



# Averting 'New Variant Famine'

Briefing Notes No 13

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## Enhancing AIDS-affected young people's prospects of achieving sustainable rural livelihoods

*Based on the findings of the research project above and discussion at dissemination workshops held with young people, with adult community members and with representatives from government, donors, UN agencies and NGOs, this briefing puts forward policy recommendations in a variety of fields.*

### Education

Free primary education and bursaries for vulnerable children have enabled many AIDS-affected young people to continue attending school. However obstacles remain, including schools charging 'development fees', requiring uniforms, and excluding pregnant or married girls. These (often unsanctioned) practices need eliminating. In terms of assuring future food security, however, education systems need to offer a curriculum more relevant to rural livelihoods. In pursuing the elusive goal of formal sector employment (heavily promoted by schools), schoolchildren forego other opportunities to accumulate resources.

### Support for enterprise

At the dissemination workshops, young people, com-

munities and policymakers called for vocational training to be more widely available. Only one young person in the study had received formal skills training, and informal training was expensive for those without personal connections. Varied interventions are needed. In Nihelo, young people required guidance on sustaining businesses, while in Ha Rantelali the challenge



Gathering views on policy recommendations at a community dissemination workshop in Nihelo

is to identify suitable business opportunities. In both countries, opportunities and mechanisms for tapping non-local and international markets must be identified. Many youth have skills, but would benefit from start-up grants targeted at potentially productive activities.

### Agriculture and food security measures

Minimum levels of security are needed to enable young people to expend

time and resources on anything beyond day-to-day subsistence. Agricultural policy can provide a safety net. Among young people in Nihelo, efficient delivery of Malawi's fertiliser subsidy is considered vital. This allows more production from small fields, and frees time from labouring to pay for food or fertiliser. It does, however, inhibit innovative

(environmentally more sustainable) alternatives to maize cultivation. In Lesotho, investment in household food production is viewed as inefficient in view of cheap South African grain imports. In the mountains, however, where prices are higher and income generating options more limited, household production remains important. The Lesotho government responds to food insecurity with food aid and food-for-work schemes. These valuable safety nets do little to assist young people to develop sustainable long-term livelihoods. In contrast, land allocation committees are allowing otherwise landless Basotho youth to acquire livelihood assets. This benefits orphans who lose land when they migrate to live with relatives, as well as others

### Key Points:

- Education needs to be more relevant to the livelihood options available to the majority of rural youth
- Successful engagement in rural enterprise requires not only skills training, but also business education and the identification of opportunities that rely not only on the local market
- Fertiliser subsidies, food aid and food for work programmes free time and energy to devote to activities with secure long term prospects
- Cash transfers, including those directed at elderly people, help young people do business and find employment by putting more cash into local circulation
- The project findings do not support the targeting of interventions specifically at AIDS-affected young people



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CENTRE FOR HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, BRUNEL UNIVERSITY



University of Malawi



National University  
of Lesotho

### Cash transfers

Both Malawi and Lesotho have introduced cash transfer programmes. In Lesotho, old age pensions, introduced in 2004, have benefited AIDS-affected children, many of whom live with elderly relatives. Malawi is instead targeting poverty and dependency ratios in a scheme that has yet to reach Nihelo. Such measures offer security to recipient households, allowing young people to remain in school or invest in business. The greater prosperity of poor households also expands the market for casual labour and small businesses, providing opportunities to other young people.

### Targeting

Directly targeting AIDS-affected young people with any form of intervention may be inappropriate, not because AIDS has no effect, but because it does not predict vulnerability. In Nihelo, all households were poor and vulnerable. In Lesotho a minority were significantly less vulnerable, among them households of former miners who died leaving large herds as well as orphans. Interventions targeted at AIDS-affected children may also weaken social mechanisms through which children receive care by shifting responsibility from extended families to the state or providing incentives for children to live

apart from adults. Social protection measures should also better accommodate the transition in an AIDS-affected household when



Community workshop, Ha Rantelali

an adult dies. Food aid to AIDS patients, which usually also benefits their children, stops when the person dies. In contrast, bursaries are hard to obtain until a child's parents have died (by which time they may have left school).



Policy workshop, Blantyre

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**Project website:** [www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sse/chg/projects/nvf](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sse/chg/projects/nvf)

#### Research team:

Dr Nicola Ansell [nicola.ansell@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.ansell@brunel.ac.uk)  
Dr Elsbeth Robson [e.robson@africa-online.net](mailto:e.robson@africa-online.net)  
Dr Lorraine van Blerk [l.c.vanblerk@reading.ac.uk](mailto:l.c.vanblerk@reading.ac.uk)  
Dr Flora Hajdu [flora.hajdu@gmail.com](mailto:flora.hajdu@gmail.com)  
Lucy Chipeta [lkchipeta@chanco.unima.mw](mailto:lkchipeta@chanco.unima.mw)