



## **Research on Poverty Alleviation**

### **17<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL RESEARCH WORKSHOP**

#### **Researching with Children: Voices of Orphaned Children Heading Households in Tanzania**

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*Draft Report*

*SPI*

Presented at REPOA's 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Workshop  
held at the Whitesands Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania;  
March 28-29, 2012

*This paper has not undergone REPOA's formal review and editing process. Any views expressed are of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of REPOA or any other organisation.*

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## ABSTRACT

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Article Twelve of the United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides the right for a child to express his/her opinion on matters concerning his/her welfare. As a result a methodological shift in research with children is occurring and children are now regarded as capable of reporting their own experiences. Taking this onboard, researchers are trying to establish appropriate methods to provide opportunities for children to express themselves. This paper discusses experiences in research with orphaned children heading households in Tanzania and focuses on the efficacy of the international and national social protection for such a vulnerable group. The research was carried out in two rural locations and used a variety of methods with children including participant observation, focus groups, interviews and role play. Results revealed major challenges in obtaining the child's voice due to power relations and tensions among involved adults (in this case those working for the protection of children). The paper discusses the need for the development of methodology to include the children being studied as well as ethical issues arising through research with children. Lastly, the paper brings out the lessons learned in using a blend of methods in capturing children's opinion and specifically vulnerable children by making proposals for the ways under which methodological reposition can work for children especially for their protection.

Key Words: Children, CRC, Expression, Researching, Methods

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0 THE CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4.0 THE RESEARCH PROCESS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 <b>CONSENT: BASIS AND MANOEUVRE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.2 <b>REACHING THE CONFINES OF A CHILD .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.0 KINDLING CHILDREN’S EXPRESSION .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6.0 CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>7.0 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>18</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Orphaned Child Headed Households (OCHH)<sup>1</sup> is a phenomenon that is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa attributable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has affected the demographic patterns by increasing the number of orphans (Otieno, (et. al.) 2003: 301). This group of children (OCHH) is increasing and needs to be studied to uncover their realities and situation in this case in Tanzania. Tanzania is one of the Sub-Saharan African Countries which has been vastly affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic since it was first diagnosed in 1983 (TACAIDS, et.al. 2005:1). The research discussed here is with the OCHH in two districts of Tanzania namely; Makete and Karagwe where the problem has been noted as growing as well as being intervened.

The research was planned and undertaken acknowledging the developments in research related to children. Researching with children is now informed by the framework provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) under its articles 12 and 13 (Ennew, 2000:178). Researchers are expected to solicit the views of children and to let children express themselves in a manner fit for them. The voices of children are necessary if the children (and therefore the OCHH) are to move from the vulnerable and marginal position they occupy in their society (Hill et.al, 2004:84). It has however, been noted that children are sometimes not ready to or are unable to participate in conventional research procedures (Aldridge, 2008:261). This then leads to the need to search for more pertinent methods in which children can participate effectively, expressing themselves in a way that their voices can be heard. The voices of children are necessary if their social protection is to be achieved.

The research being represented here used more than one method to engage the OCHH in the research as a way of leading the children to self expression regarding their situation and how they perceive the multiple levels of structures developed to support and protect them. While the use of multiple methods was useful in hearing the children's voices and minimising stress and harm on their part, it was also ethically and practically challenging to both the researcher and the OCHH. Without discussing in detail the theoretical advancement in childhood studies and the position of the CRC on child research this paper intends to share the positive use of multiple methods in the methodology for conducting research with children, as well as teasing out the practical dilemmas in the implementation of the right of a child to self-expression in research. It also provides useful ways in which children social protection can be handled from the experience of children and their wishes.

The paper is divided into three main parts. The first part provides the background to the study by describing the context in which it was undertaken. In this part Tanzania and the two districts where the field study was undertaken will be described and how the children in the

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<sup>1</sup> The term OCHH is used in two different ways; first it is used to mean the child who is orphaned and heads a household: Orphaned children heading households, secondly it means the household in which the head is an orphaned child: Orphaned children headed households.

study are situated. The second part provides, in brief, the theoretical framework in the methodology used, while the third part covers the experience of researching with children and specifically the OCHH. In this part we discuss the design of the study and how it was negotiated and carried out in practice.

## 2.0 THE CONTEXT

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Tanzania is one of the Sub-Saharan countries that have been affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This pandemic has not only posed a threat to the economic and social development of the country but it has also worsened the vulnerability of children due to the increase in number of orphaned children. About 2.5 million children have been orphaned by AIDS (De Waal (et.al.) 2004:2) thus leading to a major burden in caring for these children. One of the manifestations of this situation is orphaned children between the age of nine and eighteen years taking care of their households and their siblings. This trend has been further complicated by the profound shift in the socio-economic patterns of the country, brought in by the liberalisation and privatisation of the economy beginning in the same period in the 80's (Rusimbi and Mbilinyi, 2005:287). The majority of Tanzanians, especially in the low and middle-income groups, found themselves out of the labour market and so unable to access quality social services.

The implications of the above realities have led to the inability of extended families to care for orphaned children. This situation then produces the setting in which the orphaned children heading households in Tanzania find themselves. The study on the OCHH was conducted in two districts: Makete and Karagwe. Geographically Makete is located in Iringa region, which is in the south of Tanzania. Karagwe district, on the other hand, is in Kagera region which is located in the north western part of the country. Both districts have a large number of orphans as they both have been highly affected by HIV/AIDS. (REPOA, 2007:12) It has been found that almost one quarter of all children in Makete are orphans. (REPOA, 2007:13). The proportion of orphans is estimated to be 13,158 in absolute numbers in a population of 105,775 people <sup>2</sup>(UNICEF, 2006:29).

Various studies show that the number of orphans in Karagwe varies from 30,000 to 63,000<sup>3</sup> in a population of 425,476 people (NBS, 2003). There are 561 Child Headed Households in Makete (NBS and UNICEF, 2008) but the number of this category is not documented in Karagwe, although the District Social Welfare Officer and the District Community Development Officer are aware of Child Headed Households as a category of most vulnerable children in the district<sup>4</sup>.

In most of the Tanzanian communities orphaned children are cared for by relatives and where there are no relatives, the care may be taken by anybody in the community who is willing, or by faith-based and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Where there are government

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<sup>2</sup> This is according to the 2002 Tanzania population and housing Census volume II

<sup>3</sup> The Tanzania Government Website

<sup>4</sup> This is information received from interviews with Karagwe District Social Welfare Officer and the Karagwe District Community Development Officer, (interviewed by Author 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 respectively)

institutions very young orphans can also be taken in. Circumstances have however changed due to various factors such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. The situation is no different in Makete and Karagwe districts where there has been hasty spread of HIV/AIDS since it was first reported in the 1980s. In the two districts the major leading causes of death are HIV/AIDS and related opportunistic infections (UNICEF, 2006:42). This epidemic accounts for the impoverishment of families and has generated orphans in large numbers in the two districts. These districts were picked for the study so as to compare the interventions in place, given the fact that Karagwe has a longer history of this problem than Makete. The lessons to be found out can be shared in addressing the issues from the experiences of the OCHH.

### 3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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*The CRC (1989) positions a child as an active subject of rights entitled to full respect and dignity (Hammad, 2004:3). Further, the CRC has set some standards regarding the rights of children to express themselves. This standard can be said to be a guide to researchers since Article 12<sup>5</sup> and 13<sup>6</sup> makes it mandatory to get children's views relative to their lives (Ennew, 2000:178). The CRC's concern is for the child to be able to assert her/his viewpoint without interference on all matters poignant to her/him. It provides for the child's freedom to expression to include the way a child can seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Although article 12 does not directly provide for the way the child can express her/him self the committee on the rights of the child in its General Comment 12 has made important elaborations related to the way the right of the child to self expression can be implemented. The General comment 12 provides guidance to State Parties to the CRC which in the case of research the researcher who is in need of getting information from the child can also follow. How can this information be given by a child in self expression and not the researcher's perceptions?*

*The current trend in researching or gaining information about children is for adults to think and express thoughts on behalf of children. In some cases children are invited into adults' meetings or spaces and the children's presence is taken to be the children's participation or expression. In some other scenarios an adult will enter a child's space and assume to understand the children's expression without letting the children express themselves. The right to children's self expression as provided by the CRC is vital in changing the trend in which rights continue to be ethically grounded in the experiences and perspectives of adults (Wall, 2008:523). What needs to change as propounded in this paper is the way information is solicited from children by adults and in this case adult researchers.*

Ethically children have been viewed differently at different times in history. Today the international human rights agreements and specifically the CRC, provide the opportunity through its language for another way of conceptualising children's rights. A new possibility is through the participation rights for the children which provide for the child's voice to be heard through self expression. When a child is given such an opportunity the children's point of view on matters related to their lives can be captured and at the same time the children will enjoy the right to self expression.

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<sup>5</sup> Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) provides for the rights of a child to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child and that the views of the child to be given due weight.

<sup>6</sup> Article 13 of the CRC (1989) provides for the right of a child to have freedom of expression, which shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.



This is therefore the reason for undertaking children's research from the point of view of children and children as human beings. Children have something to offer irrespective of their age. Adults, and in this context, researchers have to observe and listen to children and take their views seriously. Ethical discussions have been useful in deciding the methodology used for the study with OCHH in Tanzania taking into consideration the developments in the area of children as human beings.

Methodological debates in this regard relate to giving children space by building on children's knowledge (Hinton, 2008:296) while changing the adult centred understanding of the issues (Wall, 2008:541). It is beneficial to look at children from the perspective of children (Armstrong, 1995:3) which challenges studies of children's rights that rely only on the views of adults (Armstrong, 1995:33). I have therefore taken this view in relation to the wider argument that the child should be central and the child's social relationship and culture be acknowledged as deserving of study in their own right (James and Prout, 1997:4). The idea is to take serious consideration of children when researching especially because most research strategies are based on adult views and do not have children in mind when they are being designed. This can prove difficult especially as adult researcher thinks as adults, and therefore particular care must be taken to plan from the child's point of view in allowing the child to remain a child and the adult researcher to remain an adult while in the child's space.

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## **4.0 THE RESEARCH PROCESS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE**

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A grounded theory approach to research was adopted as it was found to be suitable in the ethnographic investigation of the OCHH's perception of their situation and how they make sense of what is happening on them and their environment (Mitchel & McCusker, 2008). The research involved children and adults but this paper gives a detail of the experience with the children (the OCHH). 63 children participated in the research, 30 female and 33 male, 28 were from Makete district and 33 from Karagwe district. Both districts are rural based which was specifically planned so as to get the voices of the children from that settings, as many studies are usually carried out in towns. Out of the group 8 were OCHH. There were other categories of children whose involvement helped to understand further what it means to be an orphan and the whole concept of Child Headed Households. The research was informed by children living in OCHH, former OCHH, orphaned children who have guardians and children with parents but heading households. Central to the study are the OCHH but the other categories bring in very rich analysis regarding the situation of the OCHH.

The planned methods used included semi-structured interviews, and a blend of other methods which were found necessary for prompting the children to participate by expressing themselves. Such methods included photo graphing, drawing pictures, preparing a diary, focus group discussion, role playing and songs which considered children of different age categories. Participatory observation was used by performing some chores and activities with the OCHH. Some observation techniques included staying for a day in the household and performing duties which included weeding, fetching firewood, picking fruit, going to the market and cooking. Most of these methods have been used by researchers in child centred research in other countries as well as with Tanzanian children (Mhoja, 2006: Drawing, Evans & Becker, (2009) diary, Aldridge, (2008), Evans & Becker (2009) photographic participation, Chizororo, (2007) Focus group discussion). This study has used the various methods in a mixed way.

### **4.1 Consent: basis and manoeuvre**

Consent and confidentiality are vital but quite complex when researching children and even more so when dealing with children with no adult guardianship. There are some developments in the debate concerning children's consent that has been clarified by article 12 of the CRC, which implies obligation on the part of a researcher to seek the views of children related to their lives and not adult's views only (Ennew, 2000: 178). The Committee of the CRC in its general comment 12 paragraph 12 has also emphasised 'the right of a child to express her/his view without pressure, manipulation or subjection to undue influence'.

The children in this study are orphans between the ages of 9 and 18 years. The orphaned children who head households do not have direct adult guardians, so the question of getting an adult to consent was tricky. Ethical consent included the village leadership, teachers and

those adults who associated with the children. The use of the adults who were not the direct legal guardians was taken as an alternative to guardians or parents as there was no other way to protect the child. In Makete for example, some children were in the care of assigned ‘mothers’ known as *Mama Mkubwa (MM)*<sup>7</sup> The MM was the first to be encountered as she is an adult who at least is close to the child. The MM were not in all cases the first people to be asked for consent to research on OCHH since there was not always an assigned MM for each child. In Karagwe where there is no such arrangement of MM, the village authorities at the hamlet level, some members of the Most Vulnerable Committee (MVCC), church leaders or NGO leaders were in a position to provide advice and in most cases took the role, although again not all children were associated with such people. For children met in schools, the teachers gave the initial consent after they were informed about the research and its objectives. This did not work all the time, especially where the OCHH is not known to the authorities or the authorities do not know of the child. Most adults consulted did not see the reason for the consent process. They had the idea that a child has to follow what an adult tells him/her. This view notwithstanding the children’s own consent was sought.

When seeking child consent it was vital to ensure that each child participant understood the purpose of the research and the need to consent. This was repeated several times by asking questions to assess understanding and why they wanted to participate. After such assurance that they have understood, the official process of getting their consent proceeded. An introductory letter was presented to each child. The letter explained the objective of the research, the need to be a participant and the rights of a participant to decide to continue or not after the start of the research. The children who could read were given the introductory letter before our first meeting. Those who agreed met the researcher later and discussed the letter. Following the discussion the children were asked if they would sign a consent form. Most of them signed a separate consent form to participate and also to have their voices recorded. This process was useful as it helped to identify children who were unable to read or write. For those who did not know how to read or were not able to understand the introductory letter properly, the letter was read out for them and they were asked some questions to see if they understood it. After this process a verbal consent was sought and recorded.

All children who participated in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) had given consent before participating. However, before the FGD began It was necessary to make sure each child was ready to proceed. For “fun” the children were asked to propose a way in which It would be made sure that everyone was ready to proceed. The children were innovative and one group decided that they would stand up and hold hands and they would say three times that they were ready to proceed with the research. If there was one person who was not sure then s/he would not hold hands. And if there is one who felt he/she was not ready to proceed s/he

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<sup>7</sup> Mama Mkubwa MM is an initiative for care and support of orphaned children and other needy children in Makete District introduced in 1999. The initiative came as a way to respond to the psychosocial needs of orphaned children who were increasing in great numbers in with no adult support.

would step aside or run out. So this of course might not have meant that all the children had consented in this way as peer pressure could have played a role. Reliance was mainly on the individual process and the fact that they volunteered to come to the venue on that day. The “group consent” was taken to be another way in which children made a choice of how to consent.

Cultural factors also play a part. In the Tanzanian context there was a need to be very cautious because it could be taken as impolite for a child to refuse to take part after being approached by an adult, such as a village elder, MM or the researcher. It was explained to the children that if they had any reason not to participate they should feel free to opt out and it will not be taken to be rude. The major issue in this area was to be convinced that the children understood the objectives of the research and the implications of participating. The consent process is the first stage for a child’s self expression prior to having the child participate in the research.

## **4.2 Reaching the confines of a child**

The CRC has provided for the expression of a child in their own voice which means there has to be ways in which such voice is being listened. Since the voice and expression of a child is very important when looking for ways to change situations affecting children, it is vital for researchers to find ways and means for children to express themselves. The research presented developed several ways to reach the children and get their voices, feelings and perspectives while guarding ethical related issues. The main method employed was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used following some research, which demonstrated that unstructured and semi-structured interviews seem to be the most data dense (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:27). It was not very easy to get the children to express themselves through the interviews, so various methods before and after the interviews had to be devised. Free expressions from the OCHH were mostly from the activities before or after the interviews. I had to visit all the OCHH more than once before I could interview them. This was necessary in order to minimise interview distress (Robson, 2001:138) given the emotional nature of the topic and to build rapport; it became a very successful way of getting the children to express their views freely and to say what they wanted to say. When meeting a child for the first time it was very difficult to begin an interview related to his/her life as OCHH. The difficulty was not on the part of the child only. The difficulty was observed during a pilot with an OCHH in Dar-es-salaam. There are questions which could not be asked easily before familiarising with the child. Even after being familiar there were questions which were still difficult to ask some of the children.

Pre-interview visits<sup>8</sup> were used to organise sites where we could have the interviews and to plan the appropriate time for such interviews; this is also a good way to establish rapport (Robison, 2001:138). The post-interview visits were used to follow-up previous interviews or to undertake observations while working with the children. The children were given the opportunity to decide time, place and activity to share while in observation. I found out when I visited for the first time some neighbours would come to see “the visitor” or some other children would also come inquisitively. The pre-interview visits helped to keep neighbours or the children from coming on the day set for the interview session, as they had already seen me and had made the courtesy greeting to a visitor. It was the preference of a child which was taken into account when it came to where the interview was to take place within the household. For example in one household in Karagwe one child participant wanted the interview to take place in the house while the other wanted it outside. Since each was being interviewed separately both wishes were accommodated. The environment for the interview is vital to ensure the participant is comfortable to discuss. Allowing the children to choose or decide where to sit and when to have the session helped them to be more confident and open.

Since the participants were children the interviews were made short in two to three rounds over a period of time. The duration of each interview was one hour or less. This might seem to be time consuming and may be a disturbance to the child but it was very useful since it raised confidence and rapport. It also reduced tension as we normally stopped when the child seemed to be emotional or showing signs of unease. Every time the interview was begun a child would be more open and relaxed as he/she had become used to the sessions. Flexibility in session time and length helped to make the children comfortable to undergo the next round of interview.

Most of the interviews were recorded, with the exception of a few where the children were too soft-spoken or looked worried when the tape recorder was being used. To make the children more relaxed when using the tape recorder, I made sure they agreed to be taped and we tested the recorder together by listening to a recording of their voice. During the tape recorder testing some children looked happy to hear their own voice. The same exercise showed how other children were not that comfortable and looked suspicious, even after they have heard their voices on the tape recorder. When the latter happened, I stopped recording and informed the participant that we would not use the tape recorder and I put the device away. After that some of the children opened up and began to talk. The pre and post interview visits did not only set the stage but it produced much data from the children relative to how they perceive their situation and how they fit into the governance structures in their situation.

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<sup>8</sup> Pre-interview visit is the visit made to the participant prior to the interview and it can be once or several times before the actual interview takes place and post-interview visits is when the participant is visited after the interview which is another way of extending the researcher –participant relationship.

The main challenge in interviewing children was to begin the session. Some children had very short answers which did not provide the full information needed from them. Even where they were asked to just narrate their life stories some did not have much to say. I tried to use more specific and accurate questions but this did not work. There was a need for change of methods if more expression was to come from a child. I did not take this as a negative aspect of the interview but I noted that children and especially the younger ones needed some activity-oriented methods (Evans & Becker, 2009:73). Some children broke into tears in between sessions. At this point I let the child cry and I took the tears as a form of ‘voice’ (Robson, 2001:137) but a very difficult way to listen to a child’s expression. Some children offered explanations for their tears:

‘Do not misunderstand me; I am not crying because of this discussion this has been my habit since Zawadi<sup>9</sup> was taken away to an orphanage. It is painful that he never came home during holidays, the people who took him think they are helping him but it is not good he will forget all of us.’ (Kahoo, female)

The voice I was receiving from the OCHH’s tears indicates that the separation from siblings was painful. Although the use of semi-structured interviews is said to be a good way to get dense data (Corbin and Strauss, (2008) it is challenging when researching with children and there is a need to work between silence or tears. This can be difficult. The use of different methods is vital.

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<sup>9</sup> Zawadi” is a pseudonym for Kahoo’s young brother who was taken by a Priest to an orphanage in another town and has not been coming for holidays for six years and he was brought for one day only. Kahoo is also a Pseudonym of one of the OCHH.

## 5.0 KINDLING CHILDREN'S EXPRESSION

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Focus group discussion is a form of group interview which is social and combines different perspectives. This method was used with groups of orphaned children in the two districts following the semi-structured interviews as a way of triangulating data, but also as a way of getting more information on the situation and perspectives of the OCHH. FGD in Makete was carried out in a classroom but in Karagwe one FGD was carried out in a hall at the hostel I was staying in and another in a garden of orphaned children who are organised in a group. The FGD gave the children a chance to meet and for me to record further comments through their interaction. Some were meeting for the first time, others knew each other or they were in the same school. The familiarisation session before the commencement of a FGD made the children active and they began to talk and tease each other. It was during the FGD session that some of the very quiet OCHH showed their feelings and expressed sentiments which had not been mentioned during more structured interviews. Kili for example exclaimed when one member of the FGD said Kili was one of the lucky children in the village as he has been assisted, "that was not an assistance; it was only torture on my part."<sup>10</sup>(FGD, Ndulamo; 2009)

I had to give the children enough time to discuss this issue and Kili made elaborate claims why he called the assistance torture. This expression was not brought out during the one to one interview so the FGD provided space for a full discussion and flow of debate. There were several other expressions made by other children during the FGD sessions. Kechee for example did not tell me the reason for refusing to stay with his relatives after the death of his parents, but he talked about it when the group was giving reasons why children head households. This was not the only case; other OCHH mentioned some horrible things which they experience, but which they could not raise individually as they were afraid it could go back to their relatives and bring more trouble. They claimed that when they discuss in a group it will not be known who exactly has said what, but the issue can then be handled by the village authorities or the NGOS. One such issue is the trend of relatives taking material given to them such as mattresses, blankets, exercise books or even uniforms.

In the FGD other exercises used were *role plays* and *songs* which helped the children express their feelings and talked of issues they had not mentioned during the interviews. The children used songs to narrate the story of HIV/AIDS and how it has affected them and made them "*children in adult robes*". During the interviews the OCHH interviewed neither related their situation with HIV/AIDS nor did they mention the cause of parent's death. Most of the children said they did not know the cause of death while others said it was witch craft and a few mentioned specific illnesses such as headache or fever. The role play and songs made it

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<sup>10</sup> Kili had been heading a household with three siblings for three years after the death of his parents who died the same year 2005. In 2008 the children were taken away to be supported with education and care. He did not know where they were taken to; he was not consulted before they were taken. Everyone in the village is happy because Kili has been assisted with the burden of caring three children but for him it was not so.



easy for the children to pronounce issues which were not mentioned during the semi-structured interviews.

One of the challenges in the FGD was group dynamics where it was necessary to try to balance the discussion as some participants were outspoken while others needed to be pushed to talk. There also were times when the entire group would seem to run out of steam, especially when the discussion was touching sensitive issues. At these times “wake up” techniques were used such as playing. In one of the FGD the children became very quiet when they were discussing their roles and how it affects their day as children. At this point I asked them to think of a play which could cheer us up. They all stood up and one made a proposal of a play in which we all participated. After this everyone was so happy and the discussion flowed. Although it has been argued that FGD cannot be relied upon to ascertain an individual’s genuine point of view, the experience with the children indicated that FGD can provoke inner feelings and hence promote self expression.

It is not easy to begin a discussion regarding sensitive matters such as death of parents and living with no guardians. The main method devised to make it easy to begin a discussion was through use of photo taking or drawing of pictures. A child would be asked to take a photo of anything he/she wanted. After taking the photo we discussed what is in the photo/why that photo, etc. Many issues came out of the photo taking and drawing exercises. Explaining about the photo was so natural the children kept talking about it in a very relaxed manner. For example, I learnt an orphaned child was being discriminated against, due to the fact that her father was not originating from that area, when she took a photo of her mother’s grave. I also learned about a mother who had “abandoned” her children after the death of her husband only when the child took a photo of her father’s grave. Many children took photos of the things they are proud of, such as a radio bought from money one has worked for, a garden well kept, a banana farm, pets and livestock owned by the children. The discussion of the photos revealed the children’s initiative and creativity on how they are negotiating their lives as OCHH. Kimako for example looked with pride at a photo he had taken of a banana farm he had created from scratch which is now feeding the household. He also admired his old house, which he said although it was small and made of mud, it was the work of his hands and it gave them refuge before they were found and got a new house. Although in the interviews Kimako mentioned the planting of the banana and the building of the hut, he did not express it in the same manner of pride as when he was explaining about it from the photo he had taken. Younger children drew pictures and explained what they meant in their pictures. The drawing of pictures brought about expression which might not have been easy in the interviews. The use of these participative activities initiated by the children with visual participating reached the children’s confines and brought out issues which were otherwise hidden.



All the different methods had some success in getting the children to discuss their views. However the over-arching method of success was the 'work walk' method, the moments with the children in the participatory observation. It was when we were collecting firewood that a child would narrate an ordeal of abuse which had never been mentioned before. It would be when we were on our way to the market that a child will give information of how he had changed his living place after the death of parents and the decision to live in as a child head of a household. When cooking, a child would come up with information related to the difficulties in getting food and how they nearly starved while surrounded by people. The participant's observation in this case included different activities depending on the different setting and agreement with the OCHH. In some households we weeded in the household's vegetable/banana garden, while in other households we fetched firewood or pounded wheat, while in others we made tea or cooked food. Some children wanted an English lesson and they invited friends around. In the sessions I observed the way the children value education and how they relate to other children of their own age and neighbourhood. It was also during the observation that I could see how the children perceived the different structures in the village such as the village council; the Hamlet head or the MM. Participatory observation gave the children control and provided information as they expressed themselves.

## **6.0 CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS**

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Although the use of different methods provides the space to ensure OCHH express their views on matters affecting them, how they understand and perceive their situation and the environment that surrounds them, it was not an easy undertaking. To help a child to express her/himself not only needs time, patience and a variety of techniques but there is another challenge of overcoming adult misunderstanding and suspicions. First, the consent process showed how many adults are still considering children as incapable of making decisions in matters of concern to them. Many adults questioned the idea of getting a child's consent or even for them to consent on the behalf of the child. It was vital to try and explain why the consent process is ethically important.

While the pre-visits and post-visits were very useful they frequently raised tensions with the village leadership, who were often surprised that I was visiting the children so many times. One of the village leaders made a comment that he was not used to researchers taking such a long time in the field, researchers normally go for just one day to collect data (statistics). I had to explain again the methodology I was using. Not only were the leaders and MM suspicious but some villagers and even relatives appeared curious and at times followed me to the interview site. For example, when I was with Kashighwa in his banana garden his elder brother, who had not visited him for a long time, came and sat beside him. Kashighwa stopped talking immediately and introduced his brother who asked me some questions. Kashighwa had to tell him to leave. Another scenario of adult invention was when a group of orphaned children invited me to have a FGD in their vegetable garden. Immediately after I arrived, adult members of the village came to the site in large numbers without being invited. We tried to continue the discussions but the children became guarded about what they said. For example, one child was explaining the challenges they have as a group of orphaned children. He began to say there is lack of adult support, but immediately he looked in the direction of the adults gathered around he changed his statement and said "not that they do not support us but their support is limited." This might have been the truth but later, when the adults had left, the children gave a detailed account about the lack of adults support.

The various methods used raised ethical issues which needed care. OCHH have double roles as children who were taking care of their households while attending school. I was invading the scarce time they needed to balance their school and home activities, especially by using different methods which needed different times and dates. This was the cost on part of the OCHH and I had to evaluate whether it was worth doing and what the children would gain from the research. I adopted the suggestions advocated by Robson, in her study with young carers of the South to justify any discomfort caused in the process of research in order to enable the OCHH to exercise their right to self-expression (2001). I needed to ensure their voices were used to benefit them and other marginalised children and to further challenge the notion that OCHH are just vulnerable victims of their circumstances with no creativity or initiative on their part.

### **What are the children saying?**

In relation to the protection of children the children have some observations which might be helpful when looking at their social protection. There are different institutions and structures which are in place and which are supposed to protect children or to see that children are protected. The institutions are at different levels from the village to the international level. There is a need for the institutions to begin with the children by seeking their views. The family in Makete seems to have taken children's views by accepting to let children live in their late parents houses. What the children are saying in this regard is the need for follow up and providing material needs, psycho-social needs and love. '*Haitoshi kutuacha wenyewe, waje kutuona mara mara na kutusaidia sabuni,,*' (It is not enough to leave us in this way they should come and visit us regularly and provide soap...) The children feel the need to be visited regularly and to receive support from the family and other members of the community.

The MVCC is not known to most of the children although it works to support the children. '*Kuna Yule baba anakuja hapa kuniita pakiwa na watu wanaotaka kutusaidia, mimi sijui kazi yake*' (There is this man who comes and call me when there are some people who want to help us, I do not know his occupation)The children have to know the MVCC so as to be able to approach its members when they have to.

*Hii tabia yakuchukua watoto yatima kuwapeleka halafu hawarudi nyumbani kusalimia ni mbaya sana.* (It is a very bad habit to take orphaned children without letting them come home to visit).Most of the OCHH whose siblings were taken away were very bitter about the whole exercise. The children were of the view that if they were asked, they would have preferred to obtain support from their own homes and villages and not to separate some of them to go to an institution away from the other children. Some were bitter for being separated by being taken by different relatives.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

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The more recent developments on how children are perceived in society and the opening availed by the CRC provides an opportunity for the expression of children in research. The CRC Committee has put forward some elaborations in its General Comment 12 which can be of use by researchers when seeking the child's expression however it remains the role of a researcher to use diverse methods in child centred methodology letting the child stay in her/his space while the adult enters such a space as an adult but is open to hear the child as a child.

Children's voices and specifically the voice of OCHH are vital to gain an understanding of their situation and the way they perceive it. One way of availing children of the right to self expression is through research. Children need to be given space to exercise this right. The new possibilities brought about by the CRC in child research although attainable, has its challenges. The use of different types of methods has its own personal costs on the part of both the OCHH and the Researcher. Many methods require time which is often a scarce commodity. There has to be justification for incurring these costs which should focus on the current and future benefit for the children who take part in the research as well as other children in the same situation. Seeking children's own views is a novel undertaking which has to be taken cautiously by researchers balancing the ethical and the practical issues arising in the cause of the research. Using a wide variety of methods can be one way in soliciting the children's own expression, but the methods have to be properly administered to minimise any harm or distress on the part of the children as noted by the CRC committee that 'the hearing of child is a difficult process'(CRC/GC 12:24). The benefits can be assessed by listening to the children's own innovations and creativity, which must change the way children are understood or perceived in society. The possibility of entering the child's space as an adult and to work with the children from their point of view is one way in which the voice of children can be captured by an adult researcher.

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