Forgotten Families

Supporting older carers of orphans and vulnerable children

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HelpAge International
HelpAge International (HAI) is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives.

- Network of affiliate organisations supported by HAI Regional Development Centres (RDCs) in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Plus Country Development Programmes (CDPs) in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan and Tanzania.

- 20 years experience of working with disadvantaged older women and men in Africa, 10 years experience in dealing with the impacts of the AIDS epidemic on older people and their families and communities. Africa RDC is based in Nairobi, Kenya.
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Ageing and the impact of AIDS on Africa

40 Million people over the age of 60 in Africa

- 80 Million by 2015
- Increase nearly five fold by 2050

Africa will continue to age, despite the impact of AIDS.

- Period from now until 2015 likely to see highest death rates among adults leaving larger proportion of older people and young children.

Many older people in Africa live in poverty

- Discrimination, lack of policy and legislation on ageing
- Declining economic situation, poor agricultural performance
- Impact of HIV/AIDS and food shortages
- Rise in conflict and emergency situations

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Feeling the strain: older people and HIV/AIDS

- Primary caregivers for people living with AIDS (PLWA)
  Zimbabwe - 71.8 per cent of caregivers over the age of 60, 74.2 per cent women (WHO 2002)

- At risk of infection
  Uganda: 50+ seeking VCT services increased from 3 to 30 per cent between 1992 and 2002. Over 20 per cent tested positive.

- Guardians of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs)
  Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe: 60% OVCs in grandparent headed households
  Botswana, Malawi, and Tanzania : 50 %

- Face stigma and exclusion

- Denied their rights to information, support, treatment and care
Over 90 per cent of orphaned children with extended family

“Relationship of double orphans & single orphans not living with surviving parent to the head of household”

Source: Measure DHS, UNICEF-MICS, 1997-2000
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Increasing role of grandparents

Relationship of double orphans & single orphans not living with surviving parent with head of household they live in, Namibia 1992 & 2000
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Older carers of orphans and vulnerable children


Programme in 10 villages, Tete Province, Mozambique. Over first two years of project:

- Older carers increased from 425 to 1429 (330% incr.)
- Orphaned children increased from 1216 to 3497 (287% incr.)
- Equals an average increase of ca. 130 orphaned children/month under the care of older people.
- Over seventy percent of the older caregivers are women.
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Consequences for older people and OVCs

- Exclusion from HIV programmes
- Economic vulnerability
  Older headed households on average poorer, reduced income earning capacity, little if any social security support
- Reduced access to education
  Children drop out of school unable to pay school fees and expenses, Older people and children have to work to earn household income
- Health impacts
  Stress of caring for sick family members and dependents, poverty, lack of access to quality health care
- Psycho-social trauma:
  Weakened social ties and traditional support mechanisms, feelings of grief, loss and guilt, stress related to caring role, Lack of counseling support
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HelpAge International’s response: The principles

- Support older caregivers basic needs and those of their families
  Promote the needs and rights of older people and their economic and psychological empowerment. Integrated programmes of income generation and promotion, counseling, training and advice.

- Keep families and communities together
  Best interest of child and of older people and their communities, building on the reciprocal relations between generations.

- Promote community based responses
  Inclusive programming through participation and consultation. Strengthen existing family and community support structures with mutually reinforcing programme components.

Proactive policy engagement – social protection for the poor

- Develop evidence for policy and programme responses for older carers and OVC.
  Participatory research, academic partnership, collaboration with UNICEF etc.
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Examples of direct support
- Income support
  Access to social protection
  Income promotion
- Health support
  Home based care support
- Education Support
- Psycho-social support
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Challenges

- Rapid rise in numbers of orphaned children and older carers
- Food insecurity, esp. southern Africa and Ethiopia
- Poverty, lack of social security provision for OP and OVCs
- Exclusion of Older People from HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation programmes, incl. research and data sets. (Recent progress, World Bank and UNICEF)
- Language, illiteracy and low educational levels of older people and unwillingness of Development Agencies/AIDS service Orgs and Donors to support OP
- Cultural practices that undermine HIV prevention and put people at risk (wife inheritance, Female Genital Cutting, Circumcisions etc. Often performed by older people themselves).
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Recommendations

- Community based responses targeting primary caregivers, strengthen coping mechanisms and revitalise existing support structures.
- Information needed on: older caregivers, situation of OVCs living in older headed households, resources and capacities, best practices.
- Adequate policy responses for social protection measures for most affected households, directly target resources for older people and OVC, include explicitly in national and international HIV/AIDS and poverty reduction plans.
- Sensitivity to local structures, cultures, customs. ‘Scale up’ should not equal ‘one size fits all’. Communities supported on own priorities.

International community must:

- Build capacity of both governments to respond to needs of citizens (through better government structures and social protection mechanisms)
- Support CBO, FBOs and NGOs to deliver services and work with local communities in truly community driven response to development.
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Select Resources

‘Forgotten Families’ Older people as carers of orphans and vulnerable children HelpAge International and International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2003

‘Caring for the future’ Summary of a workshop on Coping strategies, support programmes and policy responses for older people caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Africa, HelpAge International, 2004


The Impact of AIDS on Older People in Africa: The Zimbabwe Case Study WHO Ageing and Lifecourse Unit, 2002.

Africa’s Orphaned Generations UNICEF 2003