



Averting 'New Variant Famine'

Briefing Notes No 6

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Methodology: Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: Building Food Secure Rural Livelihoods with AIDS-affected Young People

This briefing discusses the various methodologies used in the three different stages of the project, as well as ethical considerations and user engagement.



First community meeting

Stage 1. Community and Household Profiling:

Community profiling is undertaken through community meetings where the project is introduced and discussed and the community is asked to participate in three PRA exercises: a) to produce a list of good and bad things about the village b) to list livelihood opportunities and how these have changed over time c) to list good and bad things about being young in the

village, both now and in the past when the old people were young.

Household profiling is conducted through interviews with each household in the village. A family tree is drawn for each extended family, including all family members, their relationships to each other, livelihood activities engaged in etc. Each household is then interviewed about their assets, livelihood activities, religion and family history.

Field methods:

- Stage 1) Community and household profiling through PRA exercises at community meetings and interviews with each household
- Stage 2) Participatory research with young people in groups
- Stage 3) Policy interviews with government, donors, UN agencies and NGOs

Stage 2. Participatory research with young people

About 30 young people are selected from the households to participate in the in-depth research. At least half are from households affected by AIDS-related sickness or death, or have moved to the village following the sickness or death of a household member. They are divided into 4 groups according to age (10-17, 18-24) and gender and complete nine activities. The aim is to promote discussion that generates both information about livelihood practices and

opportunities, and understanding of how livelihoods are shaped.

The activities

Mental maps – to highlight places of local importance for group participants

Activity calendars – to explore important daily livelihood activities



Activities of a 12 year old boy: hoeing in the field, watering tomatoes and watching Jackie Chan videos

Photography – to let young people creatively communicate about their lives and activities



Photographing the tomato crop

Assets and problem trees – to stimulate discussions with participants about livelihood plans, assets needed and potential difficulties

Life maps – to explore life stories, mobility and livelihood changes over space and time

Social network diagrams – to investigate young people's access to social networks and how they acquire knowledge

Emotional storyboards – to uncover emotions, important events, aspirations and problems, as well as future hopes and fears

Drama and video – short dramatization about life in the village and problems that young people face to stimulate discussion



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Stage 3. Policy Interviews

In order to explore the linkages with macro-level policies and processes, semi-structured interviews are conducted with at least 10-15 decision makers in relevant government departments, donor and UN agencies, national and international NGOs in each country. The interviews focus on past, current and future policies and programmes, policy-making processes and partnerships, and perceptions of the impacts of policies. They also explore potential responses to the issues emerging from Stages 1 and 2 of the research.

Ethical considerations

The research has received ethical approval from Brunel University and Malawi's the National Health Sciences Research Committee (approval no. 464). Strict ethical guidelines are being followed. We are aware of the need to consider the asymmetrical power relations that characterise work with children, especially in impoverished environments, and also of the sensitivity of the topic of AIDS. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants are ensured, other than among those representing organisations, who are offered the opportunity to speak anonymously if they wish. Care is taken not to jeopardise livelihood activities or in other ways do indirect harm to research participants.

User engagement

The ultimate aim of the research is to develop, with young people, recommendations for enhancing livelihood sustainability, that can be applied at scales from the local to national policy levels. The team is therefore working with local academic and non-academic users of the research. National Steering Groups are established to invite input from research users in both countries. Toward the end of the research, four weeks have been set aside to undertake dissemination activities in Malawi and Lesotho. These will involve both the research communities and government and non-governmental organisations. Findings will be disseminated to non-academic users internationally.

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

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