

# 2006-07 Namibia Demographic and Health Survey

## Policy Brief



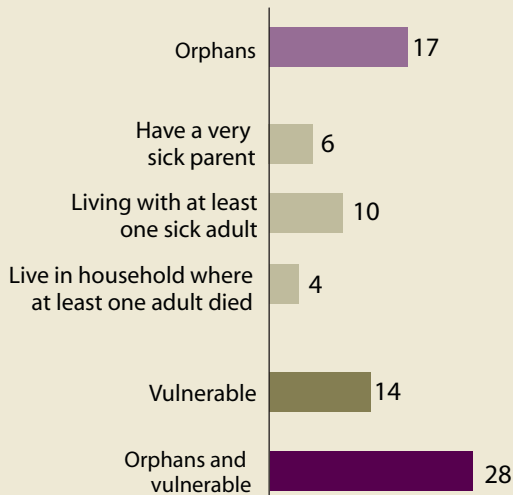
### Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has led to a growing number of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in Namibia. Today, 28 percent Namibian children under age 18 are orphans and/or are considered vulnerable. One in 10 children is living with at least one sick adult. This startling development erodes traditional living arrangements and challenges the survival of many households.

The NDHS defines an orphan as a child below age 18 with either one parent or both parents dead. A vulnerable child is one below age 18 (whether orphaned or not) whose parent is very sick, or who lives in a household where an adult is very sick, or in which a very sick adult died within the 12 months preceding the survey. An adult is considered to be very sick—that is, chronically ill—if he or she is too ill to work or perform normal activities for at least three months.

#### OVC

Percent of children under 18 who are:



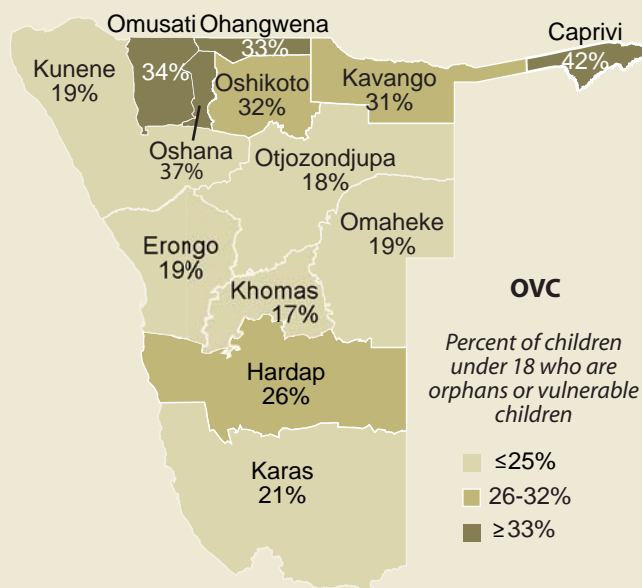
The 2006-07 NDHS finds that:

- Only 26 percent of children under age 18 live with both parents
- 34 percent do not live with either parent
- 33 percent of children live with their mother
- 5 percent live with their father.

With so many Namibian children orphaned or living with chronically ill adults, there is an urgent need to provide community and programmatic support for these children and their families. Orphans and vulnerable children depend on other household members for care, while their households often depend on community assistance to survive.

### Orphans and Vulnerable Children Are a Large Share of the Under-18 Population

The proportion of children who are orphaned or vulnerable increases with the age. Only 17 percent of children age four or younger are classified as OVC, compared to 41 percent of children 15-17 years. There is also a marked regional variation of OVC, ranging from 18 percent of children in Otjozondjupa to 42 percent in Caprivi.

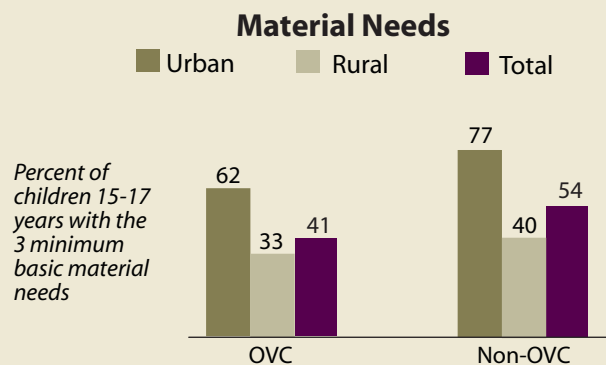




### Basic Material Needs Met Infrequently

Both orphans and children living with chronically ill adults face serious emotional, social, and economic challenges. They often lag behind other children in meeting their basic needs, for example, owning at least one pair of shoes and two sets of clothes, and having at least one meal per day. Only 41 percent of orphans and vulnerable children have all these basic requirements compared with 54 percent of other children. OVC and other children living in rural areas are far more deprived than children living in cities.

Orphans and vulnerable children under five years of age are less likely to be well nourished than other children. The NDHS found 27 percent of orphans and vulnerable infants and children are underweight for their age, compared with 21 percent of other children. Again, the rural children are less well nourished than urban children.



### Little Difference in School Attendance

One might expect that orphaned and vulnerable children would be more likely to leave school, either for lack of money or to care for sick adults at home. The NDHS shows little difference in school attendance among children 10-14 years old. School attendance is 90 percent or higher for orphans and vulnerable children, as it is for others.

### External Support Lacking for Medical, Social, Educational, Material, and Emotional Needs

Despite the obvious need, few households with OVC receive external assistance of any kinds. Only 17 percent of these households had received any assistance for medical, social, educational, material, and emotional needs in the 30 days before the survey.

Similarly, only about one in six households (16 percent) with chronically ill or recently deceased adults receive regular medical support or other care. When support is provided at all, it is most likely for medical purposes.

Possibly because of the lack of external support and basic material goods, young female OVC are more likely to engage in early sex than other young women. One in 10 female OVCs were sexually active before age 15 compared to 7 percent of other girls. Sexual activity among young men did not vary by orphan status. Early sexual activity increases the risk of HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy.