

Poverty among the elderly and children in Mainland Tanzania

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This brief analyses the economic situation of elderly persons and children in Tanzania. Significantly, the analysis found that households with elderly and children only are by far the poorest, in both urban and rural areas; 45% of these households are below the poverty line, compared with 33% of households with at least one adult of working age. A very high percentage are female-headed (62%). Based on the evidence collected, both the elderly persons and children in these households – an estimated 330,000 children and 251,000 elderly people – merit special consideration in national programmes of social protection and agricultural development.

Introduction

The elderly and children are commonly considered to deserve special consideration in programmes of social protection. Indeed, Tanzania's National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) identifies the elderly and children as especially vulnerable groups in society. This concern has grown partly because of the impact of HIV and AIDS, which has led to an increase in the numbers of orphaned children, some of whom are cared for by their grandparents. This brief examines the incidence of poverty among the elderly and children, and the extent to which they may be in need of publicly-supported social protection. It focuses on the situation of the elderly and children who live in households with no working-age adult. Data for this analysis was drawn in large part from the 2007 Household Budget Survey (HBS) as well as Tanzania HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey (THMIS) 2007-08 and the Views of the People (VoP) survey conducted by REPOA in 2007.

The elderly and children: Population and living arrangements

Of the estimated total population of 38.3 million people in 2007 (MoFEA, 2009), 6.1% or 2.3 million Tanzanians were aged 60 years and older (TACAIDS et al., 2008). Of the elderly population, approximately 18% (409,000) live with other elderly persons only, and around 11% (251,000) live with children only. Altogether, 660,000 elderly are living in households without adults of prime working age. In addition, 1.7% (330,000) Tanzanian children reside in households with only elderly adults. Thus about one million elderly people and children might be considered to be especially at risk of poverty since they live with no adult of working age.

Similarly, orphaned children – i.e., those who have lost one or both of their parents – are commonly considered to be highly vulnerable. Overall, 10.8% or 2.1 million Tanzanian children under the age of 18 years have been orphaned. Most orphaned children are living in households with working-age adults. Assuming that children living with only elderly adults are orphaned, this

group represents 15.7% of the 2.1 million orphaned children.

Households with only elderly people or with children and elderly only are more likely than other households to live in rural areas. Three-quarters of all households in Tanzania are in rural areas, but 86% of all elderly only households and 83% of households with only children and elderly persons are found in rural areas (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of households in rural areas, by household type, 2007

	% Rural
Children and elderly persons only	83
Elderly persons only	86
All households	75

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Household income and consumption

As may be expected, the main sources of income for households with only the elderly or with children and the elderly only differ from those of households with at least one working-age adult (Table 2). The principal difference lies in the proportion of these households that rely on cash remittances; in 2007, 18% of households with elderly and

children and 22% of the households with elderly only depended on cash remittances as their main source of income, compared with only 2% of other households. A much larger percentage of urban than rural households received remittances; 41% of urban households with elderly and children, and 36% of urban households with elderly only depend on cash remittances as their main source of household income, compared with 13% and 19% respectively among these types of households in rural areas. Among rural households with elderly and children only, the sale of crops is the main source of income which is not very different from that of other households. To what extent the lower receipt of remittances among rural households is determined by the state of rural infrastructure and access to financial services is not known from HBS data. It is possible that wider use of mobile telecommunications may change this pattern.

Not surprisingly, own food production is a major source of all food consumed in rural households, and households with elderly only or with children and elderly only are little different from other rural households in this respect (Table 3). Even in urban areas, households with only children and the elderly produce almost 25% of the total value of the

Table 2: Main source of household income, by type of household and by area of residence, 2007 (% of households)

Main source of household income	Households with elderly only			Households with elderly and children only			Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)		
	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All
Sale of food crops	19.9	56.3	50.3	19.9	52.9	48.0	12.6	49.4	38.7
Sale of cash crops	3.0	19.9	17.1	4.2	9.5	8.7	4.9	15.2	12.3
Sale of live stock/products	2.2	1.5	1.6	1.9	0.7	0.9	1.1	4.4	3.4
Fishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.8	1.4	2.7	2.4
Wages/salaries/casual income	17.9	3.0	5.4	20.6	10.4	11.9	44.3	11.5	21.0
Business income	13.2	0.8	2.8	12.6	1.9	3.5	28.5	10.6	15.8
Cash remittances	41.2	13.4	18.0	36.2	19.2	21.8	3.1	1.4	1.9
Other (sale of charcoal, timber, firewood, other)	2.6	5.1	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.1	4.8	4.6

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Table 3: Distribution of monetary value of food consumed, by type of household and area of residence, 2007
(% of households)

	Households with elderly only			Households with elderly and children only			Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)		
	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural	All
Own production	24.7	44.4	41.1	14.4	40.8	36.9	6.3	37.9	28.7
Gift	10.1	10.3	10.2	10.7	13.4	13.0	2.5	4.1	3.7
Purchased and other	65.2	45.3	48.7	74.9	45.8	50.1	91.2	58.0	67.6

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

food they consume. Food donations also play a substantial role; 10% of the value of food consumed by households with elderly and children was obtained through gifts. For households with elderly only this proportion was 13%. In contrast, in households with at least one adult of working age, only 4% of the value of food was obtained as gifts.

HBS data do not allow for a disaggregation of consumption data by the sex of household members. Information from Views of the People 2007 sheds some light on this. In that survey, adult men and women were asked, "Have there been times during the last year when you didn't have enough food to eat". An analysis of the VoP data found that among respondents who lived outside Dar es Salaam, elderly women were much more likely than elderly men to report being without enough to eat "always or often", and even older women in

extended family settings did not seem to be protected from frequently going hungry (Mboghoina & Osberg, 2009).

Poverty

Table 4 shows the poverty rates for the three categories of households. Households with elderly and children only are by far the poorest, in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, 43% of these households are poor; in rural areas 46% are poor. In comparison, the poverty rate for households with prime working age adults is 22% in urban areas and 37% in rural areas.

Conversely, households with elderly only are much less likely to be poor; just over 12% of these households in urban areas and 18% in rural areas were below the Basic Needs Poverty Line. In fact, the poverty rate of households with elderly only is almost half that of the entire

Table 4: Percentage of population below the Basic Needs Poverty Line, and median monthly consumption expenditure per adult equivalent (TShs), by area of residence, 2007

Type of household	Urban		Rural		All	
	Poverty rate (%)	Median expenditure (Tshs)	Poverty rate (%)	Median expenditure (Tshs)	Poverty rate (%)	Median expenditure (Tshs)
Children and elderly	42.6	16,651	45.9	15,306	45.4	15,306
Elderly only	12.3	28,086	18.0	28,311	17.2	28,311
Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)	21.7	22,382	37.2	16,582	33.3	17,936

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

population, and median monthly per adult expenditures are correspondingly higher in households with only the elderly than in other households.

Among households with elderly and children, poor households are larger (3.4 persons) than non-poor households (2.9 persons). The difference is largely because of the larger number of children in these households. There is little difference in household size among households with only the elderly, poor or non-poor (Table 5).

Table 5: Size of households with elderly and children and with elderly only, by poverty status, 2007

	Elderly & children		Elderly only	
	Non-poor	Poor	Non-poor	Poor
Number of children	1.5	2.1	-	-
Number of elderly	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.3
Household size	2.9	3.4	1.4	1.3

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Male-headed and female-headed households

Because of the special concern about elderly women, particularly grandmothers caring for orphaned children, information about poverty among female- and male-headed households was analysed. About one-quarter of households with prime working-age adults are reported to be female-headed, 77% male-headed. However, among households with elderly and children only, a much larger percentage are female-headed – 62%. These are likely to be the households in which grandmothers are caring for their grandchildren, and, as shown above, they are more likely to be poor.

Table 6: Sex of head of household, 2007

	Male-headed (%)	Female-headed (%)
Elderly and children	37.9	62.1
Elderly only	59.8	40.2
Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)	77.0	23.0

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Very high percentages of households with elderly and children only are female-headed in Arusha (100%), Pwani (91.5%), Singida (90.4%) and Dar es Salaam (87.9%).

Overall, of the people who live in households with prime working age adults, about one-third in both female-headed and male-headed households are poor. In urban areas, those in female-headed households are more likely to be poor (25%) than those in male-headed households (20%). However, in urban households with only elderly people, fewer female-headed households (8%) are poor than male-headed households (15%). The pattern is reversed for elderly-only households in rural areas, where those in female-headed households (21%) are more likely to be poor than in male-headed households (17%) (Table 7).

Table 7: Percentage of population below the Basic Needs Poverty Line, by household head and area of residence, 2007

	Urban		Rural		All	
	Male-headed	Female-headed	Male-headed	Female-headed	Male-headed	Female-headed
Children and elderly	35.7	45.9	42.2	49.3	41.4	48.6
Elderly only	15.3	8.4	16.7	20.8	16.5	18.4
Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)	20.4	25.5	37.4	36.4	33.4	33.1

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Again, it is the children and elderly who live together without working-age adults who are most likely to be poor. Of these, female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households, in both urban and rural areas. Nearly one-half of those who live in female-headed households with elderly and children only are poor.

More detailed information about sources of income for male-headed and female-headed households is provided in Tables 8a and 8b. The largest differences are in the receipt of

remittances. Just over one-quarter of female-headed households with elderly and children only received remittances, as did 30% of female-headed households with only the elderly. The corresponding percentages for male-headed households were 5% and 16%. Again, receipt of remittances was much higher in urban households than in rural for both male- and female-headed households. Forty-five percent of urban female-headed households with elderly and children or with elderly only received remittances.

Table 8a: Sources of household income in male-headed households, by area of residence, 2007

Main source of household income	Households with elderly and children only			Households with elderly only			Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Sale of food crops	15.7	60.8	55.7	19.3	50.1	46.2	12.3	49.7	39.5
Sale of cash crops	11.3	29.9	27.8	5.2	11.2	10.5	5.2	15.6	12.8
Sale of live stock/products	8.5	1.7	2.5	3.8	1.1	1.5	1.1	4.6	3.6
Fishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.4	1.6	3.2	2.8
Wages/salaries/casual income	12.3	3.2	4.3	28.9	15.0	16.8	48.1	12.1	21.9
Business income	17.0	0.0	1.9	9.7	2.1	3.1	26.0	9.6	14.1
Cash remittances	32.0	1.8	5.2	27.1	14.8	16.4	1.5	0.5	0.7
Other (sale of charcoal, timber, firewood, other)	3.2	2.6	2.7	6.0	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.9	4.7

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Table 8b: Sources of household income in female-headed households, by area of residence, 2007

Main source of household income	Households with elderly and children only			Households with elderly only			Households with at least one working-age adult (18-59 years)		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Sale of food crops	21.4	53.3	47.1	20.6	57.3	50.6	13.4	48.2	36.3
Sale of cash crops	0.0	13.2	10.6	3.2	6.9	6.3	4.1	13.9	10.6
Sale of live stock/products	0.0	1.4	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	3.6	2.6
Fishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.1	1.0
Wages/salaries/casual income	19.9	2.8	6.1	12.4	3.3	4.9	34.1	9.2	17.7
Business income	11.8	1.3	3.3	15.4	1.7	4.2	35.2	14.4	21.5
Cash remittances	44.6	21.3	25.8	45.2	26.0	29.5	7.5	5.0	5.8
Other (sale of charcoal, timber, firewood, other)	2.3	6.8	5.9	3.2	4.9	4.5	4.0	4.6	4.4

Source: Lindeboom, tabulations of data from HBS 2007

Conclusion

This analysis indicates that elderly people living alone or in households with other elderly persons are much less likely to be poor than other Tanzanians. That these older Tanzanians are living alone might suggest that they are more able to sustain themselves, otherwise they would depend on and live with their adult children. Of all elderly people, 70% live in households with working-age adults; 18% in households with elderly only.

Eleven percent of the elderly live in households with elderly and children only, with no prime working-age adult. Among these, households with a greater number of children are more likely to be poor. A much larger percentage of households with elderly and children only are female-headed than the Mainland average.

There has been special concern about the vulnerability and poverty of orphaned children and their elderly caregivers living with no prime working-age adult. These households constitute 2.3% of all households, 62% of which are female-headed. An estimated 330,000 children and 251,000 elderly people live in them. Over 80% of elderly and children only households are in rural areas and almost half of them live below the poverty line. Their main source of income, as for other rural households, is the sale of farm produce. Cash remittances are received by only 21% of rural female-headed households and 2% of male-headed households. Based on the evidence of this analysis, elderly and children only households merit special consideration in national programmes of social protection and agricultural development.

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