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Community's Care and Support to Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Case Study on the Responses of the Community to Needy Children in Maracha, Terego District

The 2002 Uganda population census shows that children under 18 years of age constitute about 52% of the general population (UBS, 2002). The Uganda National Household Survey 2005/2006 estimates that out of 5.1 million households in Uganda about 1.1 million have at least an orphan. Maracha-Terego district has an estimated number of 62,288 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). The experience of orphaned and vulnerable children varies significantly across families, communities and countries. Vulnerability of OVCs is many times associated with lack of basic needs, education, social protection, mistreatment, poor health, guidance and counselling. These among others have led to increasing numbers of OVC today. The background of the study was to ascertain why the numbers of orphans and other vulnerable children is rampantly increasing in Maracha-Terego district with major emphasis on how community's response impacts on care and support of children. The specific objectives of the study were to establish the forms of vulnerability of children, examine the causes and effects of community response on OVC care and support, identify the minimum standards and conditions for care and support by communities to OVCs and suggest appropriate strategies that would help improve OVC care and support. The population of the study was OVC households, government officials and civil society organisations, religious and opinion leaders from which a sample was drawn. The sub-counties of Oleba, Kijomoro and Oluvu were sampled carefully using cluster random and purposive sampling techniques. Thereafter, recommendations were advanced towards improving on the mechanisms of strengthening community care and support of OVCs in Maracha-Terego district and these included the need for parents to become more responsible, children should be supported to attain proper education, improvement of access to social services, prevent family break up through sensitisation and counselling, prevention and protection of children from abuse and exploitation and households should be trained on income generating activities.

Keywords: Orphans, Vulnerable Children, Maracha-Terego district