

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Non-Technical Summary

A 1000 word (maximum) summary of the main research results, in non-technical language, should be provided below. The summary might be used by ESRC to publicise the research. It should cover the aims and objectives of the project, main research results and significant academic achievements, dissemination activities and potential or actual impacts on policy and practice and highlight where the project has been successful in building capacity.

The research aimed to generate new, in-depth understanding of how AIDS, in interaction with other factors, is impacting on the livelihood activities, opportunities and choices of young people in rural southern Africa. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To improve understanding of the ways in which AIDS is impacting on young people's involvement in household livelihood strategies in rural southern Africa
2. To assess the ways in which wider policy, institutional and economic environments condition the context-specific livelihood opportunities available to AIDS-affected rural young people
3. To elicit AIDS-affected young people's perspectives on their current situations and future prospects, and to understand how their aspirations and decisions are shaped
4. To improve understanding of spatial dimensions of rural young people's livelihood responses to AIDS
5. To generate evidence in relation to the NVF hypothesis, particularly regarding the long-term food security implications of the impacts of AIDS on young people
6. To work with young people, development practitioners and policy makers, to develop guidelines for appropriate policy responses and interventions to support AIDS-affected young people in achieving sustainable livelihoods
7. To provide an innovative model for similar studies in other settings

Participatory research and individual interviews were conducted with 10-24-year-olds in two villages in Malawi and Lesotho, alongside interviews with policy makers and practitioners, to address these objectives. The research indicates diverse ways in which AIDS impacts on the livelihoods and prospects of young people, but no systematic pattern. The only generalised distinction between AIDS-affected and unaffected youth in the two villages is that those directly affected generally remain in school longer. At the individual level, AIDS is one of many interacting factors affecting access to livelihoods and choice of livelihood strategies. It has many impacts, but these differ with individual circumstance, as well as being affected by processes operating locally, nationally and internationally. Key areas of interest that will be the focus of academic publications include the roles of marriage and of social networks in influencing livelihood prospects, and the significance of temporality and relationality in livelihood studies. Ultimately, the research suggests that AIDS is unlikely to have the sort of systematic impact on long-term food security that the new variant famine hypothesis envisages. Policy recommendations include the development of opportunities for vocational training and development of market opportunities for rural youth, measures to improve access to productive assets such as land, and social protection measures that allow young people to devote their energies to accruing livelihood assets to depend on in the long term. However, targeting of AIDS-affected youth is not advocated.

To date, four academic papers based on the background literature study have been accepted for publication. A further paper reporting project findings have been submitted, and a book chapter and further journal article have been invited and are in preparation, along with other outputs. Academic conference papers have been presented at Chancellor College and the College of Medicine in Malawi; the National University of Lesotho; International AIDS Conference, Mexico; International Childhood and Youth Research Network Conference, Cyprus and a Time-Space and Life-Course ESRC Seminar in the UK. Two papers will be presented at the RGS-IBG conference in Manchester in August 2009, and

will subsequently be developed into journal articles. A one day conference on Food Security and AIDS was organised at the National University of Lesotho.

The research has also been disseminated widely to potential research users. Participatory dissemination activities were undertaken with young people and their communities in the two case study villages to develop policy recommendations. Policy workshops were held with decision-makers in Maseru in Lesotho and Lilongwe and Blantyre in Malawi, building on the village-level activities.

A project website has been developed (www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sse/chg/projects/nvf), hosting briefing notes and information about the project. Further dissemination is planned, including widespread circulation of the project report. Applications are being prepared for follow-on funding from the ESRC and 'International Engagement' support from the Wellcome Trust for further dissemination and policy-influencing activities.

It is too early to identify definite impacts of the research, but considerable effort has been made to engage with potential users and beneficiaries. National Steering Groups (NSGs) comprising representatives of government, NGOs, UN and donor agencies were established in Malawi and Lesotho, and each met three times. These provided helpful information on the policy context, advice on the fieldwork and interpretation of preliminary findings, and served as fora for raising awareness of the research and preliminary findings.

Seventy-eight interviews were conducted with policy makers and practitioners at local, district and (principally) national levels (compared with 20-30 specified in the original proposal). Again, this provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the project and its preliminary findings among decision-makers, through discussion and through the distribution of information leaflets.

Policy-focused participatory dissemination workshops were held with representatives of government, NGOs, UN and donor agencies in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Maseru. Preliminary reports were distributed for discussion. The policy implications and relevance to these organisations were considered in some depth.

All NSG members, interviewees and workshop attendees will receive the final project report and a policy briefing.

In terms of capacity building, a lecturer in Geography at the University of Malawi, Lucy Chipeta, has been involved in all aspects of the Malawi-based research, including writing publications. Through additional funding from Brunel University, we supported academics at the National University of Lesotho to undertake related research projects. These were presented at a one-day conference and will provide material for joint writing and publication, including a special issue of a Lesotho-based peer-reviewed journal, *Review of Southern African Studies*. Fourteen local research assistants were trained and gained experience in (variously) translation, facilitating participatory research, transcription and data entry using various computer software packages. Some externally sourced training on participatory methods, ethics and AIDS was provided in the UK and Malawi for researchers and field assistants. The National Steering Groups also gave research users the opportunity to engage with the research process. The project has involved the development of participatory methods, and a paper on the innovative aspects of the methodology is in preparation.