

Ageing, Livelihoods and HIV/AIDS Briefing Notes.....No: 2

Elderly Headed Households: Profile

Key Points:

- Although accounting for only 9% of the regional population, over half of all households are headed by the elderly.
- Nearly two-thirds of all such households are female headed.
- Elderly female heads are more likely to be single than male heads
- Elderly household sizes range from 1-21 with an average of 7 co-resident members.
- The elderly bear the burden for caring for children whose parents live away and for orphans
- Elderly household heads lack the education of their younger counterparts.

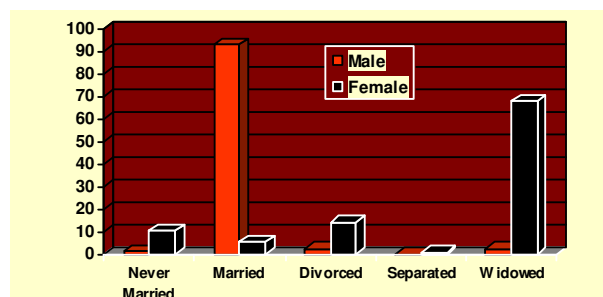
This briefing profiles elderly headed households focusing on the characteristics of heads and the households for which they are responsible. By drawing largely on the household survey (see methodology BN1a), the briefing compares younger and older household characteristics. This profile provides context for subsequent briefings that address livelihoods and HIV/AIDS.

Elderly Household Heads

Although the elderly (>60yrs) constitute just 9% of the population of the Omusati region, our survey revealed that over half (58%) of all households were elderly headed. The elderly therefore play an important role in the majority of households surveyed taking responsibility for the livelihoods of these households. The average age of these elderly household heads was 75 years.

Within the region, the tradition for females to head households is also evident among elderly headed households where 62% are headed by females (compared to 67% for those where household heads <60yrs). A key difference however is that elderly females are overwhelmingly (97%) *de jure* heads compared to 56% of younger female headed households.

Marital Status of Elderly Household Heads



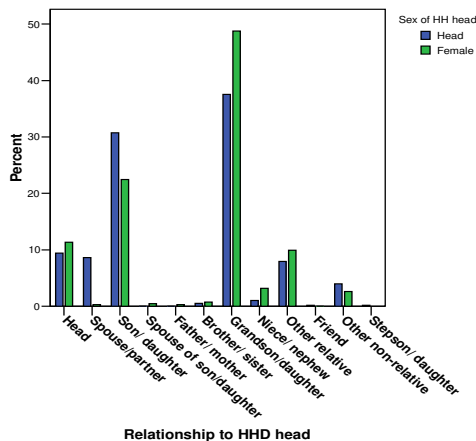
If an elderly person is present in a household, our survey revealed that individual is accorded the status of household head. In households headed by younger (<60 years) individuals nearly all (99%) of household members were aged less than 60.

The marital status profile of elderly household heads varies between those headed by men and women. Elderly female headed households are more likely to be single.

Elderly Headed Households

Elderly headed Household (EHH) sizes were found to range from 1-21 including resident and non-resident members. On average EHHs are slightly larger than younger headed households (YHHs) with 7 compared to 6 co-resident members respectively. Contrary to the popular belief that rural households can draw on support from non-resident household members, the average number of non-residents for both groups was small at two.

Elderly households: Relationship to the household head



Within EHHs, grandchildren constituted the largest group of household members followed by sons/daughters (see above). The elderly have always played an important role in caring for children whose parents live away and are increasingly responsible for the care of orphans (see BN 5 on Orphans). The burden for caring for these children is felt most by Elderly FHHs among whom 64% look after orphans and 86% look after children whose parents live away.

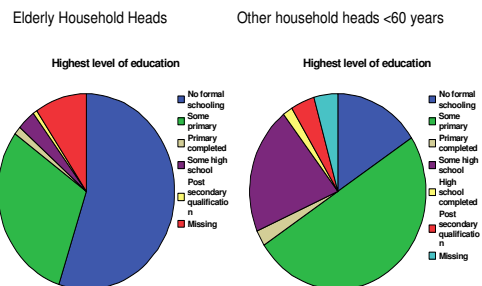
Elderly Headed Households (and in particular FHHs) are more likely to care for children whose parents live away and orphans

	All Households	Elderly Male Headed Households % carers	Elderly Female Headed Households % carers
Orphans	51.3%	57.5%	64.1%
Children whose parents are away	69.7%	75.3%	86.3%

Education

The elderly who head households are most likely to have had no formal education (66%) with a few having only partially completed primary level education. As such many are unable to read or write. This contrasts with younger household heads, the majority of whom have at least some primary education

Education by Age of Household Head



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Project website:

<http://www.ageingnamibia.group.shef.ac.uk/>

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