

Summary of Mienke van der Brug's MA Thesis:

'World and Experiences of Aids orphans in North-Central Namibia'

This MA Thesis discusses the social environment and experiences of some young orphans in North-Central Namibia. Although many children have lost their parents to AIDS in this region, only limited research has been conducted on how these children deal with the loss and their changed circumstances.

This study has been done under the auspices of the Danish NGO Ibis that supports schools and guides in the setup of AIDS prevention and care projects. Ibis considers it of great importance that experiences and opinions of children are integrated into their advice and council. When this research project is compared to existing publications on AIDS orphans, two differences stand out. Firstly, the choice to focus on the perceptions and experiences of the children themselves. In research attention is generally given to the perceptions of older orphans, whilst in studies on younger orphans the caretakers are mostly questioned. Secondly, in existing studies the position of orphans is investigated by means of surveys, interviews or short-term focus group discussions. In this study the researcher has observed the children over a longer period of time and in different contexts. This research, with attention to the perceptions and action of children and research methods that are in keeping with this, contributes both to the specific fields of the anthropology of childhood and medical anthropology as well as to general methodological discussions within anthropology.