

Ageing, Livelihoods and HIV/AIDS

Briefing NotesNo: 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 multi-method, 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.



