



Averting 'New Variant Famine'

Briefing Notes No 9

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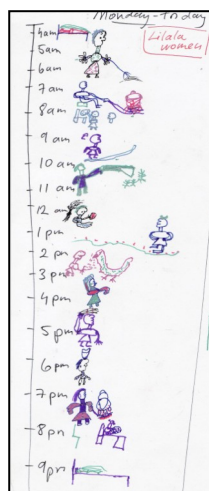
AIDS-affected young people's involvement in livelihood activities

Current principal livelihoods

Most research participants aged under 18 were still at school. Prominent livelihood activities among older youth in Lesotho were herding livestock (young men) and farming and domestic work (young women). In Malawi activities were more diverse, with many young people growing vegetables for sale on *dimba* (riverside plots irrigated by watering can), labouring for other villagers ('*ganyu*'), running informal businesses (baking food for sale, building houses etc) and cultivating subsistence crops.

Other livelihood activities

In addition to their principal occupations, all young people undertook other daily, weekly and seasonal activities.



Young women's activity calendar
Ha Rantelali

In Nihelo, for instance, Yamikani (aged 17) attends school, works on the fields, irrigates a *dimba*, and looks after the household's pigs and rabbits. Lucius (aged 13) combines school with farming, making baskets and *ganyu*.

Experience of livelihoods

Many Malawian youth had previously engaged in various small businesses, e.g. baking and selling food or trading in goods such as fish or maize. In both communities several had undertaken paid work, mostly in town or (in Malawi) on agricultural estates.

Impacts of AIDS on livelihood activities

Orphanhood and other impacts of AIDS do not appear to have a generalised impact on the principal livelihood activities young people undertake. While several participants reported having left school upon the death of a parent (usually a father), school attendance was higher among AIDS-affected than unaffected participants, and AIDS-affected 18-24-year-olds had on average progressed further through school. While such quanti-

tative measures cannot be generalised beyond the two communities, they do emphasise that many young people drop out for reasons unrelated to AIDS.

Among the young people who have left school there is little evidence for a systematically different experience of employment or business among those affected by AIDS (although again there are specific stories of the impacts of AIDS). *Dimba*

cultivation was practised in equal measure by AIDS-affected and unaffected youth. In Lesotho, most young men reported leaving school in order to herd, a roughly equal number working for their own family (usually unpaid) as for unrelated families (remunerated with a cow a year). Surprisingly only one of the participants herding for an unrelated family was an orphan. Equal numbers of affected and unaffected Ha Rantelali youth were

working away from the village. The only livelihoods in which AIDS-affected youth were underrepresented were the more lucrative informal businesses such as building in Nihelo.

Key Points:

- Young people in both communities engage in multiple and diverse livelihood activities that change over time
- Livelihood strategies both help fulfil immediate needs and build (or deplete) assets for the future
- Young people's livelihoods are not simply individual – relationships with families and the production of new relationships through marriage play key roles
- Livelihoods are also spatial – migration is important
- AIDS affects different young people's livelihoods in different ways – AIDS-affected young people tend to remain in school longer than others, but there are no other generalised differences



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Three dimensions of livelihoods



University of Malawi



National University of Lesotho

Temporality

Young people undertake activities both to fulfil their immediate livelihood needs and to secure their longer term prospects. Future food security depends partly on the balance between the two. Where young people can undertake activities geared to their future livelihoods (including education and training but also gaining experience and making useful contacts), their prospects are enhanced. In SLA terms, they are accumulating assets: human capital, through formal and informal learning; natural capital, through for instance acquiring land through marriage; social capital through forming useful friendships; and physical capital through accruing livestock or tools.



Gaining experience of selling tomatoes at market

Relationality

Very few young people undertake livelihood activities in isolation. Most combine activities that contribute to their households (those of parents, guardians, employers, or 'independent' households with siblings or spouse) with activities intended principally to benefit their individual welfare. In Lesotho, young people's livelihood activities are closely interlocked with their households. Herdboys, for instance, allow their families to decide whether to sell the cows they receive in payment. In Malawi, by contrast, young people expect to keep their own earnings, but are expected to support themselves at an earlier age. This perhaps contributes to the willingness of young Malawians to experiment with business ventures. Families and relationships make a significant difference to livelihoods, and reworking of family relationships (for instance by marrying) are significant livelihood strategies.

Spatiality

Southern African societies are relatively mobile and livelihood strategies commonly involve migration, whether for education, work, business or marriage. Many young people from both communities had previously lived away from their villages, and at the time of the research, ten young people from Ha Rantelali were employed (in low-skilled work) and fourteen were studying elsewhere.



Selling homemade fritters in Nihelo

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Project website: www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sse/chg/projects/nvf

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