



AIDS-affected young people's access to livelihood assets: Exploring 'new variant famine' in rural southern Africa



Nicola Ansell ^{a,*}, Flora Hajdu ^b, Lorraine van Blerk ^c, Elsbeth Robson ^d

^a Centre for Human Geography, College of Health and Life Sciences, Brunel University, Uxbridge, West London UB8 3PH, UK

^b Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, P.O. Box 7012, SE-750 07 Uppsala, Sweden

^c Geography, University of Dundee, Perth Road, Dundee DD1 4HN, UK

^d Department of Geography, Environment & Earth Sciences, Cohen Building, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 31 January 2015

Received in revised form

16 April 2016

Accepted 22 May 2016

Available online 28 May 2016

Keywords:

Children

HIV

Livelihoods

Rural

Youth

Southern Africa

ABSTRACT

The 'new variant famine' hypothesis suggests AIDS is contributing to food insecurity in southern Africa. Proposed causal mechanisms include a loss of livelihood assets and skills, brought about through AIDS' impacts on children's access to inherited property and intergenerationally-transferred knowledge. This paper employs a sustainable livelihoods framework to examine how AIDS is impacting on young people's access to assets and skills in two southern African countries: Malawi and Lesotho. Drawing on qualitative research with rural youth, the paper shows that AIDS affects some young people's access to some livelihood assets, but does not do so in a systematic or predictable way, nor are its impacts invariably negative. The broader cultural and institutional context is of key importance. The paper also demonstrates the need for the sustainable livelihoods framework to take greater account of the temporalities of livelihoods, and in particular the significance of lifecourse and generation.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Southern Africa's exceptionally high HIV prevalence and recurrent food crises prompted [de Waal and Whiteside \(2003\)](#) to hypothesise a 'new variant famine' (NVF) in which inability to access food is driven by the effects of AIDS. Among the tentative explanations are the 'loss of livelihood skills and assets' brought about through AIDS' impacts on rural children. In particular, they suggested that orphaned children may fail to inherit land or other productive assets, and inter-generational transmission of knowledge and skills may be disrupted, leaving orphans ill-prepared to build food-secure livelihoods. However, these propositions remain largely untested ([Mason et al., 2010](#)). This paper presents findings from research that explored how AIDS, in interaction with other factors, is affecting young rural southern Africans' livelihood activities, opportunities and choices. The paper applies a sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) to examine the relationship between

AIDS and young people's access to livelihood assets, with potential implications for future food insecurity.

The paper begins by briefly introducing the NVF hypothesis, and the postulated role of young people in linking AIDS and food insecurity. The SLF is introduced and the research settings and methods described. The paper then considers how AIDS affects young people's livelihoods in the communities studied, focusing principally on the processes at the heart of the NVF hypothesis. It emphasises the role of contextual factors – not just the shock posed by AIDS but also the transforming processes, structural and policy contexts that enable or inhibit access to assets and their use in constructing livelihoods, particularly relation to AIDS. The paper concludes that while AIDS is affecting some young people's access to assets, it is but one of many factors shaping young people's livelihoods and is unlikely to have a systematic or predictable effect on future food security. Moreover, the paper demonstrates that if the SLF is to more adequately anticipate livelihood sustainability, the temporalities of livelihoods, and the role of lifecourse and generation, need greater prominence.

2. New variant famine and the role of young people

Since 2000, food insecurity has re-emerged as a major threat,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: nicola.ansell@brunel.ac.uk (N. Ansell), flora.hajdu@slu.se (F. Hajdu), l.c.vanblerk@dundee.ac.uk (L. van Blerk), E.Robson@hull.ac.uk (E. Robson).

particularly in southern Africa where over 15 million were affected in 2002 (SADC-FANR, 2003) and nearly 29 million were food insecure in 2015 (OCHA, 2015). Southern Africa also suffers the world's highest adult HIV prevalence rates, ranging up to 27.7% (UNAIDS, 2014). This coincidence of AIDS and food insecurity led de Waal and Whiteside (2003) to hypothesise a 'new variant famine' (NVF) caused by the pandemic. Specifically, they hypothesised that 'the HIV/AIDS epidemic in southern Africa accounts for why many households are facing food shortage and explains the grim trajectory of limited recovery' (p.1234). The causal mechanisms linking AIDS and food insecurity are not well established (Gibbs, 2008) but AIDS is believed both to reduce household-level food production and to restrict livelihood coping strategies that would offer protection from food scarcity. de Waal and Whiteside (2003) suggested four drivers: changing dependency patterns, loss of assets and skills, an increased burden of care and the vicious interaction between AIDS and malnutrition. The second of these drivers implicates AIDS' impacts on young people (as future food producers and household managers), and is the most likely to threaten long-term food security.

It is speculated that AIDS diminishes young people's access to assets and skills in diverse ways. When their parents die, livestock and equipment may be sold to fund medical and funeral costs, or misappropriated by relatives (Kimaryo et al., 2003; Munthali and Ali, 2000). The significance of such assets and practices that govern their distribution vary between contexts: customary law and legislation, for instance, affect children's ability to inherit (Kimaryo et al., 2003). Moreover, if those who inherit land are too young or inexperienced to farm it, and relatives lack time and resources to manage it on their behalf, their usufruct rights may be lost, leaving them landless as adults (Slater and Wiggins, 2005; White and Robinson, 2000). In terms of human capital, orphaned children may be withdrawn from school (Operario et al., 2008). Moreover, children are believed to acquire livelihood skills by working with parents and siblings, whose premature death may interrupt intergenerational knowledge transfer (Hlanze et al., 2005; Loevinsohn and Gillespie, 2003; Mphale et al., 2002; White and Robinson, 2000). de Waal and Whiteside (2003) give the example of knowledge of wild foods and their preparation which is handed from mother to daughter and is important when faced with famine. Where knowledge is traditionally differentiated by age and gender, difficulties may be exacerbated: the surviving parent may lack the appropriate knowledge to pass on to children of the opposing gender, or the child might be orphaned before being considered old enough to learn a skill (Alumira et al., 2005; Haddad and Gillespie, 2001). de Waal and Whiteside (2003) also suggest that AIDS-affected young people may lack the planning skills and social networks that would allow them to plan a year-long strategy to protect their livelihood, drawing on income-earning opportunities, as well as direct food production.

Until recently, studies of AIDS' impacts on young people generally addressed only isolated aspects of their livelihood prospects, and many lacked substantive evidence. Research also neglected the contexts in which AIDS impinges on young people's livelihoods, and the significance of other processes in shaping their activities. The research reported in this paper was undertaken to explore holistically how AIDS affects young people's potential to participate in sustainable food-secure livelihoods in varying geographical/livelihood contexts (Pinder, 2003), and in particular how AIDS affects access to livelihood assets across generations.

3. The sustainable livelihoods framework

Since the NVF hypothesis focuses on the effects of AIDS on livelihood coping strategies, and the consequent outcomes for food

security, in this paper we draw on the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) developed by Chambers and Conway (1991) and subsequently elaborated by others (e.g. Bebbington, 1999; Scoones, 1998). This holistic, actor-centred approach directs attention to multiple dimensions of livelihoods and the connections between them (Adebayo and Idowu, 2007). In most formulations, the livelihood strategies people adopt, are understood to depend on being able to access, defend and sustain a range of assets (alternatively referred to as 'resources' or 'capitals') (Bebbington, 1999). In a widely used representation (Fig. 1), Carney (1998) classifies these as natural (land); social (networks, relationships); human (skills, knowledge, ability to labour); physical (production equipment, livestock); and financial (savings, income). Rather than focusing one type of asset in isolation, the SLF recognises that assets are combined in order to pursue strategies including agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration that either directly produce food or provide entitlement to it (Scoones, 1998). These strategies in turn determine resilience (including food security) or vulnerability.

A fundamental aspect of the SLF is the role played by context. This includes the 'vulnerability context' – the shocks and trends experienced over time – and also the transforming structures and processes operating at micro- and macro-levels that shape the ways in which assets can be accessed and deployed in particular livelihood strategies. The ultimate outcomes ('sustainable livelihoods') are not purely material but incorporate subjective aspects of wellbeing that vary between individuals and societies (Scoones, 1998), as well as the potential to transform society (Bebbington, 1999). Moreover, people's engagements in livelihoods reflect contests over social value and differing understandings of 'reality' (Arce, 2003).

The SLF codifies and simplifies reality and needs to be employed flexibly (Hinshelwood, 2003). Scoones (1998) advocates its use as a checklist of issues to explore. In this paper we employ it to investigate the possibility, as proposed in the NVF hypothesis, that AIDS is precipitating a loss of assets and skills. We use the SLF to shed light specifically on the relationship between an element of the 'vulnerability context' (the shock of AIDS) and young people's access to livelihood assets. Notwithstanding the significance of other livelihood goals, the outcome that concerns us is food security. Since the SLF conceives of livelihoods holistically, these relationships cannot be examined in isolation. We examine how 'transforming structures and processes' mediate not only the ways in which assets are employed in livelihood strategies, but also the ways in which they are accessed and the role that the vulnerability context plays. Livelihood opportunities and aspirations are significant, as these shape what constitutes an asset. However, our primary focus is not the strategies young people employ (whether direct food production or other), nor whether particular strategies lead to food security more than to other goals. Rather, we are concerned with whether AIDS shapes their access to assets and skills that are important for productive and sustainable livelihoods.

3.1. Assets, resources and capitals: terms and concepts

In using the SLF it is necessary to be attentive to a number of critiques. Aspects of the framework have been interpreted in different ways by different scholars, and afforded different levels of significance. The conceptualisation of assets and references to 'capital' have proved particularly controversial. Scoones (2015) elaborates how the term 'capital' was used to persuade economists to think more broadly – to recognise diverse forms of capital endowments that people have access to, and control over, that may include personal capabilities, tangible assets, and intangible assets. Yet Arce (2003) warns against conflating assets with such an

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6545378>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6545378>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)