# Ageing, Livelihoods and HIV/AIDS Briefing Notes ......No: 1

Project Outline: Population Ageing and Sustainable Livelihoods in regions affected by HIV/AIDS: A case study of the Omusati Region, Namibia

# **Key Points**

• Context: Neglect of the elderly in development research, policy and practice whose prominence has been heightened by HIV/AIDS.

• Aim: To investigate the livelihoods of the elderly, their vulnerabilities and capabilities and the institutional and policy contexts and the impacts of HIV/AIDS.

Case Study Area:
The Omusati region of
Northern Namibia

 The research has employed a multimethod, multi-stage methodology This introductory briefing provides a summary of an international collaborative project undertaken by the University of Sheffield, UK and the University of Namibia funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK. The project runs for 15 months from August 2005 - November 2006. Subsequent briefings highlight key findings of the project and are being updated on a regular basis.

## **Research Context**

This research has been prompted by the relative neglect of the elderly in development research, policy and practice. As a result, the progressive ageing of these populations has only recently come to the attention of international institutions, policy makers and academic researchers as a development issue in its own right. The growing prominence of the elderly within sub-Saharan African countries has been further heightened by the AIDS pandemic that is concentrated among men and women in the reproductive age-groups, further skewing population age structures in favour of the old. For the first time in a demographic transition, falling life expectancy at birth is associated with rising life expectancy at later ages.

Despite this neglect, the elderly are frequently characterised as one of the poorest, most marginalised groups (along with women and children) who are most susceptible to disadvantage and vulnerability. However little is known about the contemporary role of the elderly in household livelihoods, their vulnerabilities and capabilities and the institutional and policy contexts that frame these particularly within the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.







This research aims to provide systematic empirical evidence about elderly livelihoods in southern Africa where the significance of population ageing has been heightened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic

#### **Research Objectives**

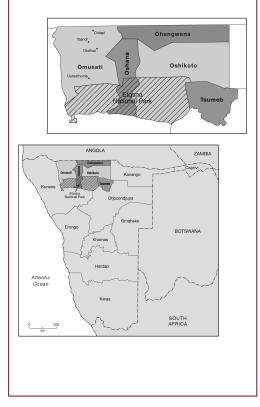
1. To investigate the role of the elderly in contemporary natural resource based livelihoods.

2. To identify the institutional frameworks that affect capabilities and work to constrain and enable access to livelihoods for elderly headed households.

3. To explore changes in 1 and 2 in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

4. To examine the role of policy in contemporary livelihoods among elderly headed households.

#### Omusati Region, northern Namibia



#### **Research Design**

The research is focused on the Omusati region of Northern Namibia, one of the poorest and most densely populated regions in the Namibia characterised by low levels of infrastructure, high natural dependency resource and dominated by mixed subsistence agriculture (see Briefing Note 3a for further details on the study area). The region has the joint highest proportion of pensioners (9% in 2001) and an estimated 33% (2002) infected with HIV.

### Methodology

The research has employed a multimethod, multi-stage methodology (see Briefing 1a for detail) incorporating:

- Settlement profile (survey and ethnographic work)
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- Survey of Elderly Livelihoods
- Case study interviews with elderly headed households
- Focus Groups involving participatory methodologies
- Interviews with local and national representatives and policy makers

**Population Ageing and Sustainable** Livelihoods in regions affected by HIV/AIDS is funded by the ESRC (RES-000-22-1427). The project runs from August 2005 until November 2006. Project website: http://www.ageingnamibia.group.shef.ac.uk/ The Research Team: Principal Investigators: Dr Deborah Sporton (University of Sheffield) d.sporton@shef.ac.uk Mt Alfons Mosimane (UNAM) amosimane@unam.na UNAM Research Fellows: Johanna Mbandi, Samson Mulonga Briefing note 1, September 2006.