

Policy Brief: Abuse and extreme poverty drive increased transactional sexual exploitation among AIDS-affected youth

Citation: Cluver, L, Orkin, M, Boyes, M, Gardner, F & Meinck, F (2011) 'Transactional Sex amongst AIDS-orphaned and AIDS-Affected Adolescents Predicted by Abuse and Extreme Poverty'. JAIDS, 58, 336-343.

Little is known about impacts of familial HIV/AIDS on abuse and sexual health. We investigated links between AIDS-orphanhood, caregiver AIDS-sickness and physical, emotional, sexual abuse or transactional sex. We also investigated what factors were driving heightened risk of transactional sex amongst AIDS-affected girls. This research is a collaboration with the South African government, the National Action Committee for Children Affected by AIDS (NACCA), Oxford University, & Cape Town Child Welfare.

The Questions:

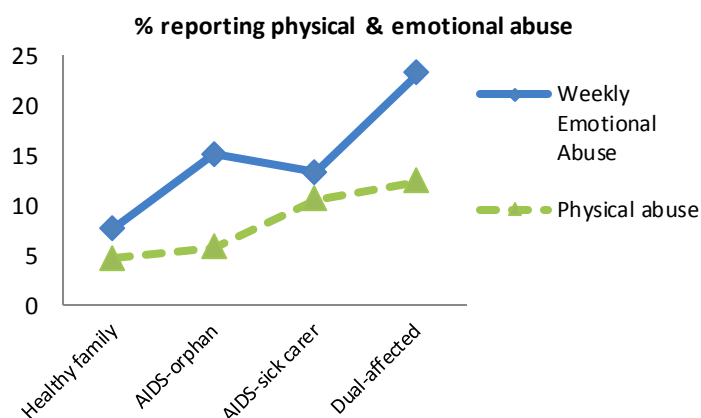
- Are AIDS-affected youth at increased risk of physical, emotional & sexual abuse or exploitation?
- Does being AIDS-affected, abused & extreme poverty have a cumulative effect on risk of transactional sex?

The Research:

- A longitudinal study with 1000 adolescents at Time 1 and 730 at 4-year Time 2
- Standardised measures of abuse, sexual risk behaviour, & sociodemographic variables

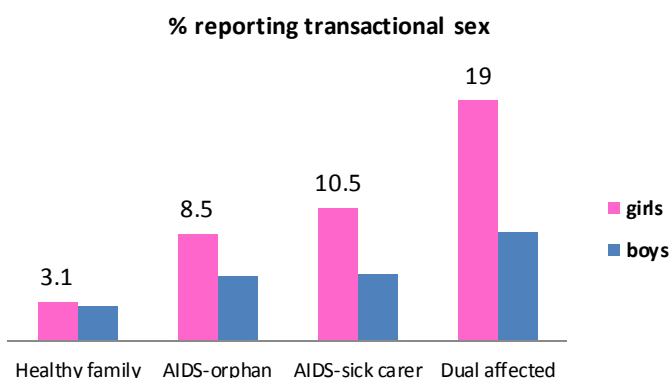
Finding 1: AIDS-affected youth are at higher risk of abuse and transactional sex

- AIDS-orphanhood and caregiver AIDS-sickness predicted emotional abuse, physical abuse and transactional sex – independently of any sociodemographic factors.
- Other-orphanhood and caregiver sickness by non-AIDS causes, as well as having healthy surviving parents, did not predict abuse or transactional sex.
- Youth affected simultaneously by AIDS-orphanhood & having an AIDS-sick caregiver (dual-affected) are 3x more exposed to emotional & physical abuse and 6X more likely to experience transactional sex than in healthy families.

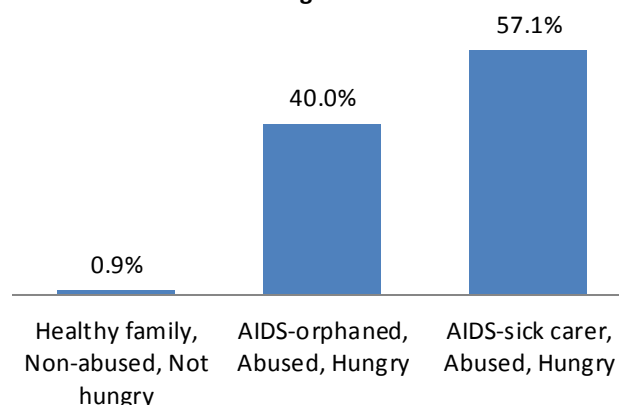


Finding 2: Abuse, food insecurity and family AIDS raise risk of transactional sex for girls from 1% to 57%

- Youth in AIDS-affected families are at higher risk of transactional sex. This is partly due to increased food insecurity & abuse in AIDS-affected families
- **The combination of familial AIDS, food insecurity and abuse raise transactional sex risk amongst girls from 1% to 57%**



Prevalence of transactional sex, 15-24 yr old girls



Conclusions:

- AIDS-affected youth are highly vulnerable to emotional, physical abuse, and transactional sexual exploitation
- Being in an AIDS-affected family, being abused and extreme poverty has a major cumulative effect on transactional sex
- To combat risk of transactional sex, we need to address family and poverty risk factors for youth.

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