

Children's Living Arrangements in Eastern and Southern Africa: Implications for efforts to strengthen family care



6th International
Conference of the
International Society
for Child Indicators

Children in a
World of
Opportunities:
Innovations in
Research, Policy, and
Practice

**Better
Care
Network**

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Decades of Research on Children's Care (LMICs and HICs)

- **Critical importance of family and a family environment for child development and well-being** (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1965; Bowlby, 1982; Schoenmaker et al, 2014).
- **Empirical research in psychology, neuroscience, social work, and other disciplines: Investing in children's early years** (*From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, 2000; *Does Family Matter?* Juffer et al., 2014)
- **Negative impact of emotional deprivation and institutionalization for younger children in Central and Eastern Europe** (Fox et al., 2011; Johnson and Gunnar, 2011; Nelson et al., 2012, Berens & Nelson, 2015).
- **Growth in use of residential care for children in LMICS but also HICS in Europe** (Carter, 2005; Browne, 2009; Williamson and Greenberg, 2009; www.bettercarenetwork.org)

International policy and standards

- ✧ The family being the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, **efforts should primarily be directed to enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents, or when appropriate, other close family members.** The State should ensure that families have access to forms of support in the caregiving role.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009) II. A.3.

- ✧ Principal Objective 2- Put family care first:
U.S. Government assistance will **support and enable families to care for their children; prevent unnecessary family-child separation; and promote appropriate, protective, and permanent family care.**

The U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity (2012) A Framework for International Assistance

1) What do patterns and trends in children's living arrangements tell us about **parental care** in Eastern and Southern Africa?

2) What do they tell us about the role of **extended family care** (kinship care)?

3) What are **possible implications** for efforts to prevent child-parent separation and strengthen family care?

DHS and MICS

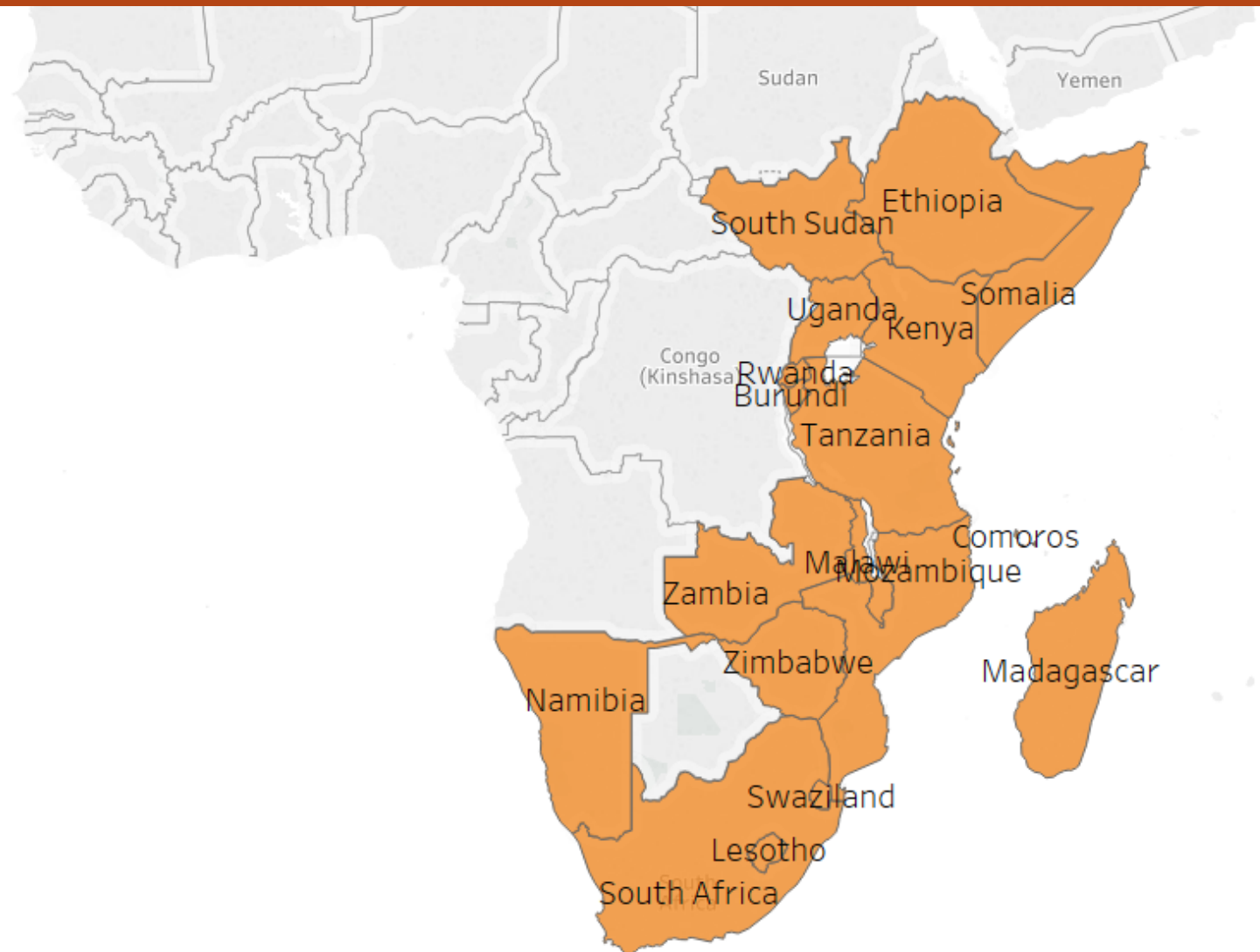
DHS: Demographic and Health Survey (USAID)— Now in Phase 7 (2013-2018)

- Since 1984, conducted in over 90 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, North Africa/Eastern Europe/West Asia
- Fertility, health, survival, immunization, safe water, education, living arrangements, etc.
- Household, woman's, man's questionnaires
- Questionnaire modules: Domestic violence, FGM, Fistula, out of pocket expenditures etc.

MICS: Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (UNICEF)- Now MICS 6 (2016-2019)

- Since 1995, conducted in more than 100 countries, includes 20 MDG indicators
- Household Questionnaire (Living arrangements, education, child labor, child discipline, etc.); Questionnaire for Individual Women 15-49 years (with or without birth history); Questionnaire for Individual Men 15-49 years; Questionnaire for Children Under Five (Mother or caretaker live with child)
- Child mortality, nutrition, child health, water and sanitation, reproductive health, child development, child protection, literacy and education, Tobacco and alcohol use, subjective well-being etc.

Eastern and Southern Africa



Child Living Arrangements in Eastern and Southern Africa

- **23 countries according to UN Statistical Division list** (Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe)
- Recent data available through recent DHS and MICS for **18 countries** (Madagascar South only; Somalia North only)
- Data also available for South Africa as part of national household survey (**19 total**)
- **Data covers 98% of the total population in the region**

FINDINGS:

1) Majority of children (0-17) in the region live with both biological parents but there are significant outliers.

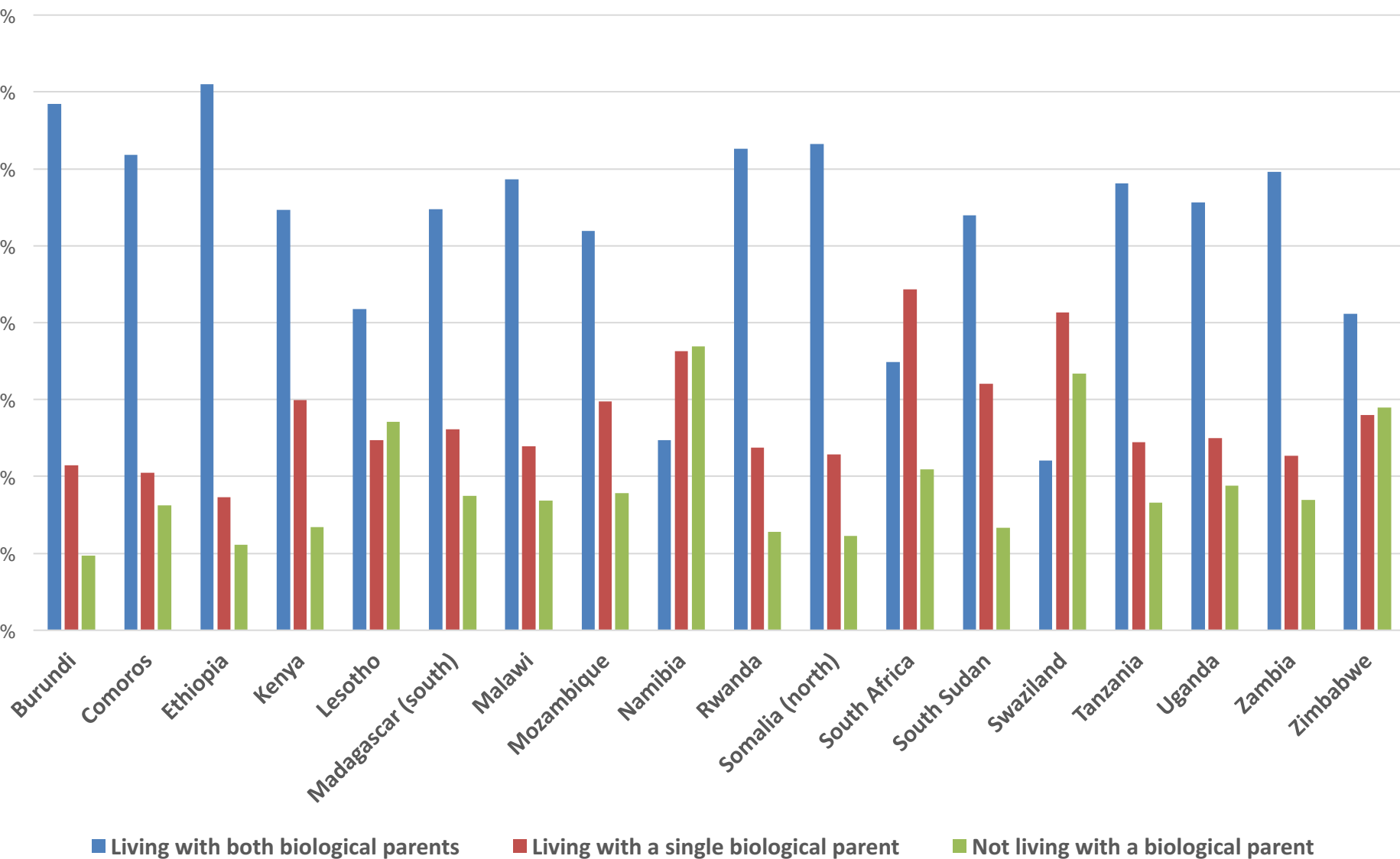
- In South Africa and Swaziland, majority of children live with one single parent.

2) Across the region **almost 30% children live with a single parent.**

3) An estimated **33 millions children (0-17) live outside of parental care** in Eastern and Southern Africa.

- In Namibia, a majority of children live outside of parental care (37%)

Percent of children 0-17 living in parental care, Eastern and Southern Africa

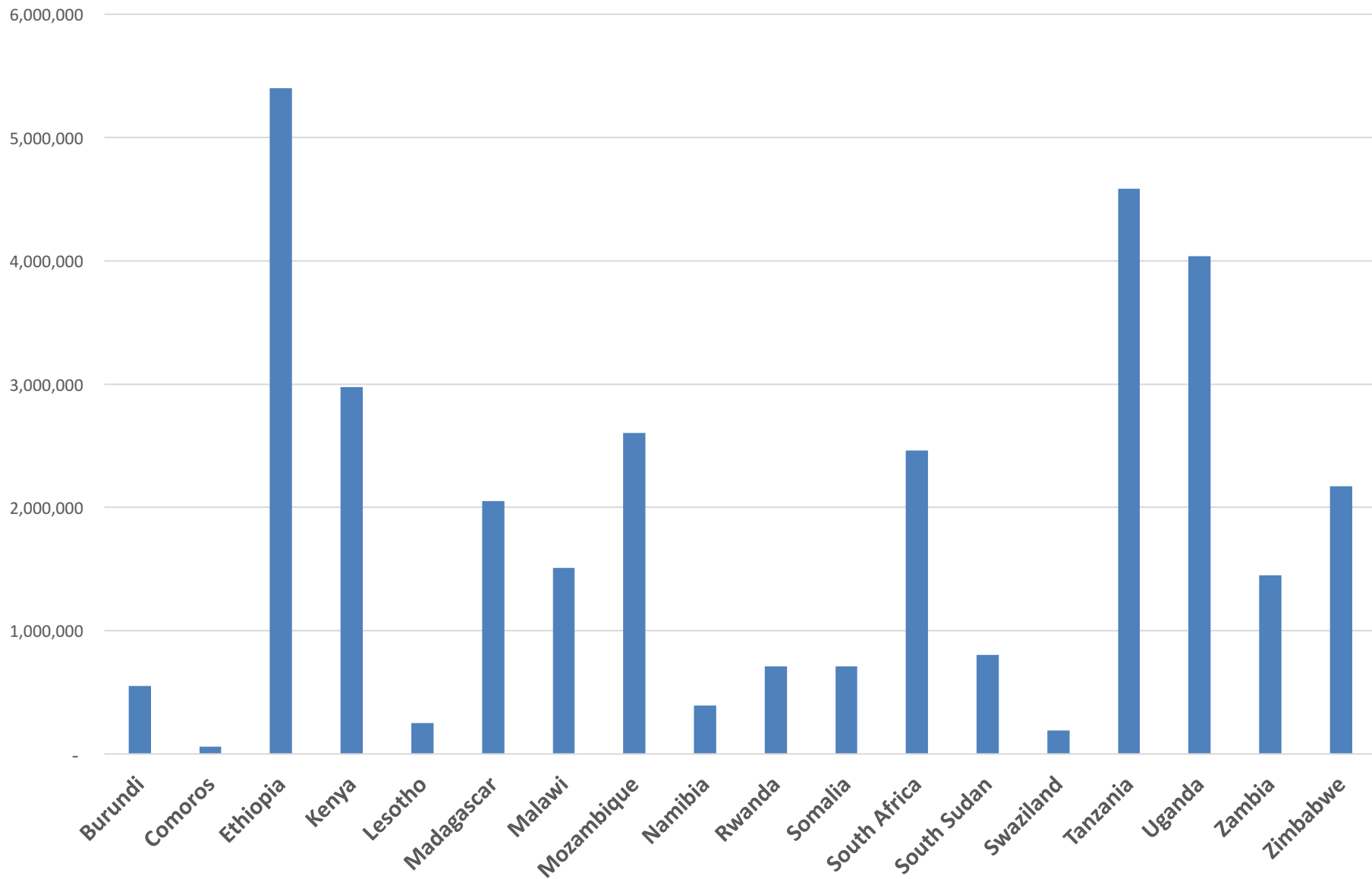


- **Swaziland:** only 22% of children live with both parents;
- **Namibia:** only 25% of children live with both parents;

Compare with:

- **Ethiopia:** 71% of children live with both parents;
- **Burundi:** 68% of children live with both parents;

In Eastern and Southern Africa an estimated 33 million children 0-17 live outside of parental care

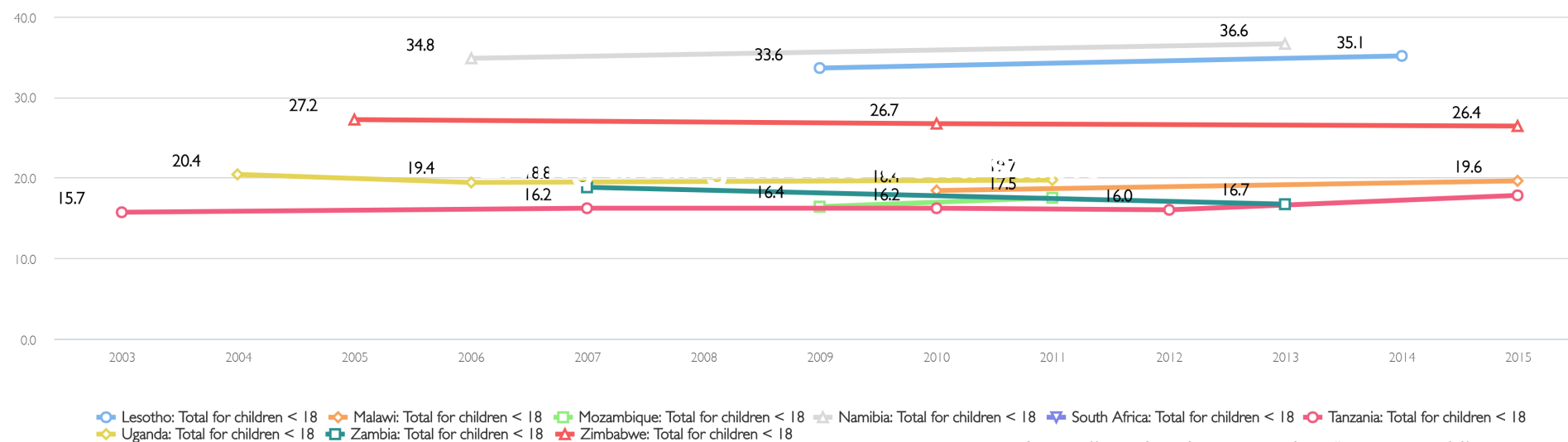


4) Trend stable- not recent phenomenon

Children not living with a biological parent

Percentage of de jure children under 18 not living with a biological parent

Reset zoom



ICF International, 2015. The DHS Program STATcompiler. Funded by USAID. <http://www.statcompiler.com>. June 25 2017

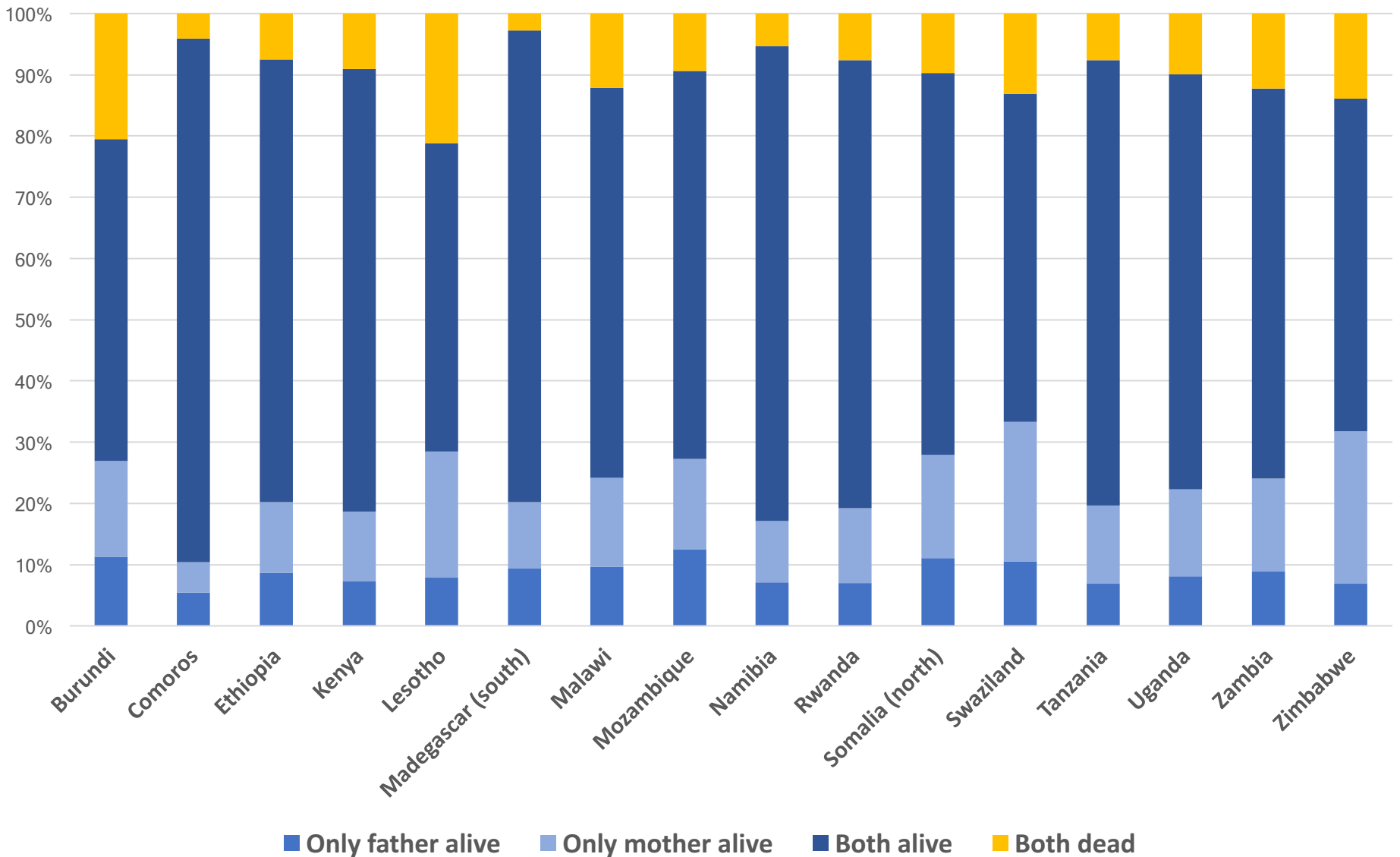
5) The majority of children (0-17) in the region not living with their parents **have parents alive**

6) Most have **both biological parents alive**, clearly indicating that orphanhood is not main driver for not being in parental care

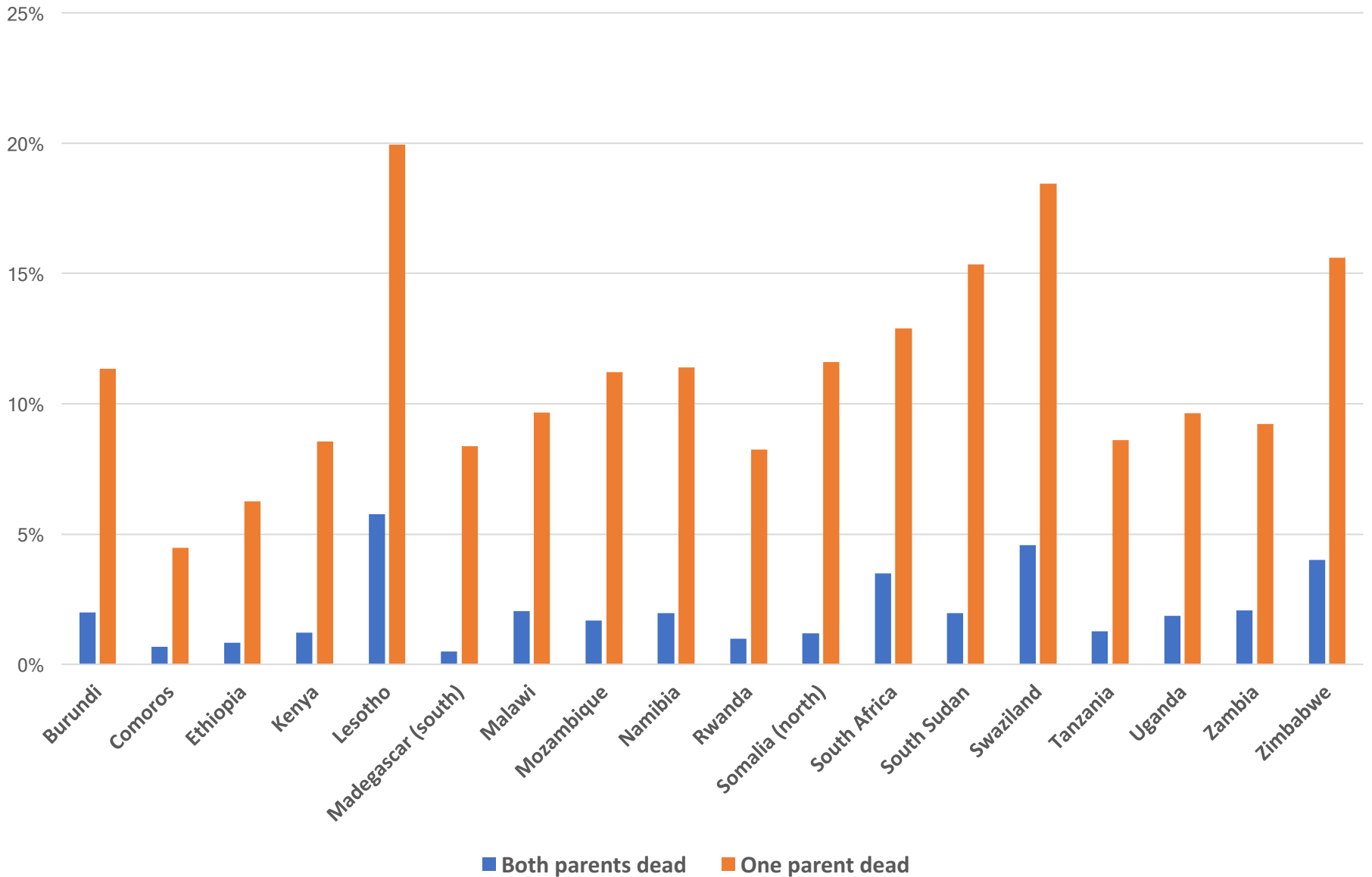
7) There is also **significant variance across the region** (i.e. Lesotho 44% have both parents; Burundi 51%; Swaziland 53% compared to Comoros 81%; Madagascar South 76%; Namibia 75%)

8) Children living outside of parental care **not just issue for high HIV AIDS high prevalence** countries (also Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda etc.)

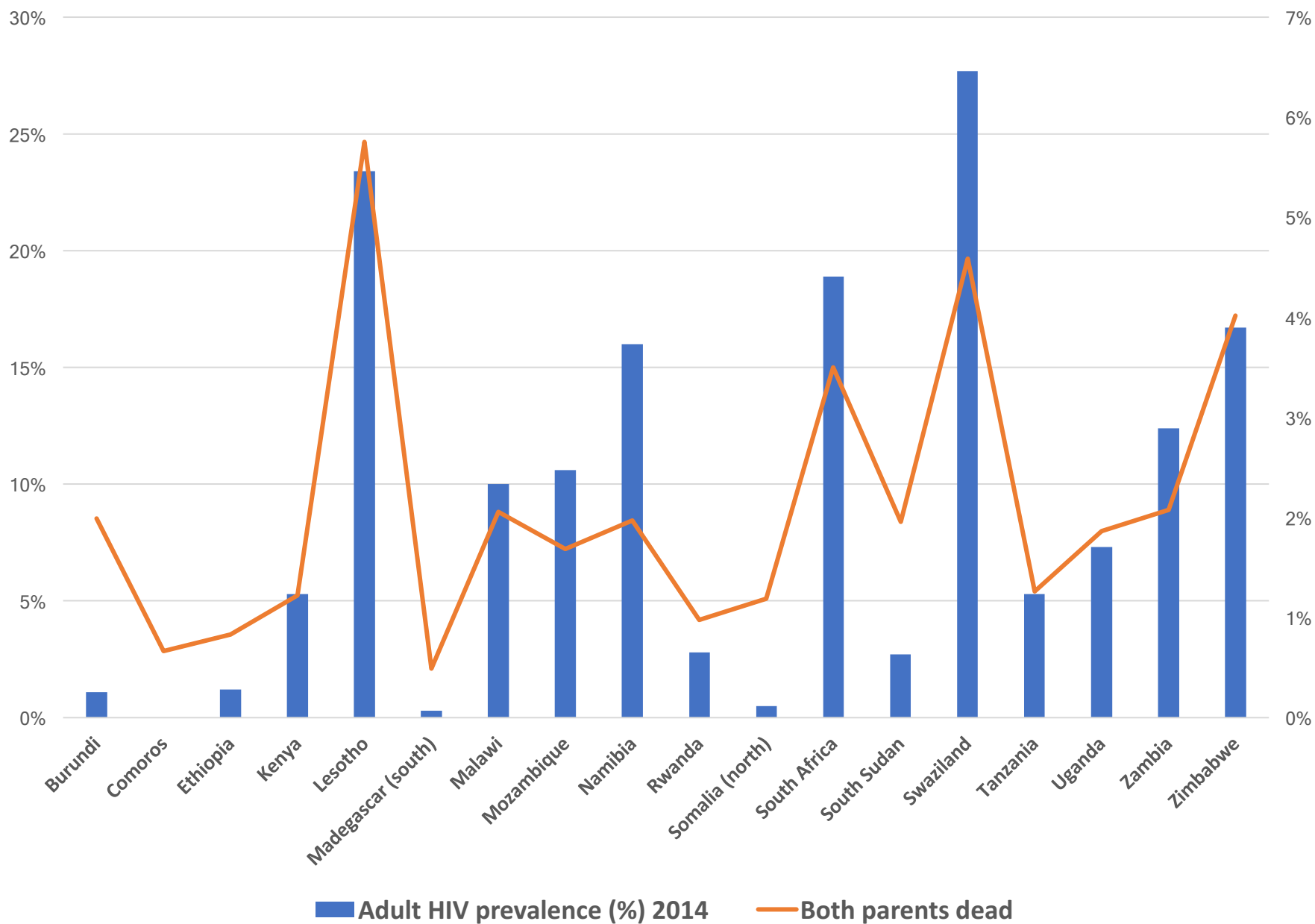
Percent distribution of parent survival among children 0-17 living with neither biological parent



Percent distribution of parental survival status for all children 0-17 across countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.



Adult prevalence of HIV and Orphanhood among children 0-17 in Eastern and Southern Africa

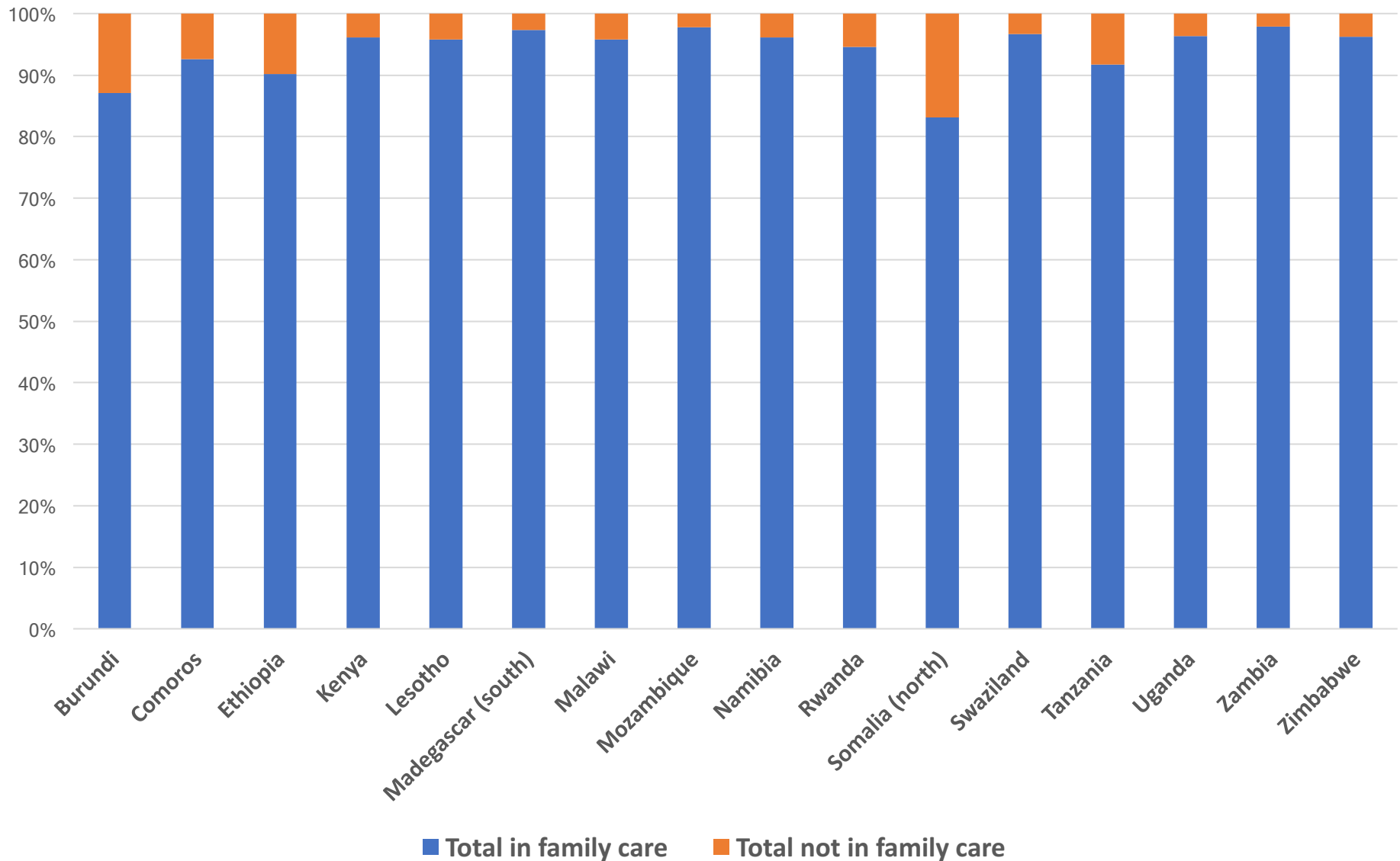


9) The vast majority of children (0-17) not living with their parents **are in family care (informal kinship care)**.

10) **28 million children (0-17)** not living with a biological parent are **in kinship care** in Eastern and Southern Africa (not including South Africa).

11) **1.5 million children** live in households in which they are not related to the household head (Domestic workers? Informal boarding arrangements?)

Percent of children 0-17 living in family care among children not living with a biological parent

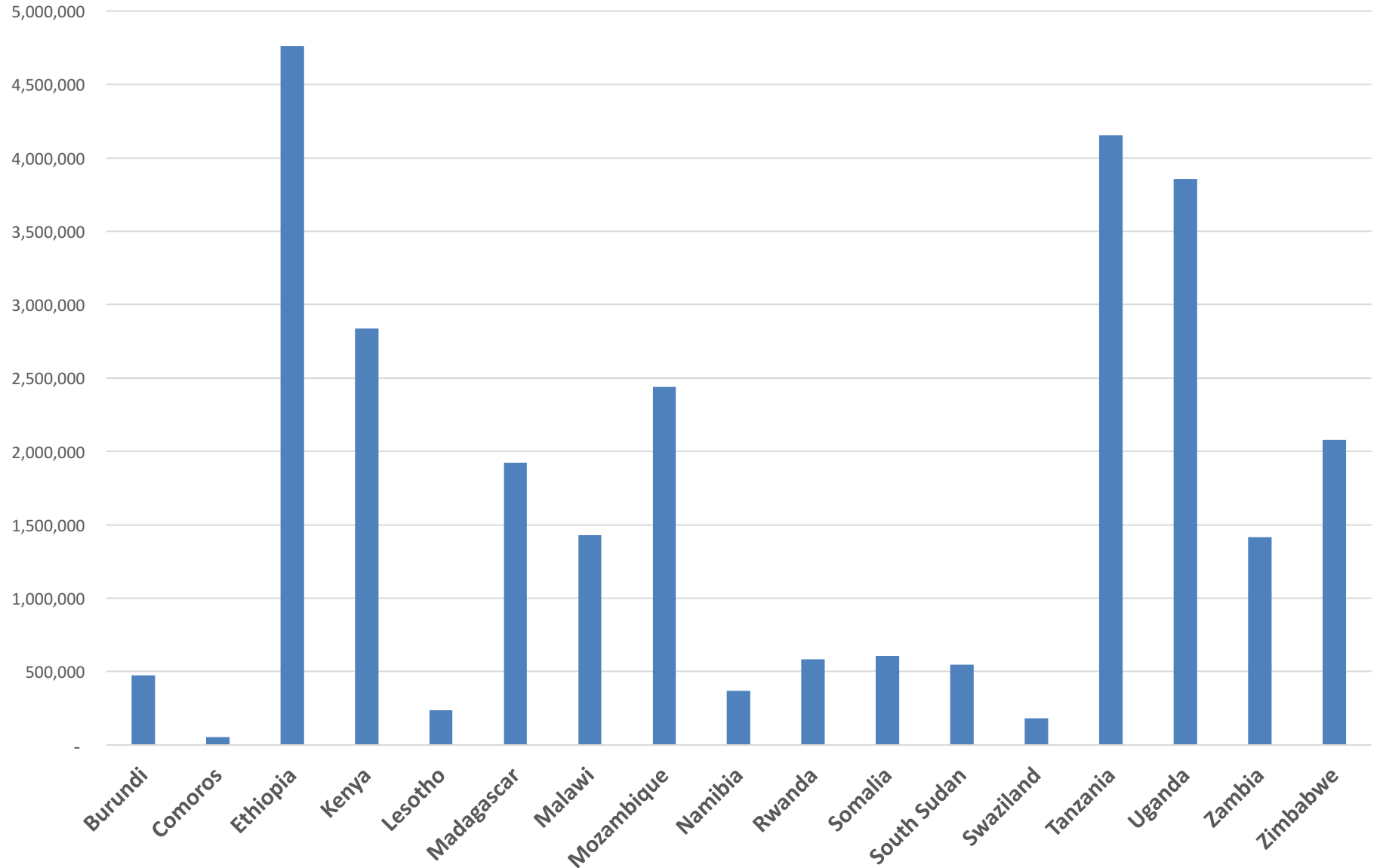


What is Kinship Care?

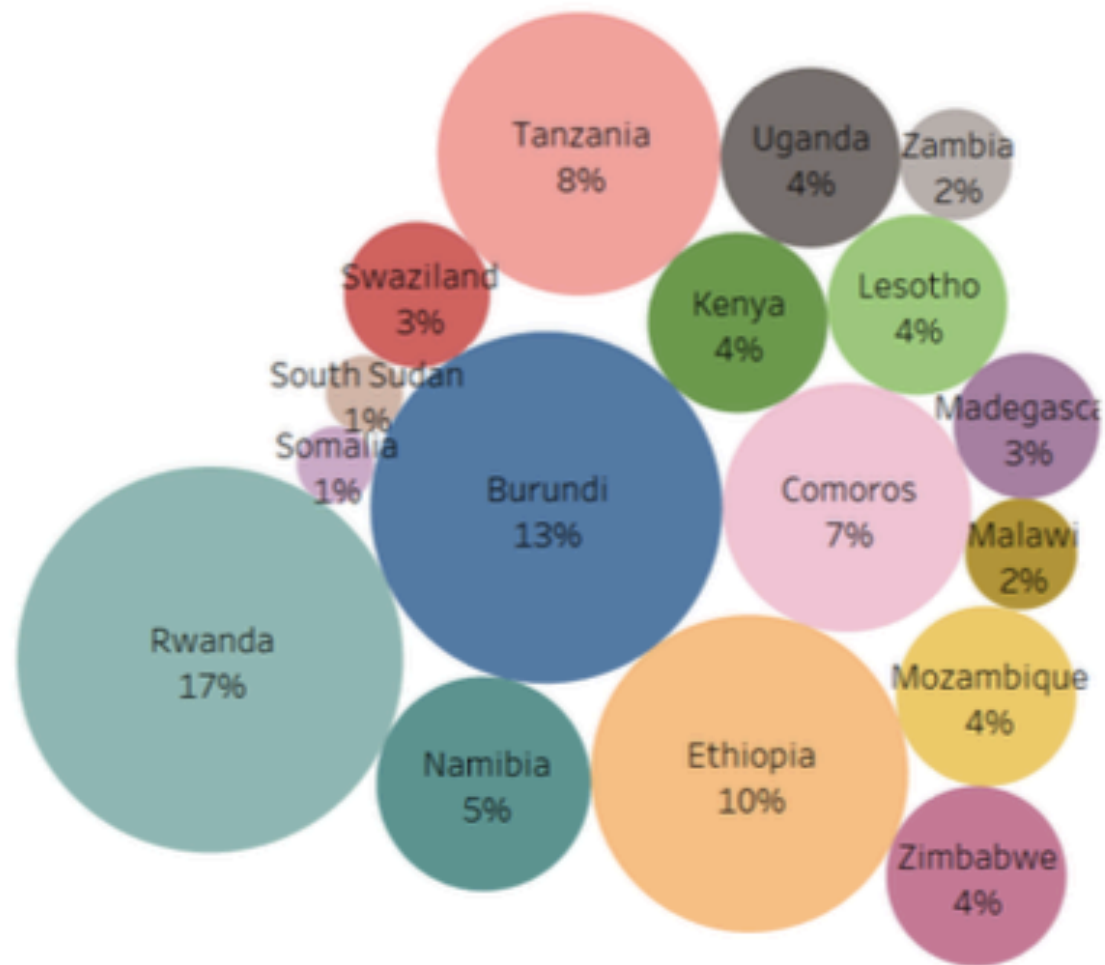
Family-based care within the child's extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature.

The AC Guidelines III.29. c.i

In Eastern and Southern Africa an estimated 28 million children 0-17 living without parents live in kinship care

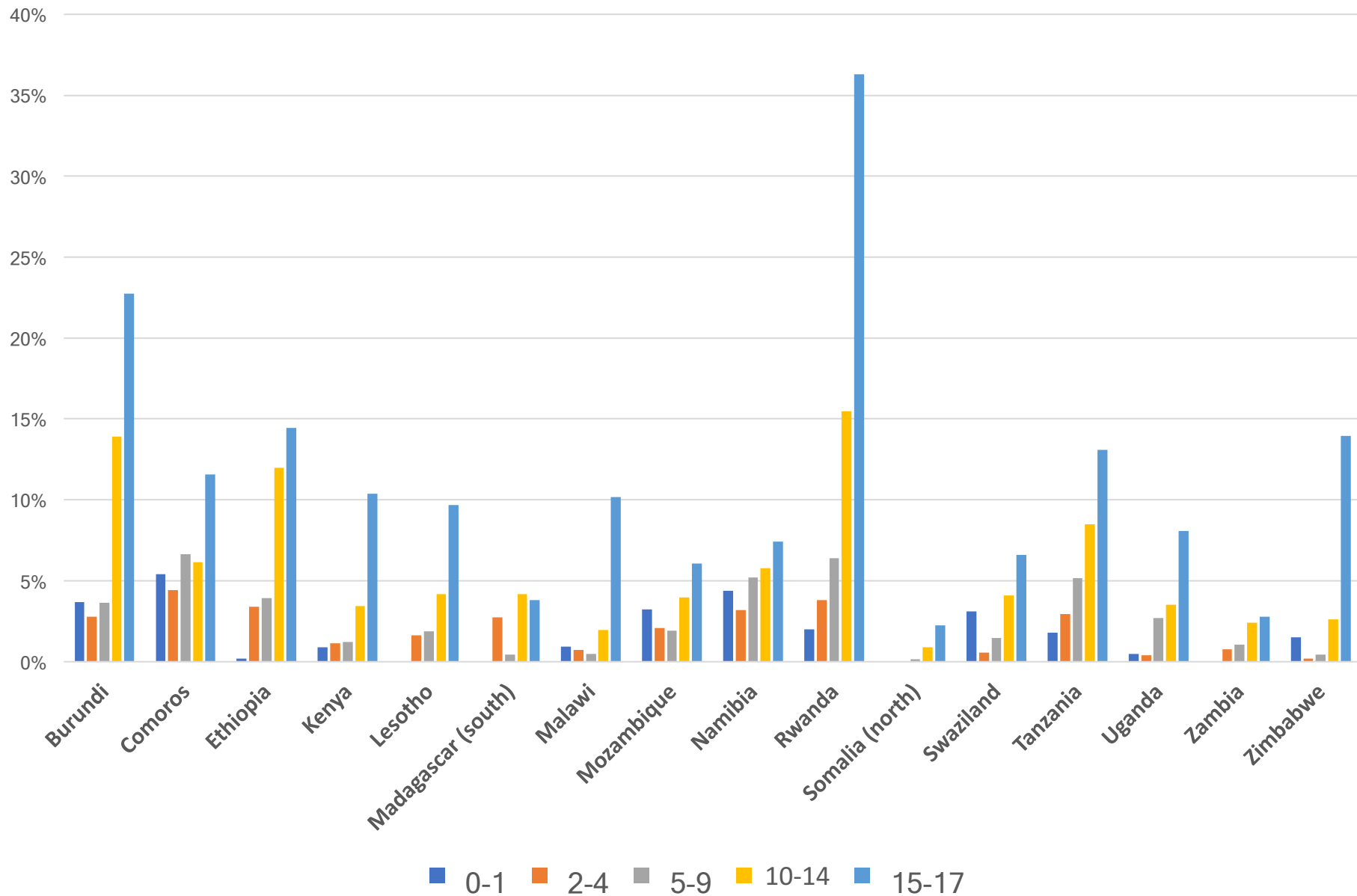


Percent of children 0-17 not living within family care among children living with neither biological parent

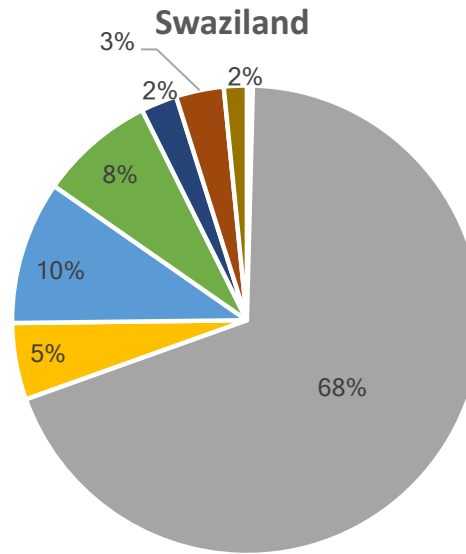
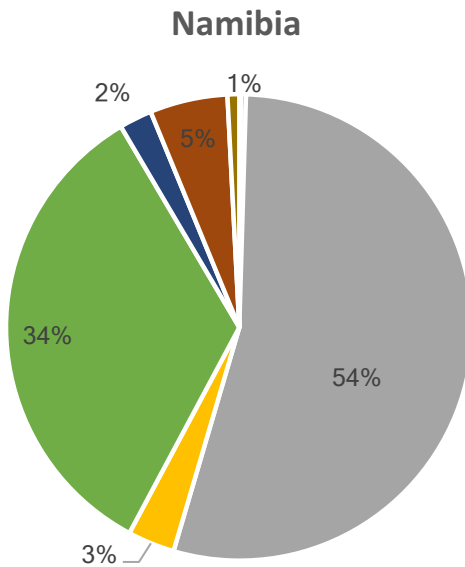
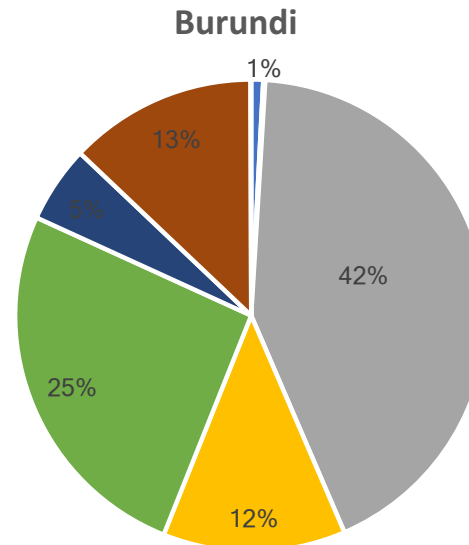
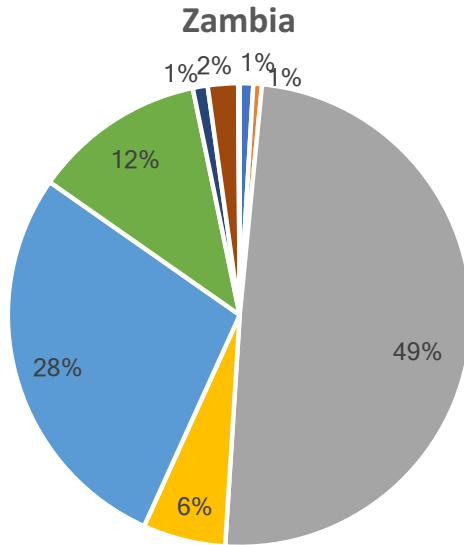


- 12) **Kinship is care is the primary form of alternative care** in Eastern and Southern Africa (and globally see Martin and Zulaika (2016).
- 13) There is **considerable diversity** in children's care and living arrangements in the region:
- **across** countries
 - **within** countries
 - **child characteristics** (age in particular; gender not so significant),
 - **head of household characteristics** (grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings...),
 - **household characteristics** (wealth; rural/urban).

Percent distribution of children 0-17 living in non related households by age group per country



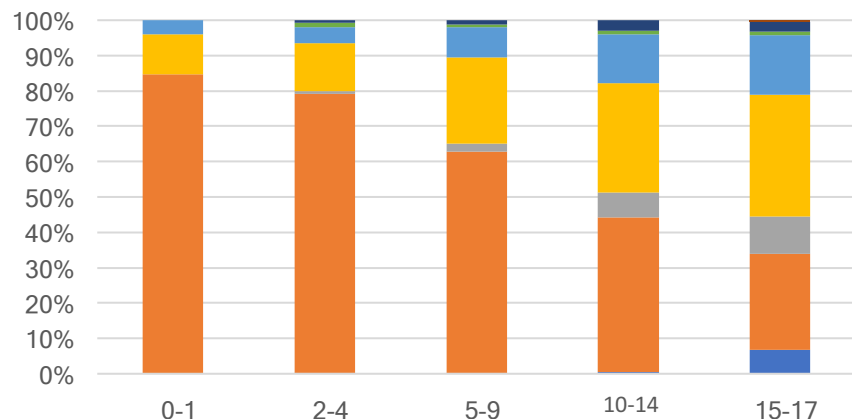
Percent distribution of child relationship to household head among children 0-17 living with neither biological parent



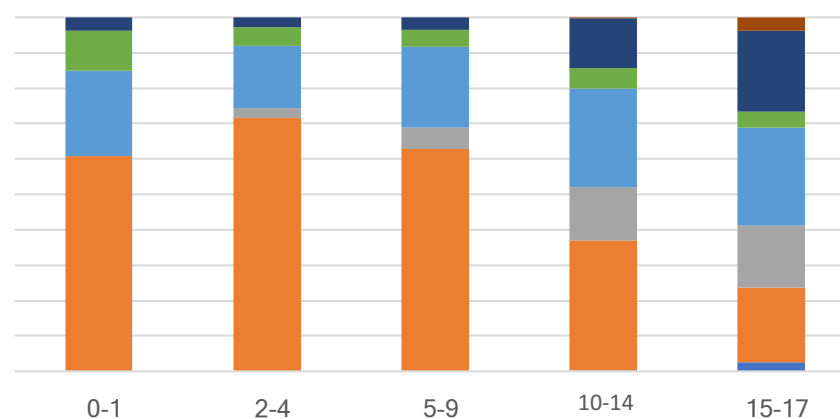
- Wife/ husband
- Son/ daughter-in-law
- Grandchild
- Brother/ sister
- Niece/Nephew
- Other relative
- Adopted/ foster

Percent distribution of child relationship to head of the household among children 0-17 living with neither biological parent by age group

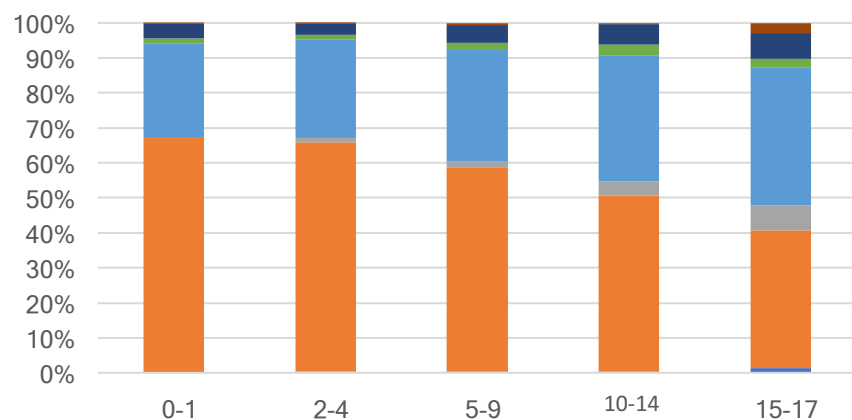
Zambia



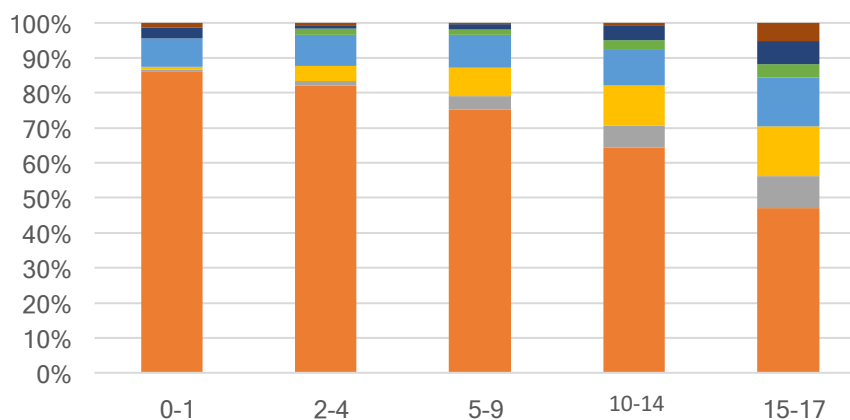
Burundi



Namibia



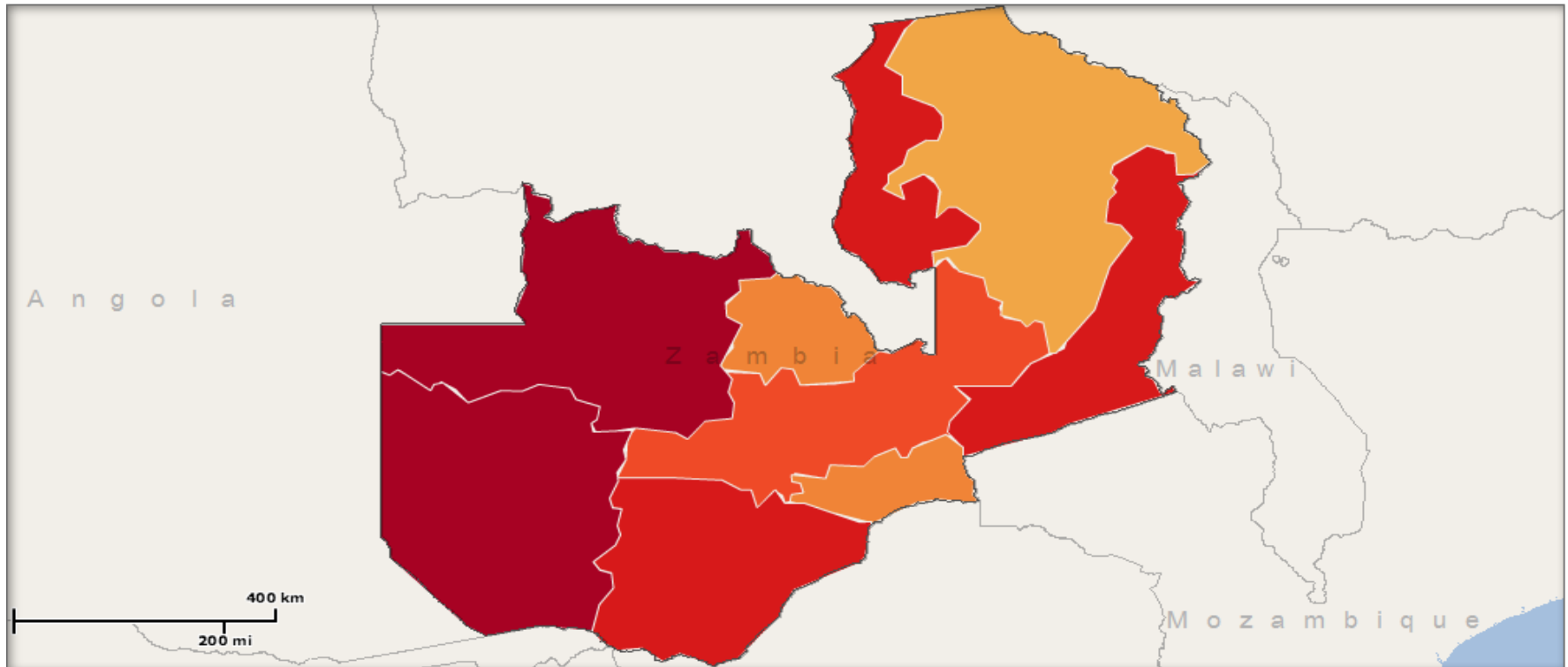
Swaziland



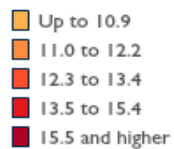
■ Spouse/child-in-law
 ■ Grandchild
 ■ Brother/sister
 ■ Niece/Nephew
 ■ Other relative
 ■ Adopted/fostered
 ■ Not related
 ■ Don't know/missing

Important diversity also within countries: Zambia for example

Children under 15 living with mother only, father alive by subnational regions



Legend



Surveys

- Western Zambia: 29%
- North Western Zambia: 16%
- Northern Zambia: 10%

Implications for policy and services?

- Need to **recognize significant diversity in family arrangements in the region** and factor this in interventions to support appropriate care for children; **No cookie cutter approach.**
- Essential for governments and actors working to strengthen family care and prevent separation to make **better use of DHS/MICS data**, and combine it with **qualitative research** to understand the factors behind these living arrangements (**both protective and risk factors**). Data identifies key questions, does not provide answers.
- Efforts to **strengthen caregivers capacity** needs to take into account **who the caregivers actually are**, not just theory.

Implications for policy and services?

- **Living arrangements found to be strong marker of wellbeing**, independent of orphanhood status; **Children living with those other than their parents found to fare worse on almost every outcome** (UNICEF: Measuring the determinants of childhood vulnerability (Idele, Suzuki et al, April 2014))
- Some evidence that **outcomes for “orphans” depend on their relatedness** to the household heads: ***“Hamilton Rule”*** (Case, Paxson & Ableidinger, 2004)
- Follow up work needed to understand linkages between different living arrangements **and** child well-being outcomes **as well as identifying risk factors to child-family separation.**

Implications for policy and services?

- **Role of informal kinship care** is fundamental and not just in an emergency/HIV AIDS context- what support is needed and by whom? What are the lessons of attempts to 'formalize' kinship care? (South Africa, Australia, US etc.)
- Research (primarily in HICs) indicates that kinship caregivers are **more likely to be poor, single, older, less educated, and unemployed** than families in which at least one parent is present. **What are their specific support needs?**
- Need to strengthen data to **understand better relationships with biological parents outside of the household** (Communication? Remittance? Involved in child's life? Links to child well-being outcomes?)

Finally...

- Who are the **1.5 million children** living outside family care in households in the region and what is their situation/needs?

Limitations of data

- **Covers only children in households**
- Data does not tell us who the caregiver is, **just relationship** (biological parent or household head)
- **Non-uniform reporting** of indicators:
 - Some countries do not report on living arrangements and survivorship of biological parent indicators
 - Ex: MICS – Argentina, DHS – Angola, Bangladesh
 - Some countries previously included and have subsequently dropped questions on living arrangements and survivorship of biological parent
 - Ex: DHS – Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Philippines
- **Importance of this data** often not recognized by governments and data not extracted/reported.



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Thank you!
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