

Challenges of intergenerational relationships between older carers and children orphaned by AIDS in eastern and southern Africa

Dr Douglas Lackey

Regional Advocacy and Communication Manager

HelpAge International

Africa Regional Development Centre Nairobi, Kenya

Email: dlackey@helpage.co.ke



Outline of Presentation

- Impact of HIV and AIDS on older people and their challenges as carers of children
- Regional Inter-Agency Task Team for Children and HIV and AIDS Intergenerational Relations Research Study
- Policy and programme responses and successes
- Recommendations

The Impact of HIV and AIDS on Older People

HIV and AIDS has been devastating to older people in sub-Saharan Africa and impacts them in two basic ways:

1. Older people are at risk of infection and living with HIV
2. Older people suffer loss of adult children and take responsibility for OVC and PLHIV at a time in their lives when they may have expected to be cared for and not providing care

»

Prevalence rates for 50+ age group

Country /age group	Kenya		Uganda		South Africa		Swaziland	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
50-54	8.3	7.5	7	5.5	10.4	10.2	29	24
55-59	2.3	4.7	5.5	5	6.2	7.7	17	10
60-64 ¹	3.4	1.7			3.5	1.8	14	7
National prevalence	7.1% (15-64)		6.3% (15-59)		10.9% (2+ years)		19% (2+ years)	

¹60+ in South Africa and Swaziland

Source for disaggregated data: KAIS 2007, Uganda HIV/AIDS Sero-Behavioural Survey 2004/2005, S.A. National HIV Prevalence IBC Survey 2008, Swaziland DHS 2006-2007

Source for National prevalence: KAIS 2007, SA National HIV Prevalence IBC Survey 2008, UNAIDS 2008

Who are the caregivers of children orphaned by AIDS?

National level data on profile of OVC caregivers

- No national level data exists on the profile of OVC caregivers. One planned for Ethiopia in 2010
- HelpAge has advocated that Demographic and Health Surveys capture this information
- Census data on orphanhood is a potential source

What is the Scale of the Problem?

- Unicef survey (2007) and HelpAge community-level data (2007) indicate that 40%-50% of children orphaned by AIDS are cared for by older carers, with an average of 3 OVC for each caregiver
- 12 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS/WHO 2008) x 40% older carers = 4.8 million OVC cared for by older carers
- Average 3 OVC per older carer = **1.6 million older carers of OVC**, of which 1.28 million are estimated to be older women (80%) and 320,000 (20%) older men

Challenges of Older Carers

Gender Issues of Older Women Carers

- Less likely to have worked in formal sector to receive a pension and to access IGA opportunities
- Discrimination in accessing, and rights to property and inheritance following death of adult children or spouse
- Psychosocial and physical abuse of older women including rape, leads to isolation and marginalisation
- Higher levels of illiteracy which prohibits access to information

Challenges of Older Carers

Gender Issues of Older Men Carers

- Less accustomed to be involved with social networks
 - Weak parenting and domestic skills as a result of cultural role of men in family affairs
 - Less able to cope alone, leading to depression
- *These challenges have a bearing on the quality of care by older carers and influence the intergenerational relationships older carers have with the children under their care*

Regional Inter-Agency Task Team on Children and HIV and AIDS - Eastern and Southern Africa (RIATT – ESA)

- 2006 GPF recommendation: establish regional task teams to accelerate commitments to meet 2001 UNGASS and MDGs. (Africa - 2006 Abuja Declaration)
- Eastern and Southern Africa RIATT
 - +/- 50 partners, including EAC, SADC, UN agencies, civil society, research, academia
- Held a regional conference in 2008 on Children and AIDS in Dar es Salaam which came up with a number of recommendations linked to older carers

Regional Inter-Agency Task Team on Children and HIV and AIDS (RIATT - ESA)

- There were four thematic groups of recommendations made:
 - Keep parents and children alive
 - **Strengthen families as a unit of care** (under which older carers were included)
 - Increase effectiveness of services and funding
 - Human rights for vulnerable children
- Addressed through research, evidence-gathering, networking and advocacy at regional and national level

Intergenerational Relationships Study

- **Objective:** Identify intergenerational issues for older carers and children orphaned by AIDS and identify policy gaps, lessons learnt, and good practices in support mechanisms to enhance intergenerational relationships
- **Methodology:** Literature review, focus group discussions with older women and men carers, children orphaned by AIDS under the care of older carers in seven countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. To date a total of 227 women and men older carers have participated in FGDs.

Intergenerational Relationships Study : Responses from Older Carers

Meeting basic needs

- Unable to provide basic needs because of limited sources of income
- Children are exposed to early child labour to meet basic needs, work as house maids, girls having transactional sex to gain income
- Educational needs of OVC not met, especially those in secondary schools
- Poor state of housing, limited space
- Many older carers lack documents of deceased parents, struggle to access grants

Intergenerational Relationship Study: Responses from Older Carers

Physical and psychological challenges

- Physical, mental exhaustion dealing with parenting issues: conflicts between children, discipline with teenagers
- Insufficient time for rest, not being able to engage in social and religious activities because of child care
- Lack of role models and a concern they are not passing on norms and values, sometimes competing with external influences: peer pressure, media
- Fear of what will happen to the children when they die

Intergenerational Relationship Issues: Responses from Older Carers

Parenting and psychosocial issues

- Stigma and discrimination by other children and the community including teachers
- Sibling rivalry between children from different parents including bullying, abuse
- Children fear being left alone to cope in case of death of their caregivers
- Carers feel they lack knowledge/skills on how to handle the children psychologically – issues of grief, depression, disclosure

Intergenerational Relationship Study: Responses from Older Carers

Communicating with children on sexuality

- Caution the child on risks and consequences of sex e.g. early pregnancies, unprepared for parenting, risk of HIV
- Older men carers will ask female relative to deal with issues of sexuality, if no choice he will explain issues of sexuality by examples of HIV and AIDS, real life experiences, through story telling

Older female carer in Kenya, *“I do not consider that there is anything so sensitive not to be talked about with orphans. This is a habit of the past. Because of AIDS, there is no need of hiding anything from children, they must be told”*.

Intergenerational Relationship Issues: Responses from Children

Relationships with Grandmothers

- A key source of conflict was around the lack of understanding by the older carers of the children's need for play and rest
- Older carers recognise the importance of formal education and life skills and were an important source of cultural information.
- The relationship is interdependent – grandmothers also depend on children emotionally and for the help they provide.

Source: Living with our *Bibi (Grandmother)*, Kwa Wazee Project, REPSSI 2008

Policy and Programme Responses to Enhance Intergenerational Relations

1. Addressing income insecurity

Dual track strategy:

- Promoting social protection policies and programs to financially support the household – social pensions, cash transfer programmes to caregivers and OVC
- Access to livelihood programmes for older caregivers and their dependants – agricultural inputs, animal husbandry projects, micro-credit schemes

Policy and Programme Responses

- **Regional Policy Addressing Income Insecurity:**
 - **Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Minimum Package of OVCY Support including PSS 2009-2015**
 - **Social transfers** from governments and community entities to individuals or households that can reduce child poverty and vulnerability, help ensure youth, children and caregiver's access to basic social services, and reduce the risk of child and youth exploitation and abuse

Policy and Programme Responses

- **Regional Policy Addressing Income Insecurity:**
 - **SADC: OVCY Strategic Framework 2009 - 2015**
 - Member States adopt affirmative **social protection policies** on livelihoods empowerment, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for OVCY and their families/carers

Policy and Programme Responses

- **National Policy Addressing Income Insecurity:**
 - **Mozambique National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014**
 - Increase the number of affected youth, women and older people that benefit from micro- credit or social transfers
 - Strengthen community action to support OVC with involvement of leaders, other influential people by increasing proportion of people affected by HIV who know their rights, benefits and access them, especially older people, people with disabilities and women

Programme and Policy Responses

- **National Programme Addressing Income Insecurity:**
 - **Kenya OVC Cash Transfer Programme**
 - Managed by Children Department of Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Development
 - Started in 2004 in three districts, scaled up with GOK and donor resources to over 100,000 households in 47 districts. \$20 per month
 - 59% of caregivers are age 50 and above
 - Similar govt. cash transfer programmes being implemented in Zambia, Malawi and CSO programme in Tanzania

Programme and Policy Responses

- **CSO Programme Addressing Income Insecurity:**
 - **Kwa Wazee Project, Tanzania**
 - Provides vulnerable people over age 60, including carers of children with social pension and child benefits.
 - By end of 2007 600 older people receiving \$5 monthly social pension and additionally, older carer receives \$2.50 child benefit for each child
 - Psychosocial (PSS) support groups in which grand parents and grand children meet separately to share their experiences.

Source: Salt, soap and shoes for school, Kwa Wazee Project, REPSSI 2008

Kwa Wazee Project, Tanzania

Benefits for older carers and the children in their care:

- Improvement in food security status, PSS wellbeing, e.g., most pensioners no longer had to beg compared to 2/3 not receiving pension
- % of older people who had to sell assets such as farmland was halved
- Children ate better, enough soap to last most of the month, absent from school less often
- 1/4 of pension recipients able to make modest savings three times more than non pension recipients.

Policy and Programme Responses

2. Promoting community level support for older carers and their dependants

- **Tanzania home-based care for older carers of OVC and PLHIV** - government HBC providers trained on providing PSS support to older carers and OVC
- **HelpAge and REPSSI** have developed PSS for older carers guideline
- **Older carer support groups** have been facilitated by many CSOs, along with training of peer educators
- **Parenting skills training** for older carers: dealing with grieving, depression, disclosure, communication and issues of sexuality, HIV and AIDS

Policy and Programme Recommendations

- **Addressing income insecurity to alleviate impact on intergenerational relationships**
 - Advocate for inclusion of social protection measures for older carers and OVC in new regional and national HIV and AIDS policies and strategic frameworks and
 - Allocation of resources and implementation of programme action plans on social protection measures for older carers and OVC
 - Evaluate social protection/livelihood programmes supporting older carers and OVC implemented by CSOs and advocate for scale up in national and district development policies and programmes

Policy and Programme Recommendations

- **Promoting community level support to older caregivers and their dependants to enhance intergenerational relationships**
 - Child-focused CSOs mainstream support to older carers of OVC including facilitating older carer support groups and parenting skills training
 - Home-based care providers prioritise PSS support to older carers and OVC
 - Advocate for UNGASS indicators which assess the support to caregivers of children orphaned by AIDS

Conclusion

- **“Children prefer to live with their grandparents after the death of their parents rather than other relatives. They feel that their grandparents provide more love and affection than other relatives”.**
- Let us dedicate ourselves to ensure that the necessary support is being provided to grandparents and children under their care to nurture and enhance this loving interpersonal relationship

Source: International HIV/AIDS Alliance and HAI, Building Blocks- Africa Wide briefing notes on supporting older carers, 2004

Thank You

