Headship of older persons in the context of HIV/AIDS in rural South Africa

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Focus

- Focus on headship as measure of older persons’ position in rural households

- Explore how households’ composition and experience of a death, in particular, an HIV/AIDS death, differ across headship types
Context for older persons’ headship

  - South Africa, 21%; Mpumalanga Province, 32%
- Increase in % deaths attributable to AIDS
  - In Agincourt: 11% to 22% of all deaths from 97-03
- Changing household composition and structure
  - Other social, political and economic factors
  - Population is aging
  - Increasing number of households headed by women, increasing average age of household heads
- South African means-tested non-contributory pension to women 60+ and men 65+
Background: AIDS, Aging & Households

- Population aging (UN 1999)
- Shifts in cause specific mortality (Anderson & Phillips, 2006; Kahn et al., 2006)
- Older persons taking on caregiving roles in multigenerational households (Møller & Devey, 2003; Schatz & Ogunmefun, 2007)
- Age and gender patterns emerging in headship and household membership (Noumbissi & Zuberi, 2001; Kinsella & Phillips, 2005; Ogunmefun, 2008)
- South African pensions viewed as household asset & safety-net (May, 2003; Møller & Devey, 2003); benefit children and other family members in household (Case & Menendez, 2007; Burns, Keswell, & Leibbrandt, 2005; Duflo, 2003; Sanger & Mtati, 1999)
Conceptual Framework

- Focus on utilitarian aspect of older headship
  - Income-earning (pension)
  - Altruistic model
    - Collective good of household
    - Pooling resources, but also household configuration and headship designation
  - Headship has emic resonance in area

- Older persons’ contributions to household maintenance may be associated with their roles/responsibilities, designation as head

- Potential relationship between HIV/AIDS-related deaths and headship type
HIV/AIDS-deaths & headship

- Households with an HIV/AIDS-related deaths may differ from households with a death from another cause:
  - Long and recurring illness preceding death
  - Age (and sex) pattern of mortality
  - Clustering of deaths within households
  - Stigma related to the disease

- Higher life expectancy and earlier age of pension-receipt might lead to older women being even more likely to take on headship role in HIV/AIDS households
Data

- Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System
  - Northeast rural South Africa, bordering Mozambique
  - Annual census since 1992
  - 21 villages
  - Population ~70,000, ~12,000 households

- Census includes:
  - Household census and vital events
  - Household headship is identified by census respondent
  - Household membership in relation to household head
  - Verbal autopsies to identify cause of death

- Dataset includes linked cross-sections from 2000 & 2005
  - Same households over time
  - Short run effects
  - Characteristics of most recent death
Analysis plan

- Examine headship and composition in 2005 based on household-level mortality experience between 2000 and 2005
- Outline the presence of pension-age-eligible adults across and within households at beginning and end of period
- Compare the characteristics of households across headship types (older man vs. older woman vs. prime-aged head) at beginning and end of period
- Explore how households’ composition and experience of a death differ across headship types
  - Death categories include: all child deaths, prime-aged HIV/AIDS deaths, prime-aged other deaths, older HIV/AIDS deaths, and older other deaths
Figure I: Population Age Distribution 2000

- Prime-aged adults: 55.8%
- Children under age 15: 39.9%
- Males age 65+: 1.5%
- Females age 60+: 2.8%

Figure II: Population Age Distribution 2005

- Prime-aged adults: 59.8%
- Children under age 15: 35.5%
- Males age 65+: 1.6%
- Females age 60+: 3.0%
Table I: Presence of older persons in Agincourt households (2000, 2005)

- Although a small % of total population, older persons live in about 1/4 of households
- Small increase in % of households with an older male or female
- A higher % of households in each cross-section with an older female; greater increase in % of households with an older female than households with an older male
- Despite aging and increases, little change in average proportion of household made up of older persons
Table II: Characteristics of household headship and households (2000, 2005)

- Aging of both male and female household heads over period
- Female heads on average older in both cross-sections
- % of households headed by women increased from 32% to 38%
- Larger increase in % of households headed by an older woman than households headed by older man over period
Table III: Household characteristics by sex and age of heads (2000, 2005)

- Older male headed households are larger, have higher dependency ratios, lower average proportion female, lower percentage with at least one orphan than other headship types in 2000 & 2005.
- Older female headed households had the highest average proportion female at each cross-section.
- Despite decrease in dependency ratio, and mean number of children, older women’s and prime-aged headed households saw a large increase in the percent of households with at least one orphan.
Table IV: Change in headship types over period for extant households in 2000

- The majority of households had the same headship type in 2005 as in 2000
- Change from older female head: 15% dissolved, 14% prime-aged adult became head
- Change from older male head: 12% dissolved, 13% prime-aged adult became head, 14% older woman became head
- 8% of households headed by a prime-aged adult in 2000 changed to an older person by 2005
  - Half became older male and half older female headed
  - Change of status to older person in 71% of the male headed households and 47% of the female headed households was likely simply the aging of the original head
Table V: Demographic characteristics of deaths by cause (2000, 2005)

- Striking differences between HIV/AIDS deaths and other causes in average age at death, age distribution, and percent female
- Prime-aged deaths: if from HIV/AIDS, average age is younger, higher percentage female, deaths earlier in period
- Older deaths: if from HIV/AIDS (very small N), average age much younger, much lower percentage female, much more recent
- Emerging trend of older male and younger female deaths from AIDS?
Figure III: Percent of households with a death across headship types in 2005

- % no death
- % combined child deaths (HIV & other)
- % with older HIV/AIDS death
- % with prime-aged HIV/AIDS death
- % with older other death
- % with prime-aged other death

Older Woman Head (N=1438)
Older Man Head (N=893)
Prime-Aged Head (N=9636)
Figure IV: Percent of deaths in households with same headship type 2000 & 2005

- % with no death
- % with child death (HIV & other combined)
- % with HIV/AIDS older death
- % with HIV/AIDS prime-aged death
- % with other older death
- % with other prime-aged death

Older Women Head (N=801): 0.77
Older Man Head (N=489): 0.76
Prime-Aged Head (N=7100): 0.76

- Older Women Head: 0.05 (no death), 0.04 (child death), 0.08 (HIV/AIDS older death), 0.06 (HIV/AIDS prime-aged death), 0.03 (other older death), 0.09 (other prime-aged death)
- Older Man Head: 0.03 (no death), 0.07 (child death), 0.07 (HIV/AIDS older death), 0.06 (HIV/AIDS prime-aged death), 0.06 (other older death), 0.03 (other prime-aged death)
- Prime-Aged Head: 0.05 (no death), 0.03 (child death), 0.07 (HIV/AIDS older death), 0.06 (HIV/AIDS prime-aged death), 0.03 (other older death), 0.09 (other prime-aged death)
Figure V: Percent of deaths in households by headship type 2005, in households that changed headship type 2000-2005

- Older Woman Head (N=514)
- Older Man Head (N=352)
- Prime-Aged Head (N=269)

- % with no death
- % with child death (HIV & other combined)
- % with HIV/AIDS older death
- % with HIV/AIDS prime-aged death
- % with other older death
- % with other prime-aged death
Key Findings

- HIV/AIDS death does not appear to be related to headship type
- Compositional differences do exist between headship types
- Possible gender differences in the impact of death on headship type
Discussion

- To what extent does headship capture financial responsibility in a household?
- Assessing indirect effects of income (pensions) on status & power is difficult.
- Results should not minimize the extent to which the elderly are affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa.
- Qualitative data might uncover more nuanced understanding of death experience on responsibility and the meaning of headship.
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