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# STDs, STIs & HIV/AIDS

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### Protective factors for school attendance for HIV/AIDS affected children in Zambia

**Introduction:** HIV/AIDS in Africa has posed a direct threat to the health development and educational success of children. An estimated, 13.4 million children and adolescents worldwide have lost one or both parents to AIDS as of 2015 and the vast majority of these children (10.9 million) live in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2016). In Zambia, where estimated HIV prevalence is 13.5% as of 2009, mortality and protracted illness from AIDS have created a generation of children that are HIV/AIDS affected often cared by chronically ill caregivers. A direct association exists between the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS affected children and increases in child labor, child prostitution, sexual exploitation and juvenile delinquency.

**Methods:** This research sought to identify and better understand the positive protective factors for HIV/AIDS affected children that contribute to school attendance. Quantitative and qualitative results were used to triangulate findings on protective factors that would support children and their school attendance and reliance. The 2009 National Zambia Sexual Behavior Survey was analyzed using data collected from a nationally representative sample of interviews of households with 475 HIV/AIDS affected

children compared to 1176 households without children made vulnerable due to HIV/AIDS. Qualitative data were collected in focus groups from 6 different schools with a high proportion of HIV/AIDS affected children (N=34 total participants; 16 males, 18 females).

**Results:** Our data analysis indicates that the number of school-age children in a home is related to school attendance. There is a negative association between children that are HIV/AIDS affected and stepparents appear to negatively influence school attendance. Our findings suggest the need to focus further on education settings as a sustainable community-based approach to support vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.

### Speaker Biography

Margaret J Henning is an Associate Professor in Health Science at Keene State College. She has earned her Master's in Health Education and her PhD in Public Health from Oregon State University with a focus on International Health. She has also completed postdoctoral work for the T H Chan Harvard School of Public Health. Her research is interdisciplinary and focuses on the problems of mobilizing, allocating and maintaining limited resources to improve health. Additionally, she was a recipient of the 2015 American Public Health Award for her work in International.

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