

“Family” in the State after Conflict

—Focus on Care of Orphans in Rural Rwanda—

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Background and Objectives of my study

In 1990s, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa had experienced serious armed conflicts. In the process of such conflicts, lots of orphans have been created. HIV/AIDS also has orphaned many children. In Rwanda, a paper reports that 51.5% of children at 7-15 years old are double-orphan or single-orphan. The objective of my study is to reveal the impacts of such conflicts and HIV/AIDS on families in Rwanda. Particular attention was paid to the trigger of family disruption, reconstructing, and the movement of creation.

Community-based care is emphasized most sustainable and effective approach to support orphans by development assistance agencies. However, there are little studies, which examine the relationship between orphans and their acceptors in the context of local settings. A report says that international efforts to assist orphans may undermine community-initiated care. While, many previous studies about orphans after conflict reported that the situation of their trauma and depression are serious. The more orphans are portrayed as the vulnerable, the more they attract international agencies to focus on orphans' care based on human security. For the Government, however, this issue imply more than human security. The Government which is to carry out reconciliation programs needs to settle down peoples' lives and stabilize communities.

In a family, which I visited in Rwanda, an old women who lost her husband, has took charge of three orphans and lived together. This “family” is not an exception in the village. Many of “families” seem to be restructured based on kin relationship but some of them are created by members of non-relation. The rural societies are also on the way to reconstruct and creation. My study will focus on the interactive relationship among these “families”, rural communities, and the state hoping the “families” will be the base for the security of orphans but also for the stability of rural communities and the state.



Picture 1: Children working in the field of beans (Rwanda)



Picture 2: Fields cultivated meticulously (Rwanda)



Picture 3: Children playing in front of a house (Rwanda)