty-five percent of the respondents argued that people have a negative attitude towards orphans. When asked why they thought so, they asserted that such people refuse to help when approached and are not friendly. A further 68% of the respondents said they do not know the attitude of the people towards orphans in the study area. The response could be attributed to the fact that a good number of people in the study area who are capable of supporting orphans are not offering themselves for fear of the ever-increasing number of orphans. As one informant declared, "Those who have, refuse to help. In fact, they do not want people to know about it".

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions revealed evidence of a good

past for orphaned children with a difficult present and a very uncertain future. For instance, it was noted that in the past, there was a lot of food and those who did not have enough could ask from those who had more than enough stock. Locally, this was a practise known as *kisuma* (getting food donations from nearby and distant relatives who had at a time of crisis). Therefore, there was no need to discriminate against orphaned children since nobody in the adopting households was threatened by their inclusion into such units. People loved and cared for each other in the community as relatives were very much valued. However, the situation as it is today, is quite different.

Participants in the focus group discussions further stressed that the change in attitude is because of scarcity of resources and increased demands of the present life. They argued that life is so expensive that people have been made to adopt behaviours that look strange. As one informant, a male primary headteacher in his forties, put it:

Ngima omedore omiyo wadonjo ei yore ma ok magwa. Wuoro gi ich lit bedoe nikech yuto matin to duaro bende omedore. (Life has become very expensive and this has forced us into lifeways that are not ours. Meanness and selfishness are existent because of scarcity and increased demand).

The implication of the above argument is that these people have had to adopt new survival strategies so as to find a place within the rapidly changing living conditions. In the process of their response to these forces, they have acquired alien characters which have necessitated a change in attitude. My own argument regarding this state of affairs is that the newly acquired characters are not friendly to the welfare of the orphaned children within the community studied.

One sphere of life in which this change of attitude is greatly manifested, is the present mode of production. A lot of people are emphasizing on business and the love for money. In fact, it was argued in the focus group discussions that even people in the study area who practise fishing along the shores of Lake Victoria do not have fish to eat in their houses because all the catch is sold to get money. Thus, with the escalating cost of living, people find

it difficult to accept additional children in their households because even the ones they have are surviving under difficulties. As it was argued out by one of the community leaders in his fifties during one of the focus group sessions:

You find that someone is willing to help, but even his own child goes to school with difficulty. It is therefore difficult to accept another child who is orphaned, especially that one you do not know completely.

Of the respondents to whom structured questionnaires were administered, ninety-one per cent stated that they were happy with the decision to accommodate orphans within their households, though they cited a number of problems associated with such support. Most of these were surviving parents and grandmothers who argued that they cannot have a different attitude towards them because the orphans are "their blood" and that they are the only surviving members of the lineage. The remaining nine percent were not happy with the orphans, their main reason being that caring for orphans is a difficult enterprise.

Caretakers in other situations were found to be fearing to ask for assistance repeatedly because they felt they were becoming a nuisance to the people they were begging from. During the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the informants argued that begging has become very difficult. This is because people have problems everywhere and no one is finding life any easier. Adult mortality rates are very high and a lot of children are left orphaned. People, therefore, do not see them as any different from other children since orphanhood is no longer a rare condition.

Church leaders from the study area argued that the Luo culture, apart from having been polluted by ideas from the west, also encourages competition among close brothers and other kin members and this has resulted in jealousy (*nyiego*), selfishness (*ich kwar*) and individualism (*wuoro*). This, coupled with the present economic conditions, gives the people who are supposed to be responsible some excuse to take cover on the high adult mortality

rates within the study area as a reason for their lack of concern for orphaned children. Some people are sceptical about helping orphaned children attend school because they may challenge their authority and that of their offspring when they are successful in schooling and get a well paying job later in life. This attitude applies to a greater extent to situations where the deceased left very young orphaned children and some members of the lineage are interested in misappropriating the deceased's property, especially land. That argument by the church leaders was further strengthened by leaders of a widows' and orphans' group. The leaders explained that they have had to defend land rights for orphaned children under their project during the District Land Control Boards when certain members of their extended family wanted to illegally acquire such pieces of land. Consequently, some members of the extended families have had to frustrate their efforts to adopt orphaned children.

Discrimination against orphans in the households where they stay was a very common feature among the study population. There were various cases of orphaned children being discriminated against at the co-wife's household and also at the grandmother's household. According to participants in the focus group discussions, there were various reasons for such discrimination. At the co-wives' household, discrimination against orphans was attributed to natural feelings that a mother would want her children to lead a better life than her deceased co-wife's children and also as a reflection of the rivalry between co-wives and the competition for the limited resources their husband has. This discrimination is strongly manifested in the family feeding arrangements, as Awino, a maternal orphan, who is 10 years old and stays with the step-mother narrated:

Sometimes when our father brings rice from Nyang'oma when we are in school, they eat it all and when we ask, she says the rice was for the young children.

Awino also talked of different eating arrangements whereby she eats together with her siblings while the step-mother eats separately with her biological children. This even happens with washing of clothes, whereby Awino washes her clothes and those of her siblings while the step-mother washes for her children. Although most of the orphans (16 households of the twenty that were studied in-depth) eat in the households where they are adopted, orphans who face discrimination eat in the households of other members of the extended family and grandparents in cases where they are still alive.

Participants in the focus group discussions explained that some husbands' irresponsibility further strengthens this discriminatory attitude as was explained by Ojwang', a 15-year old boy and a maternal orphan:

Ing'e ni mine wehegi ng'eny, otedonu chiemo, kiwuok to oketho nyingi bangi, ni ti ji rundo, to wuonwano omiye an ni opidha, to be ok omiye pesa e yo moro makare ma onyalo rundogo. Koro atemoga ni ka wuonwano osea to koro nena tin kanyo kabisa, anyalo anyala dhi kata ka gisechiemo.
(You know women are malicious, she prepares for you meals, but when you leave, she starts talking about you that these days people buy food, but my uncle has given her the burden of providing for me but has not given her money in a proper way. Therefore, I usually try so that when my uncle has left, I am rarely seen there, or I can only go after they have eaten).

Typically, the above experience by a maternal orphan shows how the changing economic situation can lead to a negative attitude towards orphans adopted in households that are not headed by their biological parents. In such cases, the little that the wife gets would be preferably for her own biological children, thereby worsening the situation of the orphaned children adopted in such households. Husbands, in some situations, were found to be ordering their wives to adopt orphans within their extended family network without doing anything to improve the wife's economic ability to take care of additional children.

Rivalry between a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law versus the love a mother has for her daughter affects the attitude a grandmother could have towards her grandchildren, as was revealed during in-depth interviews and focus group discussion sessions. Preference was found to be given to children born by the daughters rather than to the sons' children. The rivalry between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law was found to have originated from the tension that emanates between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law when she gets married and the consequent loss by the mother-in-law of the attention and resources given to her by her son prior to the marriage. Young men, upon marriage, pay more attention to their wives and reduce their attention to their mothers while married daughters continue to bring with them valuables to their mothers. It was found that mothers-in-law remember the two different relationships even beyond the lifetime of such people and this partly explains the negative attitude grandmothers could be having against their various grandchildren, as stated by two participants in a focus group discussion:

Aparo ni nyakocha ne jabiroma gi okapu, koro oketo aketa ni pod en aena hera cha, mane oherogo min nyathine. (I think the daughter used to come with a "basket", so she still sees that love that existed between her and her late daughter).

Or

Nitiere nyiego moro e kind mond yawuoyi gi deyegi, samoro ok gidak e dala ka maber, chi wuode chalne mana nyieke gidhawa saa te, nikech ne ohero nyathine ma wuoyino ma ka koro okendo ma odhi obarne kuom chiege to nitie paro ma miyo bedogo ni mamani omaye nyathine, mano ema kelo nyiego. (There is jealousy between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. Sometimes they do not get along well in the home. To her, her daughter-in-law looks like a co-wife with whom they quarrel all the time because she loved her son and when the son gets married and gets confined to the wife, she tends to think that the daughter-in-law has derailed the son from her and that is the root cause of jealousy).

Other participants argued that the daughters' children are much more loved than the sons' because they are seen as visitors whenever they are at the maternal grandmother's place.

Others explained that the boy confines himself to the wife and reduces the value of remittances to the mother because she has the additional responsibility of taking care of his wife and maybe children in the face of difficult economic conditions. A number of mothers-in-law do not easily conceptualise this shift in responsibilities.

Cases of strained relationship between members of the extended family and between close brothers negatively impacting on the attitude of the living cousins and, consequently, their attitude towards assisting orphans were very common. Aketch, one of the participants in one of the focus group discussions had this to say about relationships that exist between brothers:

Adier, kata kuonde ma wadakie inwang'o ka owete ok oherore. Gikedo kabisa to gin nyithind miyo achiel. (It is true, like where we stay, you find that brothers do not love one another even those from the same mother).

This rival relationship culminates into cousins and brothers accusing each other of witchcraft and being responsible for the misfortunes that befall each of them. Apart from the fact that living brothers and cousins may not be willing to help their deceased brothers' or cousins' children, orphaned children themselves were also found to be unwilling to approach uncles who were never on good terms with their dead parents. For assistance, Ochieng', a 15 year old boy and a maternal orphan, narrated thus:

There is serious food shortage. When I do not have food and I do not have anything to do, I just stay. My uncle when I go to ask him for help, he keeps on telling me about how there was misunderstanding between them. He says, and his wife also claims, that they were accused of killing my mother so they cannot assist me.

Among the Luo the term *owete*, which is the equivalent of brother in English, applies to any male member of the community who stand in a genealogical hierarchy of someone's brother. They do not distinguish between brothers from the same mother, half-brothers or cousins.

The issue of orphaned children who were born and brought up in town and only came to the rural home when their parent's body was brought for burial also featured in this study. Such orphans, according to the participants in the focus group discussions, are very expensive to maintain and people who are based in the rural areas fear adopting them although in the long-run they settle with the grandmother after the death of the last surviving parent. It was also found that orphans from urban areas find rural areas strange and are also not used to people in such areas. They were socialised in urban environments where small household units are emphasized contrary to what they find in the rural areas. Those interviewed showed signs of difficulty with integrating into the extended family networks. For example, there was evidence of orphaned children refusing to take meals together with other members of the extended family in spite of being invited, as Auma, a 14 year old girl and a double orphan asserted:

I do not eat in other people's homes even if they ask me to eat with them.
When there is no food at the grandmother's place, I eat at the uncle's place.

In the past, among the Luo children were free to eat in any home within their lineage (*anyuola*) where there was food. However, as we see from the case of Auma who used to stay with her parents in Eldoret and only came to stay with her ailing mother in a nearby beach before finally settling with her grandmother upon her mother's death, that freedom to eat anywhere within the extended family network is no longer there.

The behaviour of orphaned children themselves towards the caretakers could also negatively affect the attitude of the caretakers towards giving them any meaningful attention, as was evident in one household of the twenty in-depth interviews done with caretakers and orphans. In this particular household, sorrorate marriage was done and the new bride was of a tender age (21 years old) while the eldest son of that marriage was only seven years younger. There was evidence of disrespectful behaviour from the eldest boy towards the foster mother,

and this led to the negligence of the boy by the foster mother. Other orphans interviewed within the same household did not report any incidence of bias or preference for her own biological children. This indiscipline, on the part of the orphaned child, is attributed to the almost similar age range between the orphan and the foster mother and so speak the "same language".

The attitude of the study population was also investigated in relation to the management of property left behind by the deceased parents. Data collected throughout the study reveal high levels of poverty since, in most cases, there was no indication of any meaningful property left behind, other than land, by the deceased. For instance, of the study population who responded to a structured questionnaire, 92% reported no property left while only eight percent reported evidence of some property left other than the land. During the in-depth interviews, the high levels of poverty reported in orphan households was attributed to the fact that the deceased got ill for a very long time and most of the property was sold to meet the medical expenses and what remained was used in the funeral and during the expensive after funeral rites (*duogo liel* and *sawo*). This was done without due regard to the welfare of the orphans. The basic reason for such expensive funerals was because the Luo fear the dead more than they do to the living, as one participant during a focus group discussion commented: *giluoro chien* (meaning: they fear curses). This means that they can spend everything available to make the dead rest in peace but leave his/her children to suffer. However, livestock deaths within the study area also accounted for loss of property.

There were cases of mismanagement of the property left behind by uncles and elder siblings. There were also cases of theft of the property by mourners in the funerals, thus worsening the survival prospects of the orphans. Such incidences are indications of lack of concern for the welfare of the orphaned children who remain behind.

On the basis of the findings presented in this section, it can be concluded that the community's concept of orphanhood has not changed. However, significant changes were noted in the people's attitude towards orphaned children. The trend of the change in attitude was observed not to be favourable to the welfare of orphaned children and this is mainly because of the prevailing rate of poverty and the demands of the modern living conditions, which could be attributed to the process of delocalization.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ORPHANED CHILDREN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings of the study regarding the availability and effectiveness of the various aspects of social and cultural institutional support for orphaned children are presented. Also presented are the coping mechanisms the orphaned children within the study area adopt to deal with their situation, as well as emerging issues in the study of support systems for orphaned children.

5.2 Social Systems

Data collected through interviews with caretakers and orphans show that there is no significant social institutional support for orphans within the study area. For instance, 98% of the population who responded to a structured questionnaire reported no knowledge of any social institution within the study area that specifically assists orphaned children. Only two percent mentioned one women's group that is registered with the Department of Social Services and which takes into consideration the plight of widows and orphans within the study area. However, this group is faced with a lot of problems, some of which are financial while others emanate from within the community, especially in situations where certain members of the extended families do not want orphans from their lineages to be adopted. In some situations, according to the group's chairlady, orphans refuse to be placed in various foster families for fear that their homes will be deserted while others do that after incitement from members of their kin.

Community-based organizations such as the *nyoluoro* only help their bereaved members meet funeral expenses, and do not have plans for assisting orphans who are left behind by their deceased members. *Nyoluoro* are community-based credit schemes known as merry-go-rounds dominated by women. Members belong to various church denominations and some churches, such as the Catholic Church, find it convenient to communicate to the wider community through them. The Catholic Church also does not have any special programme for orphaned children and only assists the destitute, among whom there are orphans. However, with the increasing number of orphaned children, as shown in Tables 4.6 and 4.7 in the previous chapter, the church cannot afford to sponsor everyone because the number has become quite enormous. To give its followers a community based approach to the problem, *nyoluoro* members who are followers of the church are now being educated to transcend the issue of funeral expenses and save some of their contributions to assist orphans. According to one of the church leaders, thirty orphaned children are being sponsored in various schools, but this assistance is still too minimal to create any impact. The ability of the church to help more is hampered by the government's policies which interfere with the smooth flow of donor aid directly to the church.

The implication of the above sequence of events is that efforts need to be enhanced to support orphaned children. Such efforts would require decisions made on a large scale. Information obtained from church leaders and participants in the focus group discussions show that decisions made to assist orphaned children will need to take into consideration some of the Luo cultural traits that militate against full-hearted support for the disadvantaged members, especially selfishness and individualistic tendencies. For instance, key informants and in-depth interviews revealed that the efficiency of some community-based organizations started earlier on, such as the Bondo Bursary Fund, has been affected by individualism and the organization no longer serves the purpose for which it was intended. According to informants,

the Bondo Bursary Fund was started by the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga to assist educate needy cases. The Fund has committees at sub-locational level that receive and vet applications. Orphans and other bright children from disadvantaged families were supposed to benefit from this fund to gain access to education. However, key informants argued that the people managing the fund are very insincere. As one church leader commented:

Individualism has affected allocation of money from Bondo Bursary Fund
People are only working out ways to help their own relatives.

However, only two of the twenty households studied in-depth reported having received assistance from the Bursary Fund towards the education of orphans under their care.

Friends' and neighbours' concern about the welfare of orphans was very minimal in the study area. Friends who were reported to have visited the widows and provided some donations were workmates of the deceased parents and their concern, according to the findings, was unsustainable since they only visited for a few months after the death of their workmate and then stopped all together.

5.2.1 Cultural systems

Cultural institutions within the study area have not totally neglected the plight of orphaned children. The majority of orphaned children (93%) were found to be taken care of within the patrilocal set up. Only six percent of the orphans were taken care of by maternal relatives. This information agrees with the qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews in which eighteen of the twenty orphans interviewed were being taken care of by paternal relatives. In these eighteen households, three of the orphans were staying with siblings. Cases of siblings taking care of others accounted for only four percent in the survey. Participants in the focus group discussions attributed the rise in teenage-headed households to the lack of adults within the extended family responsible enough to foster the orphaned

children. However, the proximity of close relatives and their willingness to assist or to send remittances from urban areas for those who work was found to cushion the hardships faced by teenage headed households. In other cases, orphans refuse to be adopted in other households far from their original homes.

In this study, an orphaned child as young as 12 years old was found to be staying alone using money sent by the working parent in town to manage himself both at home and in school. This happened despite the fact that there were co-wives in the neighbouring homes who could stand in and support the child. A grandparent as old as 72 years was also found to be taking care of eight orphaned children without any meaningful economic activity or support from outside. In another striking situation, a 16-year old boy (double orphan) was found supporting five other orphans. Such situations are clear indicators of a systematically declining support for the disadvantaged members of the society by the extended family. The survey revealed that about a half of the caretakers (48%), who were to a large extent widows, fell between 20 - 39 years, those who were between 40 - 54 years constituted 29%, while those who were 55 years and above accounted for 21%. Teenagers who were heads of households and who were below 20 years of age constituted only two percent of the total number of caretakers who responded to the questionnaire. Although most of the caretakers were people in their productive ages, the situation within the study area, especially the climatic and environmental conditions, do not allow for enhanced agricultural production. Such conditions significantly frustrate the efforts made by heads of orphan households to adequately provide for the orphans under their care.

The institution of polygyny, which is prevalent in the study area, proved useful in taking care of either double or maternal orphans in a number of cases, except in cases where there existed strained relationships between the co-wives, as was evident during in-depth studies, in some households. There was evidence of ailing step-mothers who were still

providing for their deceased co-wives' children, despite the fact that such ailments negatively affected their productivity. Of the twenty households studied, eleven were polygynous while nine were monogamous. An almost similar finding was again observed during the survey where of the households that responded to the questionnaire, 54% came from a polygynous make up while 44% were from a monogamous set up.

There were some differences in the information given by orphans and their caretakers in regard to the sources of assistance given to households staying with orphans from the kin network. For instance, while data collected from orphans indicated that in eleven households there was assistance received from paternal relatives and seven from maternal relatives, data collected from caretakers gave almost contradicting information. This variation could possibly be attributed to two factors. First, is the fact that children are not directly concerned with their survival and therefore are not likely to know where assistance for them comes from. Secondly, the variation could be attributed to the fact that most of the caretakers who responded during in-depth studies (14 of the 20) were females and they would want to expose assistance from their relatives while male caretakers would not wish to disclose assistance from in-laws. This kind of behaviour is due to the patriarchal nature of the community where support for orphans is supposed to come from paternal relatives. It is, therefore, considered an embarrassment for caretakers, especially males, to admit that they get assistance from the in-laws. As one informant, a 41 year old widower put it:

The maternal grandmother wanted to stay with the youngest but I have refused. It will appear as if I am incapable of supporting them.

A later home visit to the same informant's homestead found that his 14-year old daughter had gone to visit her grandmother and had been away for the last two weeks. My contention that male informants were not comfortably acknowledging assistance from in-laws was further strengthened by contributions made by participants in a focus group discussion. In

their contribution, they argued that, in the past, orphans were never taken away from their paternal relatives, although these days hard economic conditions force them to go anywhere.

In the past, orphaned children found it easier to get food than is the case today. This was so because there used to be the central pool eating arrangement where males, married or unmarried, were required to eat at the *duol*. Females, on the other hand, also ate together at the grandmother's house where all young women brought in food they had prepared in their own households. In fact, orphaned children, girls and boys who were not of the age at which boys ate at the *duol*, were placed at the grandmother's house. Key informants and participants in the focus group discussions argued that this kind of family feeding arrangement was a safety net for orphans and other vulnerable children whose parents did not have food. In these central eating places, it was difficult to discriminate against orphans and they grew up without much difficulty, as was declared by one participant in the focus group discussions who was also a female primary school teacher:

Fuono nyathi kama ji nitte ei group ok yot, inyalo mana fuone ka in kendi
(Pinching a child where people are in a group is not easy, you can only do it where you are alone).

The current economic conditions and increased cost of living have rendered this system of family feeding unviable. This is because people are preoccupied with problems in their own households owing to constraints by the current situation. These hard economic conditions have led to the stratification of the society, thereby dismantling the central pool eating arrangement. It was explained during this study that because of modern economic conditions, the status of people in the community was, to a large extent, determined by their level of income and hence there emerged differences in the ability of various members of an eating pool to present decent meals. Consequently, while those who had a better economic background presented decent meals and were not comfortable with other members who did

not present equally good meals, those from poor economic backgrounds felt embarrassed to present meals they considered to be of poor quality before others. As one participant in a focus group discussion who is also a businesswoman in her forties narrated:

The owner of vegetables is embarrassed because other women will look down upon her with her vegetables and she is equally not happy because she also eats other people's fish while they are not happy with her vegetables.

These changes were further attributed to the issue of paid up employment. This, as the key informants argued, has brought about meanness (*ich kwar* or *ich lit*) and every young married person eats in their individual households with no regard as to whether other brothers and their families have eaten.

Assisting orphans among the Luo was the responsibility of the brothers of the deceased and not the levir. However, levirs were encouraged to give assistance and a number of them gave assistance to widows and orphans out of their own kindness as they had their own families to concentrate on. This used to happen in the past when the process of wife inheritance was well planned in advance and elders chose upon one of the responsible cousins to the deceased. These days, there is no proper leviratic procedure and, therefore, widows meet anybody and arrange for leviratic unions on their own, even with strangers (*jokowiny*).

However, with the advent of AIDS, the situation has become further complicated because people fear inheriting wives whose husbands have died because they do not know what killed the husband. In fact, it is not unusual to come across houses which are in such pathetic conditions that when it rains, the floor becomes flooded, muddy and no cooking takes place. In such cases, orphaned children sleep hungry, as happens to Joyce Aloo, 30 years old and a caretaker of four orphaned children whose husband died in 1995 but has yet to be inherited. This is how she put it:

No member of the community is ever bothered. There are many diseases and they do not know what killed the husband and the widow's movements.

In some other cases, key informants argued that women do not want to enter leviratic unions with the real cousins to their dead husbands because they do not want any male control after the death of their husbands and also because they judge them on the basis of their economic status. Therefore, economic status determines whether one can be a levirate or not. Among the Luo, women who do not enter leviratic unions after the husband's death are considered unclean. They are not supposed to interact freely with people in the community and participate in various activities within the community, including going into anybody's home or staying in other people's homes. They were also not supposed to repair the houses in which they lived prior to the husband's death or invite somebody to repair the houses. It is because of such restrictions that some widows organise with strangers (*jokowiny*) to come and enter leviratic union with them so that they can participate fully in normal activities within their community.

Traditionally, the Luo, especially members of the lineage (*anyuola*), used to have meetings after the burial of the parents to discuss the future of orphans. Contrary to this, evidence from qualitative data shows that in only one out of the twenty households covered during the in-depth interviews, members of the extended family met together with the ailing father of the orphans after the burial of the mother to distribute orphans to various households of their kin. The dominant trend is that after the burial of the parents, the closest surviving member of the lineage takes it upon himself/herself to accommodate the orphans. In other cases, the closest surviving kin members send females to work for their relatives in urban areas while the male ones are employed as herds-boys within the rural areas.

The mode of the decision-making process as to who will accommodate and provide for orphaned children was, to a large extent, unilateral. Some surviving parents, siblings, grandmothers and other close members of the kin took it upon themselves to accommodate

the orphaned children. The quantitative data show that 69% of the orphans were cared for by the surviving parents, 18% stayed with grandparents while the remaining 12% stayed with siblings (4%), paternal uncles (4%) and maternal relatives (4%). Regarding the mode of decision-making to accommodate the orphans in the households, 94% of the respondents reported that they made the decisions themselves while 6% of the decisions were made by members of the extended families and others. The implication of this sequence is that surviving parents and grandparents together with other close relatives take it as an automatic decision to accommodate orphans. This was again confirmed in an interview with Mathlida Agola, 72 years and a caretaker of seven double orphans, who had this to say:

When their mother was buried and people dispersed, they had to remain here. Where else could they go?

Mathlida Agola's household represents a typical situation that caretakers, especially grandmothers, and the orphans under their care face. This is how Agola narrated her story:

I had four children, two sons both of whom were employed in urban areas and are now dead together with their wives leaving orphans behind. I also had two daughters, one of whom died with the husband and I am now staying with their children. Another one had a child (2 years old at the time of the interview) out of wedlock, abandoned her and disappeared to a destination unknown to me. Now I take care of the baby. People in the village lend me grains and I pay later on when I have sold milk. I can get KShs. 30 from the sales in a day. However, I face problems with my cows. Some time back, some were stolen because there was no one to get them back from the grazing field in the evening. In order to pay people who lend me grains, I go hungry but I make tea without sugar for my grandchildren for supper although they disturb me a lot in the night. Children do not understand that there can be no food and think they have been denied food whenever they sleep hungry.

In a number of households where grandmothers were caretakers, there were serious cases of shortages and lack of ability to organise any meaningful economic livelihood because of the age of the caretakers. As is exemplified in an interview with Mathlida, who had stayed for quite some time alone and did not imagine that she could be a caretaker of orphaned

children as young as 2 years, their ability to adjust to the role of providing for the orphans economically and to socialise them is highly undermined by the ageing factors and its accompanying consequences.

5.3 COPING MECHANISMS ADOPTED BY ORPHANS THEMSELVES

When our parents died, we were with our step-mother, my eldest brother and sister and some of our younger siblings. Early this year, February 1998, our step-mother left and then our eldest brother. After our brother left, our eldest sister went to get married in June this year. Then I saw that if I continue going to school our younger siblings would be left hungry, so I left school in Std 7 this year (Magak Primary School). Then I started working for other people, burning charcoal and weeding for other people. I clear for other people their land and they give me money. If I do not get any work, I go to my eldest sisters in Yimbo who give me money when they have. I keep on going to any of them to give me money and then I buy food. I work for three days to get seventy shillings. When there is no place to slash I burn charcoal and sell. People in the village come to visit us, but they do not provide anything. We only talk and they go. But there is a burden, when I burn charcoal and buy food, it cannot even take three days and I look for other things to do or go to ask for money from my sisters. None of our children goes to school. They used to go but when our parents died, they left because there was no one to pay for them school fees. They used to be sent away from school repeatedly and therefore they got disinterested and left. Sometimes when they came back from school, they never used to get food to eat and when they were sent away, they never used to get money to pay at school.

The above narrative which came from a 16 year old boy, a double orphan and a caretaker of his other five double orphaned siblings, describes a typical situation orphaned children within the study area face and the various coping mechanisms they adopt. In this study, the coping mechanisms orphans adopt to deal with their situation were investigated. In order to do this, questions were asked about the ability of orphaned children to acquire certain essential resources and services that contribute to their well being in various aspects. The interviews, therefore, sought to know how the orphans cope with their situation in regard to food acquisition, healthcare, education, shelter, clothing and how they obtain other essentials in life.

A significant number of orphans reported various income generating activities which enable them to help the caretakers meet their household financial obligations and at the same time acquire some personal effects they may be in need of. In other cases, orphaned children work for people to get money for schooling. This was found to be only possible to a certain extent, depending on the educational level of the orphaned children. For instance, it was found that orphaned children in senior primary classes, especially class eight, were not able to work for people so as to get the necessary items for schooling and therefore dropped out. Onyango, 17 years old and who had left school in class eight, stated:

I left school before doing K. C. P. E. in 1998. I could not work for others to get money for fees because in Std. 8 we go upto Sunday at 2.00 p.m. and they also wanted money for enrolment.

Orphaned children interviewed about their involvement in such activities, explained that this was done to cater for the lost services the deceased parents used to provide.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that orphaned children face a serious problem of raising money for schooling. Of the 100 respondents to whom structured questionnaires were administered, 84 reported schooling problems while 50 reported clothing problems; most of them had the clothes they were bought by their deceased parents. Forty-eight of the caretakers reported the problem of food, twenty reported the problem of getting proper medication and only two of the respondents cited the problem of shelter. Apparently, orphaned children within Nyang'oma do not face the problem of shelter, specifically sleeping places, because people still have communal sleeping arrangements whereby small children and girls at puberty were found to be sleeping at the grandmother's house while grown-up boys who did not have their own houses slept in the houses (*simba*) of their senior brothers and cousins who were not married.

The problem of schooling was found to be the most serious one as orphans reported being sent away and persistently reporting back to school even before they got the money they were sent away for. Payment of money for schooling and acquisition of other schooling requirements proves to be difficult for orphans as illustrated by the following case of Ojwang', who is 16 years old and a paternal orphan:

Father died on 16/8/98. When he was fine, he used to bring money for school fees but these days, no one pays for us money at school. My mother does not get enough money from her business to pay for our school fees because she also feeds us. The three of us go to school. In Std. Six, we are required to pay KShs. 310. We started facing problems with payment of money at school when he was sick. There are no text books. They want three text books (English, Maths and Kiswahili). So those of us who do not have books go to school at 6.00 a.m. to borrow books from friends and do the assignments before eight when the English teacher comes. I recently worked for a certain mother in the village who paid me KShs. 150 which I used to buy a new set of school uniform. I have also organised with a certain old lady in the village who owns a donkey to fetch water from the lake and sell to people during weekends and school holidays and we share the money. I make KShs. 30 daily, which I use on school expenses.

As he puts it, his mother who sells fish on a small scale could only afford to feed them but not to meet the cost of their basic schooling adequately. Most orphans within the study area do what Ojwang' does to maintain themselves in school and, in a number of situations, also help their caretakers. A good number of them agreed that some teachers understood their problems and spared them when sending away other pupils from school. This was confirmed through visits to the local primary schools and informal conversations with the headteachers.

However, interviews with school administrators indicate that the district education boards still do not have special regulations for orphaned children and non-orphans. When the school committees send returns, they follow the number of pupils in school without regard to the pupils' parental survivorship. Because of this, orphans sent away from school due to non-payment of fees and other levies extend their absence looking for the same, through work, mining and fishing. However, some of them do not come back to school after engaging in

income generating activities. Listen to Ojwang' talk about his eldest brother:

Nodhi nam dichiel ma onwang'o pesa mang'eny bas to ochako pondo ei sikul kodhi nam. Koro nene oweye aweya nikech baba ma nene nyalo chike to nene tuo piny. (He went to the lake once and got a lot of money and then started sneaking out of school to go to the lake. He was just left because father who could control him was sick).

In a number of cases, the absence of orphans from school in search of money was found to adversely affect their academic performance, so most of them were compelled by their respective schools to repeat classes. The problem of schooling was found to be closely linked to lack of food in the households studied while, in a few cases, lack of proper medication also contributed to poor school attendance. Orphaned children who go hungry sometimes fear going to school because, in some cases, their labour is required in school and this requires strength. Some of them explained that they were unable to be attentive in class when they are hungry and therefore sneaked out of school in between the sessions.

Lack of supervision due to death or illness of one or both parents was also found to contribute to poor school attendance among the orphans in Nyang'oma. Orphaned children pretended to be sick in the morning hours of the weekdays to miss going to school only to be seen playing actively during the day when adults were away. As one caretaker stated:

They use the excuse of being sick to miss going to school but when I have left home, they play around.

High levels of poverty in the households studied, did not put caretakers in a good position to determine the true health status of orphaned children. Lack of money was found to be an inhibiting factor in the ability of households to carry out preventive mechanisms such as proper feeding, proper clothing and maintaining reasonable hygienic standards. Information gathered from interviews shows that a greater number of orphans receive treatment at the neighbouring Nyang'oma Mission Clinic than the government-owned Nango dispensary. For instance, interviews with caretakers reveal that out of twenty households studied in-depth,

twelve of them visit Nyang'oma mission hospital while the remaining 8 of them visit Nango dispensary. Those who go to Nango explained that it is relatively cheaper as compared to Nyang'oma, but lacks drugs and does not operate over the weekends. Those who go to Nyang'oma explained that it is because the mission clinic, to a large extent, offers credit facilities to the locals which caretakers take advantage of. Odongo, a 26 year old man and a caretaker of three of his siblings, explained thus:

When I do not have money, I take them and leave my identity card and when I get money, I pay in instalments until I pay KShs. 180.

However, in other households where caretakers do not have anybody responsible enough to negotiate for the credit facilities on their behalf, they resort to community drug retailers who also offer a great deal of relief to such households and also others that are poverty-stricken. Such households resort to buying tablets and sometimes even acquire them on credit as Opiyo, 16 years old (both parents dead) and a caretaker of five other siblings, elaborated:

When sick, they used to go to Nyang'oma mission clinic, but since our parents died, when there is no money in case of sickness, I take tablets on credit from a neighbour who sells them and then pay when I get money.

In order to pay for the tablets and other household requirements, Opiyo works for people in the village. Other households in similar circumstances only buy tablets to relieve themselves of pain, since they cannot afford the cost of medical diagnosis. Apart from Nango and Nyang'oma health facilities, caretakers within the study area also seek medicare from community health workers (CHWs) locally known as *nyamrerwa*, as was evident from data collected from three caretakers out of the twenty households that were studied in-depth. In some cases, the *nyamrerwa* treat very cheaply. They can charge as little as KShs. 10 in a situation where one has one's own drugs and a syringe. The charges are only for services rendered and this in actual sense makes their services easily accessible to some orphan

households that do not have alternative medicare facilities

Additional data collected from five orphaned households showed that such households reported high incidences of malaria and stomach related problems such as diarrhoea and constipation. The stomach related problems were attributed to the kind of water used within the households which was contaminated. The other reason for the stomach related problems was due to poor preparation of food as was the case with one household where food consumed within the household was always prepared by a fourteen-year old female maternal orphan. She stays with her 64-year old father who was also ailing at the time of the interview

To cope with such diseases in the households studied, orphaned children and their caretakers resorted to the use of traditional herbs, buying tablets from the community drug retailers and the *nyamrerwa*.

There were various income generating activities that orphaned children reported to be engaged in. Such activities included fishing along the shores of Lake Victoria, burning charcoal, collecting maize left in the farms after harvest, weeding for other people, mining and selling or hawking fruits at school to buy exercise books and pens needed at school. Of the orphans who engaged in income generating activities, the dominant group reported weeding for other people and, in some cases, combining that with charcoal burning. Home visits indicated that even girls engaged in charcoal burning, but always formed groups in which there were males to perform what are traditionally considered masculine tasks.

Orphaned children were found to be learning performing household chores when the parents were ailing, and continued with these roles after the death of their parents, thus dropping out of school as happened with Awino, 14 years old and a maternal orphan

When she was sick, I left school to nurse her including washing and feeding her and the small baby. I left school in Std. 5. When she died she left the small baby, one year old, whom I have been nursing since then.

Awino's father is now a TB patient under homecare and, therefore, not energetic enough to provide for them. His health status forces Awino to work for people and provide for four other orphans who are her siblings. Awino, who complained that what she got was not enough to feed the siblings and the ailing father, had this story to tell:

When my father got sick, I could go to work, get money and prepare them meals. I weed for people (*amali*). I work for two days and get KShs. 50. I buy one tin of maize at KShs. 30, grinding costs KShs. 3, vegetables KShs. 7 and salt KShs. 9. I go everyday and buy anything missing.

Although participants in the focus group discussions and a number of caretakers noted that the orphans' involvement in such activities was detrimental to their schooling since they lost schooling hours and got used to handling money at an early age, the entire issue was still sending confusing signals to all concerned. This is so because, while some caretakers did not welcome the habit of their children engaging in such income generating activities, they sometimes encouraged them to do such things because the activities boosted the household economic status, as Abiero, a 30-year old widow who takes care of seven paternal orphans explained:

Seche moko an bende agole nikech onyalo konyo e ot ka. (Sometimes I also send him because he can help in some way in this house).

Information obtained from the survey data indicates that a significant proportion of caretakers (42%) who agreed that they were aware of orphans' involvement in income generating activities, stated that such efforts were not good because they interfered with their schooling while 15% of them said that such activities were good for they enabled them to have money. A further 43% of the respondents were not aware of any income generating activities orphans carry out and were not, therefore, required to respond to the respective question. When asked about what orphans needed to do to help themselves, 56% of the respondents stated that orphans needed to go to school so as to have a meaningful future, another 32%

reported that orphans needed to engage in income generating activities, while 3% and 2% stated that orphans needed to work for people and get assistance from people, respectively. Seven percent of the respondents did not have any suggestion as to what orphans needed to do. However, in one household, there was evidence of an orphaned child joining a group of others who help in cultivating or weeding for the group members as a means of reducing the workload for the caretaker. Such groups are locally known as *saga*. An initiative of this nature was considered as one of the non-financial coping mechanisms orphaned children could adopt to deal with their situation within the study area.

Orphaned children who attend school and engage in such income generating activities during weekends were found to have total freedom and control over themselves. They even sometimes had control over the household economic processes and the caretakers, which is not in line with the traditional mode of child rearing. This made it difficult for the caretakers to compel them to go back to school when they were no longer interested in schooling.

5.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ORPHANHOOD

Apart from the changes that have taken place in the area of supporting orphaned children among the people studied, this study also found that orphaned children suffer greatly from the psychological impact of orphanhood following the death of their parents. In-depth studies and focus group discussions revealed that the psychological impact which is manifested through depression, sadness and loneliness, increases with the level of poverty mostly felt during times of scarcity. For instance, focus group discussions with orphans showed that orphaned children suffer most depression and emotional distress when they miss food and other services the deceased parents used to provide. Interviews with orphans from relatively stable economic backgrounds revealed very little evidence of psychological problems.

Primary school teachers who participated in the focus group discussions observed that the psychological impact of orphanhood negatively affects the class performance of the children in question. This is especially true for those who are in boarding schools for they are uncertain of the new caretaker and changes in their residential arrangements. The teachers asserted that some children break down and cry when they remember their dead parents and their previous homes, especially when schools are closing.

The psychological impact of the loss of loved ones was also found to affect the caretakers' ability to work hard for the provision of the orphaned children. This was particularly found to be true with households headed by old grandmothers who appeared to have big numbers of orphaned children to support and no energy to cultivate land and feed them. Such old grandmothers were found to have lost hope in life. In fact, one of the grandmothers complained that she had been made to go back to the art of child rearing at that age and it proved difficult for her to miss sleep in the night to attend to a crying baby. Grandparents who were interviewed argued, in some instances, that because of their age, they should also be considered as "orphans" and be given assistance.

This chapter has described the various aspects of social and cultural support systems for orphaned children and some of the coping mechanisms adopted by orphaned children. Generally, there are social systems in place within the study area. However, due to lack of sensitization on the seriousness of the problems faced by orphaned children, these systems, which include the merry-go-rounds dominated by the women, do not do anything meaningful to support children. Except for the unfriendly human relations that existed among the people studied, cultural systems were found to be doing everything possible to assist orphaned children. Unfortunately, the efforts made by these systems are frustrated by lack of proper economic resources and the increasing demands of the present day life. Orphaned children were found to be engaging in various income generating activities as well as working for

in the locality to supplement the efforts made by the caretakers. This was done out
an initiative as a response to the increasing difficult living conditions within the
where they are adopted

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the findings are interpreted to show how they relate to some other studies done elsewhere and which have some relationship to the problem of support for orphaned children. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further study and policy implications are dealt with.

6.2 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the people studied seem to make efforts to support orphaned children within their households, while at the same time responding to the economic constraints brought into existence by the present world economic order. This new world economic order is an aspect of the whole process of delocalization which, as the data collected indicate, seem to conspire against the traditional caring mechanisms for support of orphaned children among the Luo of Western Kenya. Ideally, these traditional caring mechanisms operate under great pressure in the contemporary world in which family life is in transition.

Orphaned children were found to be cared for within the patrilocal set up, with both patrilineal and matrilineal relations giving assistance. However, much of the support was observed to be from patrilineal relatives. This could be because of their proximity to the orphans' residential arrangements and the feeling of responsibility among them. A study carried out by Urassa *et al.* (1997) in Tanzania also showed that the extended family system appeared to absorb and care for the orphans with minor adaptations, such as more involvement of the

maternal relatives of the family in a patrilineal system. The researchers further observed that matrilineal relatives were now the main carers for orphans. In Nyang'oma, there was a growing concern from maternal relatives but since the Luo are a patriarchal society, the feeling of responsibility is likely to be stronger from paternal relatives than among the matrilineal relatives. It was also observed that this feeling of responsibility is hampered by lack of sufficient resources, which is occasioned by the present poor economic conditions. This is an indication that the process of economic delocalization is transforming the indigenous mechanisms that could otherwise adequately support orphaned children.

The majority of the caretakers (74%) were women and some of whom were ailing, an indication that adult mortality rates were high among men and who, therefore, die leaving behind women. Thus, the households studied were associated with the hard economic conditions that afflict female-headed households and this further increases their vulnerability. Similarly, Ntozi (1997) found that orphans with surviving mothers suffer more from financial problems than those with fathers. To further strengthen this observation, key informants in this study pointed out that orphans without fathers face problems with schooling because the mothers can only afford to feed but not to sustain them in school. In fact, children in boarding schools, which are relatively expensive, appeared to be withdrawn gradually to the local day schools within the study area after the death of the father. This happened after the lapse of the first anniversary since the father died and when all the savings had been exhausted.

The fact that female-headed households face financial problems, as was also observed by Nalugoda *et al.* (1997), could be traced to the traditional household division of labour where men were expected to go out and fend for the family, both financially and otherwise, while the women were expected to organise at the household level what the husband brought home. However, as the process of economic delocalization takes effect, forcing the mode of production to shift from locally available resources to the outside ones, women, especially in

the rural areas, find it difficult to adjust immediately to the role of the husband in the event of death. This is particularly the case now when livelihood is, to a greater extent, determined by modern economic conditions, a challenge they are least prepared to face.

The orphans reported a lot of problems with schooling. Nalugoda *et al.* (1997) also found lower rates of school attendance by children who had lost a parent in Rakai district of Uganda. Likewise, UNICEF (1999) postulates that many orphans in sub-Saharan Africa risk never completing basic schooling due to limitations in the resources that characterise such households within the region. As a response to this challenge, a number of governments, including those of Malawi and Uganda, have put measures in place to support education for orphans. Such policies include free primary education (UNICEF, 1999: 34).

The Kenya government also has such a policy (ROK 1997b). However, it has not had any meaningful impact on the educational prospects of orphans. Orphans and caretakers cited the problem of lack of schooling requirements and payments made to the schools. The issue of money was further made worse by the requirement that primary school pupils pay a certain amount of money to help pay for the helper teachers' monthly wages because the government is not able to post enough teachers to the schools, plus payments for many other things such as chalk, books and activity fees. Although some head teachers could be willing to understand the situation of orphaned children, assistant teachers have to be employed anyway if meaningful teaching has to take place. However, no alternative measures have been taken to enable local primary schools raise money without charging caretakers for such additional costs. Apart from lack of resources, the orphaned children were found to be overburdened by household chores. In addition, lack of parental care and supervision also affected school attendance.

According to Hunter and Williamson (1998), orphaned children face a premature need for education and training that could help them support themselves in future. However, economic pressures and the need to replace lost adult labour often force them to drop out of school. It was found that girls drop out first, thereby causing long-term losses to the society in terms of education for the girl child. In the Nyang'oma area, female maternal orphans were found to be dropping out of school in significant numbers in order to carry out the nurturing roles the deceased mother used to do. In fact, they started performing the nursing roles when the mother was sick and continued after her death (Barnett and Blaikie 1992; Saoke and Mutemi 1996). The government of Kenya has also observed that the expected consequences of the AIDS pandemic are an increase in families headed by children, declining educational enrollments as children are forced out of school to take care of sick parents and increased child labour in the informal sector as children attempt to supplement the income earning activities of sick parents (ROK 1997a).

Most orphans (69%) were cared for by their surviving parents, followed by grandparents (18%). Ntozi (1997) also had similar findings from his study in Uganda. Some of the grandparents who participated in this research were over 70 years old but with large numbers of orphans under their care. Hunter (1990) has observed that grandparents are less able to provide adequate socialization and even to address the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and health. Grandparents within the study area were also found to be incapable of carrying out subsistence activities and income-generating activities to help meet the financial needs of their households. Indeed, the study showed that most of the caretakers, grandmothers included, undertook the decision to accommodate orphans with great personal sacrifices as indicated in the data collected where some grandmothers missed sleep and went hungry so that their orphaned grand children could eat. Such decisions were reinforced by the rules of affection where emotionally driven decisions overshadowed the individual's economic ability

to implement his/her decisions and complicated further by the problems of a delocalised economy. Obbo (1995) argues that it was apparent that women caretakers, often widows or elderly grandparents, had access to fewer resources and less income compared to men. According to her, grandmothers in their sixties or more were returning to long hours of hoeing so as to raise food for their grandchildren. Divorced women are fostering their ex - husbands' orphaned children, and barren women, who had always fostered their brothers' and sisters' children, were taking on even more children. However, Cattel (1993) further argue that providing such support can be burdensome although it is also a source of pride and respect among the elderly. Additionally, she observes that the AIDS epidemic in Africa, where millions are infected is simultaneously reducing available caregivers for the elderly and increasing care giving burdens of older people.

The findings of this study show that as the process of economic delocalization takes place, plus the accompanying consequences of social change, orphaned households within the study area were found to be unable to sustain the kind of support they desired for their households. There was declining support from other members of the kin due to encroaching modern economic conditions. UN (1990) also noted pathetic situations, where grandparents who expected to be supported by their children suddenly had to care for their grandchildren. In some situations, grandparents who were studied in-depth argued that they also should be considered for assistance since they are not energetic enough to support themselves as well as the orphans. In most cases, these grandparents did not have education and, therefore, their ability to continue providing for all members within their households in the absence of adequate support services raised a lot of concern.

There were cases of orphaned children going without food, missing school or not being able to search good treatment in the event of illness except from community health workers (CHWs), locally known as *nyamrerwa*. The *nyamrerwa* sometimes treat for as little

as KShs. 10 for those who have their own syringes and drugs. The level of hygiene was observed to be very low in households where orphans were staying. This was because the household heads could not afford to buy washing soap as well as getting clean water as sometimes both commodities have to be purchased. In their study in Luwero and Kabale Districts in Uganda, Nalwanga-Sebina and Sengendo (1987) observed that orphaned children adopted into impoverished families suffered from lack of resources necessary for their basic needs.

The prevalence of polygyny within the study area and the consequent concern for orphaned children was viewed positively in this study. This was especially in cases where orphaned children were being cared for by co-wives. But as Suda (1997) has argued, a more critical look at this traditional family system where jealousy, conflict, tension and violence between co-wives was discernible, reveals some potential for child neglect. Orphaned children absorbed into households headed by non-biological caretakers reported cases of discrimination in preference for the biological children of the caretaker.

Discrimination of orphans is attributed to scarcity of resources and the present modern economic conditions, in which the indigenous caring mechanisms are now systematically being eroded, partly as a result of economic delocalization and other forces of change which arguably have also resulted in moral delocalization. In addition, this behaviour on the part of some caretakers could be seen as a manifestation of rapidly changing family situations. Weisner (1997) sees this crisis as one of survival and resource control mechanisms in times of scarcity, rooted in national and international politics, economics and public health. However, part of this discrimination could also be due to the bad relationship that existed between the biological parents of the orphans and the present caretakers. Similarly, Bledsoe (1988) has observed that orphaned children fostered in other families receive worse treatment than the biological children in the same family, trends which point to the disadvantages of orphaned

children. Orphans in Nyang'oma reported a number of acts of discrimination by various members of their agnatic kin, including unequal distribution of food and discriminatory eating arrangements as well as denial of services, such as washing of dirty clothes and negligence by the caretaker.

Discrimination of orphans and other co-wives' children residing with step-mothers is a cultural trait found among the Luo and other African peoples. As Ominde (1952) puts it, co-wives among the Luo view undue wealth of the other's house with alarm and this is seen in terms of progress made by children of each house. It is because of this that mothers in each house think first about the future of their own children. Thus, co-wives are traditionally jealous, as Whisson (1964) puts it in the myth of origin of clans among the Luo. This jealousy causes ill feelings between co-wives and their children and could lead to accusations of witchcraft, as Evans-Pritchard (1976) found in his study among the Azande. Such accusations provide people with the natural philosophy upon which relations between people and unfortunate events are explained (Pritchard, 1976: 18). These relations are brought about because of jealousy and hatred. Orphaned children in the study area, especially maternal orphans, were found to be victims of this traditional jealousy, and this negatively affected their ability to cope with orphanhood.

Most of the caretakers (71%) who responded to the questionnaire were between the ages of 24 - 49. Caretakers aged 50 years and above constituted 27% of the respondents, while only 2% of the caretakers were below 20 years of age. But the rate of adult mortality was noted to be steadily increasing, for there was an increased number of households which had experienced the death of the parent(s) of the orphaned children between 1995 and 1998. Most of the parents were leaving behind young children, meaning that the above ratio will certainly be altered in future. Even though this number is anticipated to increase, it is not probable that those people will have to develop radically different coping mechanisms. Data

collected in this study indicate that the majority of the caretakers were either illiterate or had up to primary education schooling with no skills acquired. This makes it difficult for such caretakers to adequately adjust to a delocalized economy and get alternative sources of income such as gainful employment. Most of them were still depending on subsistence agriculture as the information gathered so far reveals. For instance, a good number of orphans were found to be cutting wood to burn charcoal, while others were mining, activities which, if not well controlled, could lead to environmental degradation and result in further desertification. The solution, as Nalugoda *et al.* (1997) see it, lies in developing feasible interventions with community-based support systems which focus on the most vulnerable households and extended family but environmentally friendly. In Uganda, the strength of women's support networks have shown significant progress (Obbo 1995). Such interventions could be considered appropriate given the fact that about a third (27%) of the caretakers were 50 years and above, and so in their less productive years.

Although the proportion of orphan-headed households is small in Nyang'oma, teenage orphans were found to be actively involved in household production processes, either through direct labour or income they earned from their labour. Ntozi *et al.* (1999), in their study about the role of the extended family in orphan care in northern Uganda, found that the extended family support for orphaned children has been overburdened by the AIDS epidemic. The result is that some care is being provided by the older orphans, who are too young for the responsibility. Quite a good number of households within the study area were found to be dependent on orphans' labour and their initiatives to boost the household's income-generating activities. However, girls found it easier to carry out the household chores than boys who seemed to cope with household chores with difficulty. The difference could be attributed to the socialization process and the traditional gender division of labour within the households. Male orphans complained that they were not finding it any easier to carry out the traditionally

prescribed feminine roles. This could explain why in the teenage-headed households studied, the eldest boy performed the duties of a father while the eldest girl performed the roles of a mother. In his study on support for children among the Kisa of Western Kenya, Weisner (1997) found that girls are much more likely to do caretaking and domestic tasks than boys. He further argues that this is as a result of the socialization process in which children learn their roles and responsibilities according to their age and sex within the household.

During the focus group discussions, it was stated that orphaned children who head households are more responsible than those who stay with relatives. According to Sengendo and Nambi (1997), a high degree of externality (that is, being able to go out of their way and enter agreements with adults) was observed among orphans living on their own in the Rakai district of Uganda. This could be attributed to the fact that orphans who live on their own and care for others always assume adult roles and enter into agreements with outsiders to fend for themselves and the siblings under their care, as happened with households used in this study where orphans had assumed adult roles. Saoke and Mutemi (1996) attribute the rise of orphan-headed households to lack of families in the extended family kin network to adopt them. However, in Nyang'oma those orphans who appeared to be staying alone, apart from not having responsible people nearby to foster them, were unwilling to desert their homesteads to go and stay with other relatives who were far away from their natal homes. This is why Manguyu (1991) argues that institutionalization of such children should be discouraged. Orphaned children fear leaving behind their parents' land and other property since these could be misappropriated in a changing family life situation where individualism is systematically replacing collectivity.

Apparently, poverty could be the principal factor behind the establishment of orphan-headed households, especially those who stay alone within the proximity of the extended family kin. In their study of the factors that lead to the establishment of child-headed

households in Zimbabwe, Foster *et al.* (1997) observed that high poverty rates prevalent within the community explain why members of the extended families refuse to adopt orphans in their households. Furthermore, the number of orphans involved is quite big while there are no productive people within the community who can provide for them. Poonawala and Cantor (1991) also attribute this neglect to lack of financial ability. This sequence of events is observable in the study area possibly because economic delocalization has weakened the moral power of the members of the community under study where some members of the extended family find it difficult to share the scarce resources they have with orphans. In fact, among the households in Nyang'oma, it was observed that the financial problem was so immense that even a basic requirement such as soap for bathing and washing clothes was unaffordable. This was responsible for the low standards of hygiene observed in the orphan households.

Friends' and neighbours' concern for the welfare of orphans seemed to be unsustainable in the study area. Similarly, a study carried out by Ntozi (1997) on the problem of orphans in Uganda, revealed that friends and neighbours did not participate much in the orphan care decision-making process. Other sources of assistance for orphan households covered in this study did not feature very prominently apart from assistance by caretakers themselves and, to a lesser extent, members of the extended family. In some cases, households with orphans did not show any evidence of having received or having any connection whatsoever with either social or cultural institutions within the study area. Most community-based organizations, such as *nyoluoro*, have not come to terms with the fact that the question of support for orphaned children requires their special attention, and the designing of strategies for assisting orphans besides helping the bereaved families meet funeral expenses. Urassa *et al.* (1997) noted that outside support is generally lacking or very limited to orphans in Tanzania. A study carried out by Ouko (1999) in what is now Bondo district discovered that *nyoluoro* groups, which are credit schemes on a merry-go-round basis, have potential to support orphans and widows but

do not do so at the moment. Similarly, the Kenya government (ROK 1997a) targets such groups for income generating projects to ensure sustainability in orphan households. However, in general, the informants stated that they only received support during funerals and nothing else after the mourning period.

The cost of illness, expensive funeral rites, low crop productivity among the people as a result of bad climatic conditions and, sometimes, livestock deaths, were cited as being responsible for low household property levels in Nyang'oma. Susan Hunter and John Williamson (1998) attribute the poverty observed in households living with orphans to the cost of illness and funeral expenses. Obbo (1995) observes that prolonged nursing had usually drained the family's resources. This was equally true with orphaned households in Nyang'oma where a number of them indicated that the property they had was sold to meet the medical and funeral expenses of the deceased. To a limited extent, poverty was blamed on livestock deaths due to the high prevalence of livestock diseases in the study area.

Although the problem of psychological impact of orphanhood was not explored exhaustively in this study, a significant proportion of informants studied in-depth reported psychological problems among orphans and also among the caretakers, mostly overwhelmed grandmothers. It was observed, as Sengendo and Nambi (1997) argue, that the psychological problem increases with scarcity of resources in the households that adopt or stay with orphans. The psychological problem was found to cause confusion and learning problems to school-going orphans.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The attitude of the study population towards orphaned children was found to have changed significantly. This change was found to be linked to the prevailing levels of poverty and individualistic tendencies prevalent among the people studied. The presence of these characteristics is attributed to the weakening of the social and cultural fabrics of the society by the penetration of modern economic conditions of production, distribution and consumption. It is because of the scarcity of resources that competition between co-wives and brothers intensifies, thereby leading to jealousy and counter-accusations of witchcraft. This later on impacts negatively on orphaned children. Poverty was also found to be the cause of misappropriation of the deceased's property by elderly siblings and paternal uncles of the orphaned children. This appears to confirm the first hypothesis that changing living conditions have affected the attitude of the people studied towards the situation of orphanhood. According to the information obtained in this study, this change impacts negatively on the survival prospects of orphaned children as the means of livelihood within the community continue to be delocalised from the resources available in the community.

Cultural institutions within the study area were found to be engulfed in the crisis of poverty and this, coupled with the process of social change, was found to be unfavourable to the survival of orphans. The extended family system is gradually weakening as a result of the larger social, cultural and economic transformations that are taking place in contemporary Kenya. These changes, to a greater extent, have profoundly affected the extended family and introduced behaviours that were unknown to the people of Nyang'oma. In general terms, these institutions were found to be doing everything possible to support orphaned children but, seemingly, their resources have been over-stretched and will require external support. This is because the number of orphaned children is on the increase and the community is most unlikely to cope with the demand for their care.

Social institutions within the study area appeared not to appreciate the magnitude of the problems faced by orphaned children. This is because they did not appear to have adjusted their assistance programmes to respond to the needs of orphaned children. The above arguments partly confirm and partly disapprove the second hypothesis that there are no adequate and efficient social networks and cultural institutional support for orphaned children. Data collected throughout the study reveal an existence of both social networks and cultural institutions or structures that can be effectively manipulated to address the problems faced by orphaned children in the study area. However, these networks and structures are not effectively dealing with the plight of orphaned children owing to modern economic constraints, an aspect of the process of delocalization. Part of this inefficiency can be attributed to lack of sensitisation.

The coping mechanisms adopted by orphans were mainly income-generating and were not found to be conducive to their schooling prospects. However, a number of orphans and caretakers reported non-income generating ways of coping with their situation, especially when they do not have food. Such orphans ate at the grandmother's households or households of their uncles. However, the caretakers and the general community did not have an alternative strategy that could help orphaned children shape their destiny. In fact, caretakers seemed to support the coping mechanisms despite the fact that they were widely aware of their negative effects because they also benefited from the money generated by orphaned children in their households. This, confirms the last hypothesis that orphaned children in the study area face a lot of difficulties in trying to cope with their situation.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study reveal a declining support for orphaned children. One of the areas where orphaned children were most disadvantaged was access to education. It is, therefore, recommended that policies designed to address the educational problems orphaned children face need not look at education in isolation. For such policies to be effective, and to be closely linked to the needs of orphaned children, they need to take into consideration the household living conditions in orphaned households and come up with alternative ways of generating income for sustainable household living conditions as well as acquisition of schooling requirements. For instance, Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1997 on HIV/AIDS prevention (Republic of Kenya, 1997b) states that AIDS orphans should be allowed to access education freely. However, this seems not to be practical as the results from Nyang'oma show that local primary schools continue to send orphaned children out of school for nonpayment of school levies. There should be alternative sources of funding either through school-based income generating activities or exemption to relieve orphaned children from paying such charges. For the income generating activities to be culturally feasible and relevant to the local situation, a lot of emphasis will need to be placed on utilization of locally available human and natural resources. This should be done with a view to manipulating the already locally available structures to respond to the needs of orphaned children. Such structures should include both women and youth groups found within the community. However, for this initiative to be effective external financial support will be necessary.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as churches working in the area, should educate members of the community on the need to assist orphaned children. This should be done through helping the community to mobilize resources and start income generating activities that would relieve orphan households of the overwhelming burden. In all programmes designed to assist orphans, the community should be made to take an active role.

This would facilitate acceptability and, may be, the long-term sustainability of such initiatives.

The problem of orphanhood should be seen in a political and macro economic context. The government should therefore formulate a formal orphan policy and allocate funds to help provide basic needs for orphaned children. Negligence of orphans' problems could pose a major risk for the civil society in future.

6.5 AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The indigenous institutions for supporting orphaned children seem to be in place within the study area. However, these institutions are not doing much to support orphaned children. There is need to carry out a study on how these institutions could be used in intervention programmes so as to come up with a community-based support system for the orphaned children.

There is also need to carry out a full scale survey to establish the rate of prevalence of orphanhood within the study area and Kenya in general.

A comparative study needs to be done in households with orphans and those without orphans so that the differences between the two are clearly understood. Similarly, there is need for a comparative study between different parts of Kenya.

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APPENDICES

14. Is every child you are staying with other than your own orphaned?

Yes _____ No _____

15. If No above, how many of them are not orphaned and are staying with you? _____

16. What do their parents do for a living? _____

17. When did they/he/she die? _____

18. When did you start staying with the orphaned children? _____

19. Previously, where were they staying and with who? Please state the relationship:

20. What property did the deceased parents have? _____

21. Who controls the deceased parent's property? _____

22. Does he/she also help in assisting the orphans?

Yes _____ No _____

23. Who made the decision to accommodate the orphans in your household?

Husband _____

Wife _____

Community members _____

Others _____ Please specify: _____

24. Were you happy with that decision?

Yes _____ No _____

25. If No above, please give reasons: _____

26. Who else helps you in supporting orphaned children? (Specify) _____

27. How often do you receive such assistance?

Very frequently _____

Frequently _____

None _____

28. What do other people think about assisting orphans?

Positively _____

Negatively _____

Don't know _____

Please explain your answer _____

29. Whom do you think should support orphans?

Members of the extended family _____

Church bodies _____

Friends _____

Neighbours _____

Government _____

NGOs _____

Please give reasons for your answer _____

30. What are your views towards the situation of orphanhood? _____

31. Are there any organizations within the community which assist the orphans?

Yes _____ No _____

32. If Yes above, specify the organization(s) _____

33. What problems do you face in supporting the orphan(s)? _____

34. How do you think these problems can be solved? _____

35. Are there any efforts by orphaned children to support themselves?

Yes _____ No _____

36. If Yes above, please elaborate _____

37. Give your opinion about these efforts _____

38. What do you think orphaned children can do to help themselves? _____

39. What do you think the community can do to help alleviate the situation of orphanhood? _____

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ORPHANS

1. Biographical data

Age of respondent _____

Sex _____

Religious affiliation _____

Relationship to House head _____

Census number _____

2. Narrative

Story about how he/she became orphaned and experienced so far gained as an orphaned child

(b) Where did you used to stay when your parents were alive?

- Who made the decision for you to stay where you are staying?

3. Education

- Do you go to school (Indicate class and who pays school fees). If No, probe reasons for not attending school).
- Who made the decision to take you/not to take you to school?
- How many days/times have you missed going to school this/last term (probe reason for absenteeism)?
- Difficult faced in schooling and how they can be solved?

4. Health care:

- Where do you go for treatment when sick. (Probe reason for place of treatment)?
- Who pays for your treatment and why?
- In case of lack of treatment when sick. What do you do?

5. Food, clothing and shelter

- Apart from where you stay, do you eat anywhere else? (State relationship to household head, how often and why).
- What do you do when faced with serious food shortage?
- From where do you get clothes (Probe all sources)?
- Do you think you have enough clothes? Explain why.
- Whom do you approach when you lack clothes?

- Where do you sleep, is it together with others or alone, why?
- Are you allowed to construct your own house where you are staying?

6. Property right

- What property did your parents leave behind?
- Who owns and controls that property?
- Were you consulted when the decision on ownership and control of property was made (probe level of consultation and how the decision was reached)?
- Does the person who owns and controls your deceased parent's property assist you in anyway. (Probe kind of assistance given)?

7. Social and cultural institutions

- Is there any church body, women group, youth group etc., which has ever assisted you? (Probe the nature of assistance)
- How many of your relatives have given you assistance of any nature? (Specify the nature of assistance).

8. Coping mechanisms

- Within the household in which you live (headed by some adult) did you feel that you are sometimes treated differently from the biological children. If Yes, in which respect?
- How do you cope with difficulties you face in : -
 - Schooling.
 - Food shortage.
 - Sleeping place.
 - Clothing.
 - Health care.
 - Any other problem (Probe).
- How do you think your problems can best be addressed.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CARETAKERS

1. Biographical data

Age of respondent _____

Marital Status _____

Educational level for respondent _____

Spouse _____

Religious affiliation _____

Occupation _____

Household size - Number of people staying in the household and relationship to household head. (Indicate male/female).

Census number _____

2. Source of income and subsistence activities:

- What are the household subsistence activities? (Kind of money)
- Assistance from outside including remittance from working family members and any other donations, gifts from the community members.

3. Education

- Do orphaned children of school going age under your care go to school. (Give details).
- Who made the decision to take/not to take them to school. (Probe how decision was reached)
- How many times do they miss school in a term. Give the reasons
- Give suggestions on how education for orphans under your care can be best provided.

4. Orphans access to health care:

- Where do you take orphaned children for treatment when they are sick. Give reasons
- Problems you face in providing health care for orphans and how do you solve those problems.
- Give suggestions on how the health needs of the orphaned children you stay with can be properly catered for.

5. Food and clothing for orphans

- Do you face any problem in providing food for the orphaned children?

- Who else helps you to feed the orphans? Explain
- Apart from you, who else gives them clothing?
- In case of serious clothing problem, who else do you approach for assistance?

6. Property right

- What property did the parents of orphans you stay with leave behind?
- Who owns and controls the left behind property? State relationship to the deceased parent).
- Does he or she give any assistance in orphan care? Give details of the assistance given.
- How was the decision to control and manage the deceased's property reached
- Given suggestion on how the deceased's property can be well managed to benefit the children left behind.

7. Social institutions

- What are the social institutions available in the area and which has given assistance of any nature for the orphans you are staying with. Give their names, school, church bodies, youth groups, women groups etc).
- In the last six months has any of the orphan's deceased parent's friends paid any visits or given any assistance for their support.

8. Cultural institutions and support for orphaned children :

- Who made the decision to accommodate them in the household? (Probe how the decision was reached).
- Do other relatives of the orphaned children you are staying with give assistance?
- If No, probe reasons why.
- Any other assistance received from the community, neighbours, extended family etc). Probe any kind of assistance given.
- How are orphaned children looked upon?
- What other problem do you face in caring and protecting orphans and how do you think these problems can be solved.

Summary

- Do you see any difference between the orphan(s) in question and your biological children? (Coping Mechanism).

APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR ORPHANS

1. Problems faced in School :

- School attendance and Money payment.
- School attendance and feeding at home

2. Differential treatment at home :

- How is it done in provision of food and acquisition of basic needs.

3. Coping strategies:

- Burning charcoal and other activities done.
- How the money is used.
- Who decided how the money is used?

4. Assistance within the Community

- Do you ask any assistance from home?
- Why?
- What assistance?
- How do people react when approached for assistance?

5. Psychological effects of parents death:

- What are the feelings?
- How/when do they manifest themselves?
- How do you overcome them?

APPENDIX 5: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

- Definition of an orphaned child
- Who is considered an orphaned child among the Luo?
- Who among the orphans of various categories is more vulnerable?
- Views about orphaned children indulging in paid labour within the community
- How often do orphaned children work for people within the community?
- Why do they go to work for people?
- How do they use the money they get from the work?
- Supporting orphans
- How were orphaned children supported in the past?
- Is there any difference between the past and the present mode of assisting orphans?
- Discrimination at household level and the Question of orphan headed households
- Why do some orphaned children stay alone while there are members of the extended family network?
- Why do some caretakers discriminate against orphaned children within the community?
- Orphan's Education:
- How can orphaned children be assisted to gain access to education?

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. Knowledge about orphanhood

- Whom do you consider to be a vulnerable child?
- Who is an orphan according to the Luo traditional definition?
- How would you see the position of a child who:-
 - (i) Has lost both parents
 - (ii) Has lost the mother but not the father
 - (iii) Has lost the father but not the mother
- Whose parents are still alive but not able to take care of him/her?
- Whose parents are still alive and who has been sent to stay with other relatives? (e.g. dani, Aunt etc)
- Child born out of wedlock and the mother later marries another man
- Has the Luo people's understanding of orphaned children changed?
- What are the changes. How do the Luo people define orphans today?

2. Support for orphans.

- How were such orphaned/ vulnerable children supported in the past? Who was responsible for their support and protection?
- Have there been changes in the way orphans were taken care of in the past?
- What are the changes and how have they affected orphaned children?
- What do you think is responsible for the changes?
- Have people's attitude towards orphans also changed?

3. Wife inheritance

- What was the role of the inheritor in relation to support and protection of deceased's children?
- Have there been changes in this role?
- How has the changes affected the orphaned children?
- What has brought about these changes?