

## **Are there Working Children and Child Labour in Uganda when it's a signatory to the UN Convention and having Universal Primary Education?**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this paper was to study working children and child labour among children in Uganda. The most important question paused was if children in child labour were orphans or not. This paper was based on secondary data from the 2005/6 Uganda National household survey. Overall, 36 percent of the children were involved in some kind of work whether for pay or on own. There are also children who worked for pay, worked for own account and worked for the household. The results further show that child labour accounted for almost one in five (19.2%). Despite Uganda being a signatory to the UN convention on the rights of children, one in three children is working and one in five is involved in child labour.

In urban areas, the proportion of children working for money is also an indication of child labour. Whereas the pretext is that children involved in child labour are mainly orphans, results showed that orphans were not more vulnerable to child labour than the other children.

**Key words: Orphans, workload**

### **Introduction**

In 1997, the government of Uganda introduced universal Primary Education (UPE) which aim was to give a chance to all children to have access to free primary education. Five years later, it introduces the universal secondary education. The importance of education as been over emphasized as the ten countries in the world with the best economies also have the highest proportion of the population with secondary or more education. One of the advanced theories on education is that children usually engage in work because they are orphans. Orphaned children must earn income in order to support their siblings. Other vulnerable children who may not necessarily be orphans also care for sick relatives, and join orphan committees to organize their response. Many orphans face increased responsibility to provide income for their family. As a result, many orphans end up entering the labour force and drop out of school earlier than non-orphans (Hunter, 2001). Orphans and other vulnerable children are adapting to their circumstances by assuming many of the responsibilities commonly associated with adulthood (Guarcello et al 2004). Workload of orphans may be greater than non-orphans living in the same household (Foster, Makufa, Drew and Colleagues, 1997). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), not all work performed by children is equivalent to "child labour". The concept of child labour is therefore based on the minimum age of entry into the labour force, non-hazardous work and worst forms of child labour. Similarly, Article 34 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) prohibits child labour. Despite all these commitments, child labour still exists. The majority of working children work in the agricultural sector which controls about 70 percent of the work force in Uganda (UBOS, 2006). Studies have showed that in Uganda, children are a source of labour to their families and must participate in their own upbringing. Increased domestic workload often falls more on girls than boys (Ledward, 1997).

## **Objective**

The objective of this paper was to study working children and child labour among children in Uganda. The most important question posed was if children in child labour were orphans or not. Specifically, the study looked at the socio economic characteristics of children in order to explain who the children at high risk of being called working children are and those engaged in child labour.

## **Methodology**

This paper is based on secondary data from the 2005/6 Uganda National household survey. Section 7 of the UNHS questionnaire collected information about activities the household members were involved in during the last seven days for all persons aged 5 years and above. Three questions were selected for the analysis on working children and child labour

- i. During the past 7 days, have you worked for pay for an enterprise or someone who is not a member of your household at least for one hour in any day? -**Worked for pay.**
- ii. During the past 7 days, have you worked on a land owned or occupied by a member of your household either in cultivating crops or in farming tasks, or have you cared for livestock belonging to a member of your household or fishing at least for one hour in any day? -**Worked for household.**
- iii. During the last 7 days, have you worked on your own account or in a business enterprise belonging to you or someone in your household, for example, trader, shopkeeper, barber, etc. at least for one hour in any day? -**Worked on own account.**

To differentiate between work from labour, a child was deemed to have been involved in child labour based on a predetermined criterion. This criterion of child labour was adopted from UBOS (2007) as explained in the UNHS report derived using the following classifications:

- i. Children aged 6-11 years who did any work (including household work) and those who worked for more than 14 hours in a week
- ii. Children aged 12-14 years who worked for more than 14 hours in a week
- iii. Children aged 15-17 years who worked for more than 40 hours in a week

## **Results**

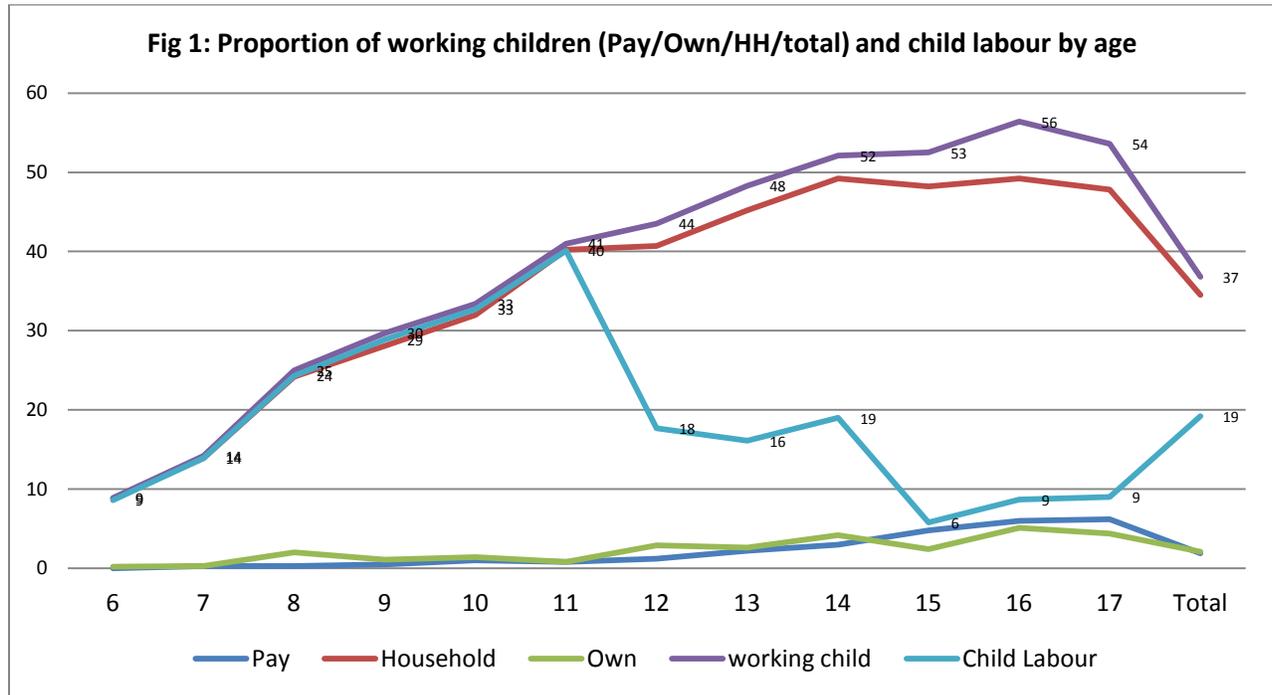
The results indicated that about 2 percent of the children aged between 6-17 years worked for pay for at least one hour in a day. A similar proportion of 2 percent also worked on their own account or in a business enterprise belonging to themselves or someone else in the household, like trader, shopkeeper, barber, etc. at least for one hour in any day. The analysis further showed that 34.5 percent of the children worked for households. An aggregate analysis was also made on those who answered at least a "YES" in at least one of the above questions. Overall, 36 percent of the children were involved in some kind of work whether for pay or on own. There are also children who worked for pay, worked for own account and worked for the household.

The results further show that child labour accounted for almost one in five (19.2%). This was a very high proportion and since we know that child labour affects the proper growth of children, a high proportion of Ugandan children in danger. It is important to note that not all children involved in work (36.8) are involved in child labour (19.2%). However, all children involved in child labour are involved in child work.

**Table 1: Distribution of working children/child labour by selected child characteristics**

<b>Child Characteristic</b>	<b>Worked for pay</b>	<b>Worked for household</b>	<b>Worked for own</b>	<b>Worked for pay/ household/own</b>	<b>Child labour</b>
<b>Orphanhood status</b>					
Both alive	1.4	33.5	1.8	35.3	18.2
Only Mother dead	3.9	37.0	4.2	39.8	16.7
Only Father dead	4.4	39.4	3.0	43.9	19.0
Both parents dead	3.5	36.4	2.4	41.2	18.3
Non orphan	1.4	33.5	1.8	35.3	18.2
Orphan	4.1	38.2	3.1	42.4	18.3
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	2.1	36.0	2.0	38.4	18.1
Female	1.7	33.0	2.2	35.2	20.3
<b>Region</b>					
Central	2.4	36.2	3.9	39.9	22.2
Eastern	0.9	39.2	1.2	40.3	20.9
Northern	3.0	21.3	2.3	24.6	14.0
Western	1.5	37.9	0.8	39.0	18.1
<b>Rural-Urban</b>					
Urban	3.2	9.8	4.4	16.4	10.6
Rural	1.7	38.7	1.7	40.3	20.7
<b>Marital status</b>					
Married	6.9	62.9	2.6	69.9	14.7
Not married	5.6	48.0	3.9	53.7	19.3
<b>Relationship to household head</b>					
Head	33.8	24.2	9.5	59.3	0.0
Spouse	4.3	53.9	1.9	60.1	5.5
Son/daughter	1.3	33.8	1.8	35.5	17.9
Grand child	1.5	40.1	2.6	41.3	26.0
Step child	4.1	30.6	2.9	35.7	21.6
Sister/brother of head	2.7	35.2	2.7	39.0	22.8
Nephew/niece	1.6	32.9	3.8	36.0	15.4
Other relatives	1.9	33.3	2.2	36.3	19.4
Servant	66.5	28.4	4.8	88.6	39.0
Non-relative	7.0	26.2	4.5	36.8	17.9
<b>Migration</b>					
Migrant	6.2	30.0	4.0	38.1	18.2
Not-migrant	1.4	35.1	1.9	36.6	19.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>19.2</b>

One in three of the children in Uganda based on UNHS 2005/06 were working. The proportion of working children increases with increasing age.



The proportion of boys working was higher than that of girls. Eastern region had the highest proportion of working children. More children in urban areas were working for pay. More than 50,000 children in Uganda were working as servants. Of these, 30 percent were not being paid. More married children were working than their counterparts who were not married. Slightly more orphans were working than non-orphans.

Child labour starts as early as age 6 years for children. However, there is a relationship between child labour and poverty. This is especially true in peasant families which depend entirely on agriculture as indicated by the variations across regions. In urban areas, the proportion of children working for money is also an indication of child labour. Child labour does not depend on the survival status of parents.

### **Determinants of working children and child labour**

Two logistic models were run, one for working children categorized as a working child and not working and another for child labour, categorized into whether the child was involved in child labour or not. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Results showed that an increase of one year of age increased the odds of a child being involved in work by 5 Percent. This increase was statistically significant. However, age had an inverse relationship to child labour. A change of one year of age reduced the odds of the child being involved in child labour by 9 percent and the difference was statistically significant. The sex of a child showed that male children had 3 percent less odds of being involved in work. The results further showed that male children were 12 percent more likely to be involved in child labour compared to female children. However, the boy child must go out to work for pay even at young age.

**Table 2 Logistic regression predicting working children and child labour**

	Working Children			Child labour		
	Coef.	Odds Ratio	p>z	Coef.	Odds Ratio	p>z
Age	0.053	1.05	0.001	-0.093	0.91	0.000
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	-0.031	0.97	0.741	0.111	1.12	0.013
Female		1.00			1.00	
<b>Residence</b>						
Urban	0.134	1.14	0.351	0.693	2.00	0.000
Rural		1.00			1.00	
<b>Region</b>						
Central	-0.974	0.38	0.000	0.637	1.89	0.000
Eastern	-0.685	0.50	0.000	0.379	1.46	0.000
Northern		1.00			1.00	
Western	-1.079	0.34	0.000	0.256	1.29	0.000
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	-1.371	0.25	0.043	0.414	1.51	0.326
Never married		1.00			1.00	
<b>Migration status -Migrant</b>						
<b>Migration status -Non-migrant</b>	-0.230	0.79	0.117	-0.321	0.73	0.000
<b>Survival status of parents</b>						
Non-orphan		1.00			1.00	
Maternal	0.273	1.31	0.187	-0.038	0.96	0.738
Paternal	0.069	1.07	0.616	0.093	1.10	0.193
Double	-0.245	0.78	0.258	0.155	1.17	0.156
<b>Relation to head of Household</b>						
Head/Spouse	1.626	5.08	0.047	-2.145	0.12	0.051
Son/Daughter	0.054	1.06	0.631	0.424	1.53	0.197
Grand child	0.319	1.38	0.868	0.699	2.01	0.035
Step child	0.058	1.06	0.735	0.412	1.51	0.274
Sister/Brother	0.017	1.02	0.618	0.561	1.75	0.110
Nephew/Niece	0.286	1.33	0.934	0.158	1.17	0.645
Other relative	-0.687	0.50	0.067	0.343	1.41	0.320
Servant	0.250	1.28	0.730	1.146	3.15	0.008
Non relative		1.00			1.00	
Constant	-2.074			-1.667		

Working children were not statistically significant by sex but child labour was. Residence showed consistent results in that children in urban areas were found to have 14 percent odds of being involved in work compared to their colleagues in rural areas. Children in urban areas were twice more likely to be involved in child labour than their counterparts in rural areas.

Married children had 75 percent less odds to be working compared to the unmarried children while married children had 29 percent more odds of being involved in child labour compared to those not married. Non-migrant children had 21 percent odds less likely to be working and 27 percent odds less likely to be involved in child labour. This implied that many children probably migrate in search for work, some of which results in child labour.

Non-orphans were taken as the reference category. The multivariate results showed that double orphans were the only category of orphaned children who were less likely to be working compared to non-orphans. Maternal orphans were found to have 31 percent more odds of being working children while paternal orphans had only 7 percent odds of being working children compared to non-orphans. Surprisingly, maternal orphans had less odds of being involved in child labour than non-orphans. The double orphans had the highest likelihood of being in child labour with 17 percent odds. Children not related to the household head were taken as the reference category. Findings indicated that children who were household heads had 5 times more odds of being working compared to non-relatives to the household head. This difference was found to be statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Children who had no relationship to head were taken as the reference category. Results showed that children regarded as servants in the household had 3 times more odds of being in child labour, followed by the grandchildren (2 times more odds).

### **Conclusion**

Despite Uganda being a signatory to the UN convention on the rights of children, one in three children is working and one in five is involved in child labour. This proportion is high in a country which is signatory to the UN convention on the rights of the child and to the African Charter.

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