Challenges and Coping
Strategies of Orphaned Children in Tanzania

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Abstract

Most orphaned children in poor, rural communities sometimes either have no adult who is able to care for them or the adult caregiver is not able to provide adequate care. The aim of this article is to explore the challenges and coping strategies within two possible trajectories for such orphans: either remaining in the rural areas in child-headed households, or migrating to urban areas. Antonovsky's Salutogenic Model is used as the theoretical framework. The model examines how people use available resources to cope with stressors and improve their wellbeing. Data were collected from two groups of participants: first, three children heading households in Makete who were involved in three participatory activities and one in-depth interview; and secondly, nine girls who had migrated from rural areas to Dar es Salaam who gave their extended life history narrations. Loss of parents, lack of cash and balancing school attendance with food production and harvesting, were chronic stressors for the children heading households while resources included creative strategies for income generating, and the ability to negotiate with teachers, for example, to arrange time off school for food production activities. For girls who had migrated to urban areas chronic stressors included exploitation and trafficking, long working hours with little or no pay, isolation, sexual harassment and rape. Limited resources included faith-based networks and neighbours, but escape from the exploitative situation frequently involved external help. All the children demonstrated at least one dimension of the Sense of Coherence (SOC), namely meaningfulness. The dimensions of comprehensibility and manageability were lacking in all the children who migrated.

1.0 Introduction

The extended family has long been referred to as the 'ideal' care and living arrangement for orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa. Whilst the extended family continues to play a key role in the care and support of orphaned children, many such households struggle to make ends meet, resulting in children being vulnerable to adult exploitation and without adult support and supervision.

Strategies for the support of orphaned children continue to focus on the role of the family and community in safeguarding the basic needs of vulnerable children. The framework for the protection, care and support of OVC living in a world with HIV and AIDS has been hugely important in setting this agenda. The framework was the

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outcome of the first Global Partners' Forum convened by UNICEF in 2003, in which five key strategies were outlined (UNICEF, UNAIDS, & USAID, 2004:5). These strategies, which have also been adopted by the more recent Joint Learning Initiative on Children and HIV/AIDS (JLICA), focus entirely on the family and community with little attention paid to the children who fall outside this network. Publications continue to stress that programmes should be aimed at providing support for children under the care of an adult, whilst alternative living arrangements such as children living on their own or in institutional care are rarely considered.

Against this background, and in our interest to frame support for children who are not adequately cared for by their extended family, we draw on the Salutogenic Model, to examine the struggles and coping strategies of children who fall outside the 'ideal' support network of the family and community and instead follow one of two alternative trajectories: i) orphaned children remaining in the rural area in a child-headed households, or ii) orphaned children being trafficked to urban areas to serve adults.

2.0 Struggles and Coping Strategies

2.1 Orphaned children living in child-headed households

Child-headed households (CHHs) may be defined as households headed by persons who are under 18 years of age (Hosegood *et al.*, 2007:331). Luzze and Ssedyabule (2004) add to this definition, that such households should be recognised by the community as being independent. Luzze & Ssedyabule in a qualitative study of 969 CHHs in one district in Uganda found that orphaned children living in CHHs are poorer than orphaned children with other living arrangements, as well as having lower school attendance and poorer access to social services. Many aid agencies no longer rank those who care for their siblings as 'children' once they turn 18, even though no other circumstances have changed (Daniel, 2008). Evans (2010) notes that rigorous application of age definitions does little to support young caregivers in need; she uses the more inclusive term "sibling-headed households" and describes how they often play down their 'adult' roles when negotiating assistance from NGOs or government agencies.

2.2 Orphaned children trafficked to stay with adults in urban areas

In many parts of Africa it is customary for children to stay for some time with adults other than their biological parents (usually members of the extended family); for example, a child from a rural area might move to live with a relative in an urban area to access some level of schooling unavailable in the rural area. Such 'voluntary' fostering is seen as mutually beneficial as the child gets an education, while the foster caregiver might receive agricultural products from the rural area and get help with household chores from the child (Madhavan, 2004). AIDS has introduced 'crisis' fostering where adult relatives feel obliged to take on children whose parents have died. Such fostering lacks the element of reciprocity and is instead "a normative social obligation" (Goody, 1982, cited in Madhavan, 2004:1444). The tradition of child fostering has been linked with child trafficking. According to Koda (2000), under the pretext of taking care of orphans and children from poor families, children are recruited by relatives or non-related adults, particularly from rural areas, for domestic work in the homes of wealthier families. Koda (2000:251) describes a typical domestic

servant in urban centres as "a young girl of between nine and eighteen years of age who may have been brought to her employer by a relative, a friend, a village-mate, or a child who has migrated to the urban area on her own".

Evans (2005) contends that the tradition of child fostering by members of the extended family may expose orphaned children to exploitation (e.g., as domestic servants) and abuse. Other authors (Blagborough, 2008; Ochanda *et al.*, 2011) confirm that child fostering is a factor in child trafficking. Child fostering turns to trafficking or slavery when the child is deprived of his/her basic rights such as education, health services and basic needs; made completely dependent on the caregiver; and denied the right to choose.

According to UN (2000:2) Article 3 (a) trafficking in persons is defined as:

> *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

The UN Protocol (2000:3) Subsection (c) based on the definition of a child as: "any person under eighteen years of age",[2] stipulates that "...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in person" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) above.

Following the UN Protocol above, in 2008 the Government of Tanzania enacted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. Child trafficking is a very particular form of child labour migration that involves exploitation of the migrant child. According to the UN Protocol (2000), only those cases of migration in which the child (at any point during the migration process) is being recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, can be called trafficking. According to Dottridge (2004), in child trafficking victims are transported and put to the others' use, usually to make money. In short, trafficking is distinguished from migration by the existence of exploitative intention and acts at any point.

Exploitation of trafficked persons may include physical and mental abuse or confinement, inadequate or non-existent healthcare, poor accommodation and hazardous work, as well as forcing a child or misleading him/her with false promises in the recruitment or transportation processes (ILO-IPEC, 2002). Exploitation also includes child domestic servitude. Anti-Slavery International (1997) cited in Lange (2006:11) defines child servitude as "the complete dependency of a child upon his or her employer for his or her wellbeing and basic necessities and withholding of wages or deferred payment for more than, or a matter of a few weeks.

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[2] Article 3.(d) of the UN Protocol

3.0 Salutogenesis

The Theory of Salutogenesis, used here to analyse the coping strategies of orphaned children, focuses on the origins of health rather than the origins of disease as it is the case in pathogenesis. Antonovsky (1996) proposes that all human beings are somewhere along a continuum that ranges between the extremes of health and disease, and that Salutogenesis is occupied with what causes people to move towards the health end of the continuum. The Salutogenic Model contains two key concepts: generalised resistance resources (GRRs), and sense of coherence (SOC) (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010:18-19). GRRs are resources which help people to cope successfully when faced with stressors which may be chronic or acute (Antonovsky, 1996). GRRs can be internal or external, material or non-material, for example, money, self-esteem, social relations or beliefs (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010:20). Antonovsky (1996) describes SOC as "a generalised orientation towards the world which perceives it [...] as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful;" hence, a strong SOC will promote movement towards health and enable a person to cope with stressors. "[A] strong SOC protects against anxiety ... and hopelessness, is strongly associated and positively related to health resources such as optimism, hardiness, control and coping" (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010:32). Figure 1 presents the Salutogenic Model, as constructed by Mittelmark (2010).
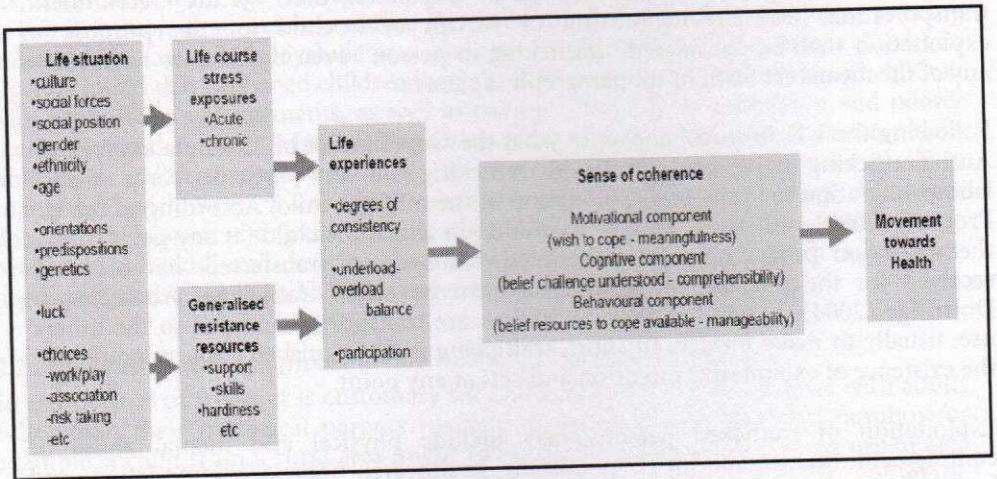

Figure 1: *The Salutogenic Model*
Source: Mittelmark (2010)

Figure 1 shows Mittelmark's (2010) construction of the Salutogenic Model as described by Antonovsky (1996:15). Life situation comprises culture, social position and many other factors that may generate both stressors and GRRs. These, in turn, shape three kinds of life experiences – consistency, underload-overload balance, and participation in socially valued decision-making – which will all determine the

strength of SOC (Antonovsky, 1996:15). Life experiences reflect the ability to use resources available to deal with stressors in such a way that options for better health improve (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010).

4.0 Tanzanian context

4.1 Demography of orphaned children

Tanzania, despite decades of development assistance, remains one of the poorest countries in the world (ranked 148 out of 169 in the UNDP's Human Development Index [UNDP, 2010:145]). The Government of Tanzania, based on population estimates, reported that in 2007 there were around 12.9 million people (33.68% of the population) living in poverty in Tanzania (URT, 2009:11). However, other authors suggest that the figure is as high as 50% (Ndulu & Mutalemwa, 2002:3). The poverty levels vary from one region to another, and between rural and urban areas. According to the IMF (2006:4), 87% of the poor in Tanzania live in rural areas, and the absolute number of poor people is likely to increase due to population growth.

HIV prevalence among adults (15 to 49 years) in Tanzania is on a downward trend - 5.6% in 2009 compared with 7.1% in 2001 (UNAIDS, 2010:181). There are some locations, including Makete, where prevalence rates remain high resulting in concurrent high levels of orphaning. Most orphaned children are absorbed by the extended family with grandparents, aunts and uncles providing care for 90% of children without parents in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2003a:15). Some orphaned children however are left with no adult to take care of them, and in some cases the adult who is responsible for them is unable to provide adequate care due to poverty or lack of resources. Leach (2008) notes that in Tanzania the main constraint on adequate foster care is poverty, and Mabala (2008) comments that families may see girls as an economic burden and, as a family survival strategy, seek to marry them off early. In such cases, children may live without an adult in a household headed by a child, or they may accept invitations from relatives, neighbours or friends to migrate to urban areas.

Socio-cultural factors can contribute to the vulnerability of children. The socialisation of children, especially girls, to be submissive and obedient leads to children accepting abuse without questioning or seeking help from adults. Rwezaura (2000:327), writing on "the worsening status of the child in contemporary Tanzania", notes that leading causes include gender discrimination (especially in patrilineal communities) and the fostering of children by urban relatives. Girls usually take on roles of care and domestic labour while boys frequently receive more education than girls.

The Tanzanian Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and incorporated the two conventions into the Child Development Policy 1996. In late 2009, it enacted the Law of the Child Act 2009. Furthermore, under the customary and some religious laws, girls, at puberty, are considered mature for undertaking women's social roles of reproduction and household activities. In some communities girls undergo the tradition of initiation in which they are taught how to handle their husbands and carry out domestic chores such as child rearing. After the initiation, girls may be forced to be

married or asked to take full responsibility of household activities at home or elsewhere. According to Mbonile and Lihawa (1996) forced marriages and domestic work directly or indirectly facilitate migration and/or trafficking.

4.2 Study findings on orphaned children

The findings and analysis, on which this article is based, come from two studies. The first (in Makete) study involved child-headed households, while the second study (in Dar es Salaam) involved trafficked girls. While the objective of the first study was to explore the impact on social cohesion of aid targeting children in poor communities, the second one sought to explore experiences of girls who had been trafficked. Conducting research with vulnerable children raises a number of ethical challenges. Personal topics, especially those related to separation, death and abuse might be associated with pain, shame, guilt, stigma and taboos; hence, all precautions were taken to ensure that the dignity of the respondents was preserved. The second study which was conducted in Dar es Salaam documented the life history of each informant collected over several sessions with special sensitivity towards the informant's psychosocial wellbeing. Table 1 shows the details of the participants of the study.

Table 1: Details of participants

	Pseudonym	Age at interview	Age at parent's death	Orphan Status	School level #
Orphans heading households	Lucy	13	9	Double	Standard 7
	Joseph	16	9	Double	Standard 7
	Stella	18	10	Double	Dropped out Std. 4
Trafficked girls	Wema	16	9	Double	Dropped out Std. 3
	Faraja	16	N/A	Double	Standard 7
	Furaha	17	11	Double	Standard 7
	Imani	18	N/A	Paternal	Standard 7
	Subira	16	11	Double	No schooling
	Salama	17	10*	Double	Standard 7
	Nuru	17	10	Maternal	Standard 4
	Semeni	17	5	Paternal	Standard 7
	Upendo	14	Before birth	Paternal	Standard 7

Note: * when parents tested positive; # before migration for trafficked girls

4.3 Stressors

All the children referred to in this study were orphans; all of them had experienced the death of a parent and the grief and adversity that accompany such a loss. In addition, all the children in both studies had experienced chronic poverty and food insecurity that worsened after their parents had died. Often lack of income resulted in poor attendance or dropping out of school completely.

Six of the trafficked girls had reached Standard 7, end of primary school, and did not progress further because their relatives were unable or unwilling to pay for their

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[3]These girls are deemed to have been trafficked because they all had been deceived and exploited by the people who facilitated their migration or those who had 'employed' them.

secondary education. While poverty and food insecurity were among the factors driving them away from the rural areas, the hope that they would be able to continue their education was the strongest factor attracting them to take up offers to migrate.

All three of the children heading households were responsible for another child. Besides managing a household, producing food, earning cash to buy items they could not produce (such as clothing, salt, sugar, oil), and doing their own school work, they were responsible for the wellbeing of a younger child, ensuring needs were met and school attended. Conflict between their numerous roles caused tension that took creative responses to resolve. Apart from some of the other chronic stressors of poverty and food insecurity, there were also other acute stressors connected with income earning strategies such as carrying forestry logs, carrying bricks for builders, making charcoal, and selling fruit bought in from a neighbouring town.

All the trafficked girls had been deceived – they were made to work excessively hard, sometimes up to twenty hours a day. Those who had been promised education did not receive it and several of them were not paid, or were paid only pittance, for the work they did. They also experienced physical abuse such as beatings, and psychological abuse such as insults and false accusations. Psychological abuse was frequently the response when the girls raised the topic of schooling. Many of them were isolated, prevented from making contact with their families, while some were not even allowed to attend church. Six of the girls had been sexually abused, sometimes brutally raped and at the time of the study two had already been infected with HIV.

5.0 Framing the findings within the Salutogenic Model[4]
The Salutogenic Model provides a framework that promotes a better understanding of the coping strategies of children who find themselves without family care. This section uses the framework to examine experiences of the children involved in the study to see how they were able to use the resources available to them to make the best of the difficult circumstances they faced. As the three kinds of life experiences (consistency, underload/ overload balance and participation in socially valued decision-making [Antonovsky, 1996:15]) are considered in relation to the components of Sense of Coherence (comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness), clear differences emerge between the children heading households and the trafficked girls.

5.1 Consistency and comprehensibility
Consistency occurs when life is structured, predictable and explicable (Antonovsky, 1987:19) i.e. certain challenges can be expected and planned for. All three orphans heading households have remained in the dwelling where they had lived with their parents before they died. Two have continued at the same schools, and all three have continued to work in their same *shamba*. Producing enough food to meet their needs, earning cash for things that cannot be produced and caring for their young ones are predictable challenges that must be faced on an on-going basis. The trafficked girls however experienced multiple changes in their lives and lack of consistency. Three of

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[4] Personal narrations and life histories of the respondents could be obtained from the study report

the girls had several different jobs over the course of a few years, while all the girls had to get used to new homes, new ways of doing things in an urban rather than a rural area and all experienced a range of new challenges. Another breach in consistency occurred when they were faced with actions based on values other than those they had been socialised into.

The girls who were sexually abused and raped found it difficult to believe the men of the household could violate them in this way – as one of them said: "*he was a respected man*". Some of the girls told the women who were employing them of the ordeal they were facing, but instead of being supported and protected, they were accused of lying, made to leave the house or faced with silence. Mabala (2008) discusses how hard it is within a patriarchal system which protects men, to punish perpetrators of sexual abuse, particularly when the victim is dependent on the abuser. He explains the silence in response to abuse as families' attempt to hide the shame and protect their good standing.

Consistency links with the cognitive dimension of Sense of Coherence (SOC), comprehensibility, and the ability to understand the challenges faced. Two of the orphaned children had been heading households for about eight years and had a clear grasp of the challenges confronting them. One of the girls was newer to the responsibilities, but clearly understood why she was living without an adult and caring for her young cousin and what such responsibility entailed. Among the trafficked girls though, there was initially a lack of comprehension. They had been promised further education or good jobs, they had high expectations of a life better than the rural situation they left behind, but they were deceived. Not only were promises of education and employment broken, but they were also exploited and treated inhumanely. The situation was incomprehensible to them. Once they realised they had been deceived, they began to question their employers about the promises of education, for example. The response to such inquiries was often physical or psychological abuse.

5.2 Underload/overload balance and manageability

The underload/overload balance refers to having the resources available to meet the challenges and demands (Antonovsky, 1987:19). Once again there is a clear difference between the experiences of the orphans heading households and the trafficked girls. All the orphans heading households had access to physical or social assets: each had a *shamba* and a garden for food production; and two had extended families nearby who would help in times of crisis. The trafficked girls, on the other hand, were effectively deprived of most resources; they were a long way from their extended families and friends as they were not allowed to contact them; and they were kept dependent when their employers withheld their wages. When confronted with abuse and exploitation they had few resources to utilise.

Generalised resistance resources (GRRs) do not only help one combat stress, but may also help one avoid it (Antonovsky, 1979 cited in Lindström & Eriksson 2010:19) and often the only option open to the trafficked girls was to run away. In the limited capacity available to them, they also utilised social support; for example, two of the girls involved members of the church in getting away from their exploitative employers.

The underload/overload balance between stressors and resources links with the behavioural dimension of SOC, manageability (Antonovsky, 1987:19). Unlike the trafficked girls who were raped, one girl was able to manage the sexual harassment she was facing from men in her neighbourhood. She could see that despite the numerous demands on her meagre resources, she was better off in her orphanhood than her friends who were married and unable to manage their own lives.

The trafficked girls had expectations to continue schooling, earn money to pay for their own schooling and generally have a better life than they had previously had in the rural areas. In Dar es Salaam they struggled to deal with the exploitation and abuse they experienced, as they were not able to avoid being physically and psychologically abused. In the end, the only way to stop the exploitation was to leave the job and move away from their employer's home. In most cases they needed help to do this. It is interesting that their advice to other girls in the rural areas was to avoid getting into that situation in the first place, but also to speak out and ask for help; in other words, to draw on social networks, no matter how limited.

5.3 Participation in socially valued decision-making and meaningfulness

All three orphans heading households were able to participate in socially valued decision-making; they were all caring for younger children and had to make decisions for the children's well-being. They also had to make decisions about food production and earning cash. These are adult roles that were recognised and valued by the community around them. Being responsible for a younger child was both stressful and rewarding. But the trafficked girls were kept dependent, often were not allowed to participate in normal family life and were not even permitted to make decisions about their own wellbeing, for example the violation of their person through rape.

Participation links with the motivational dimension of SOC – meaningfulness. Antonovsky (1987:19) and Lindström *et al.* (2010) identify this as the most important dimension of SOC, driving one to seek resources to strengthen the other two dimensions. Caring for a younger child motivated all the orphans heading households to persevere in solving problems and seeking the resources to provide for them.

6.0 Conclusion

From the two groups that were studied, it initially seems that children who remained in rural areas without adult care were better off than children who migrated into urban areas. All three children in the rural area had generalised resistance resources (GRRs) in the sense that they had assets that they used to cope with the stressors they faced. Ownership of a *shamba* enabled them to produce food contributing to their basic needs. Their labour and skills like charcoal making enabled them to earn some cash. They used the resources available to them to cope, although not all children in the rural area have access to a *shamba* and many may even be dispossessed of the parental home (Rwezaura, 2000). Even those who do have a *shamba* do not have food all year round. After harvest the food must be stored and some seeds kept for the next planting season. Moreover, there are several basic necessities that cannot be produced on the *shamba* for example soap and salt.

The trafficked girls had very limited resources while in the exploitative situation, but their desire for education and a better life was a strong enough motivating factor to help them to escape. GRRs also include resources which enable people to avoid stress and in this sense, desire for education was a GRR. This points to an area where policy and practice might assist vulnerable children. Tanzania has adopted Universal Primary Education but "those left out include a disproportionately high number of poorer and vulnerable children" (Mamdani, Rajani, & Leach, 2008:54). Once the trafficked girls were with KIWOHEDE they all received further education and also training in skills that would help them cope in the future.

Besides identifying resources that help children cope and can be supported by government and aid agencies, the Salutogenic Model also identifies stressors that need to be dealt with. Several of the trafficked girls experienced severe sexual abuse. Mabala (2008:47) claims that adolescent girls are not safe anywhere in Dar es Salaam and he says that most of the girls have not been prepared to deal with sexual harassment. Sexual abuse occurs in rural areas too – two of the girls from the first study had been raped by neighbours. A report by UNICEF (2009) indicates that a third of all girl children in Tanzania have been sexually abused by the time they reach 18 years of age. Although Tanzania has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), child protection is an area that still needs strengthening. Another related area that needs to be addressed is the disparity in marriage age which is 15 for girls and 18 for boys, contravening the CRC and contributing to many girls being forced to marry against their will (UNICEF, 2009).

The identification of resources and assets, for example a *shamba*, that help children living without an adult to cope, can provide a way in for aid agencies to provide effective and appropriate support for children who live beyond the UNICEF ideal. Dimensions that provide motivation and meaningfulness to orphaned children, like the importance of education for the trafficked girls, can guide policy makers in supporting vulnerable children. A focus on assets and what is significant to children provides a means of recognising what support would be most effective, particularly for those orphaned children who fall outside the UNICEF ideal.

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