

Youth, AIDS and Rural Livelihoods in Southern Africa

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Abstract

AIDS, in interaction with other factors, is impacting on the livelihood activities, opportunities and choices of young people in southern Africa. This paper explores these linkages firstly by reviewing what is known about the impacts of AIDS on young people, before looking more specifically at how this impinges on their future ability to secure livelihoods. Within the home and family AIDS often results in youth taking on a heavy burden of responsibilities.. This can include caring for sick relatives, helping with chores and taking on paid employment. This burden of care and work can have further impacts on young people's future livelihoods as they find they have reduced access to schooling, potential loss of inheritance and a breakdown in the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, which is especially important for sustained agricultural production. The paper ends by suggesting that the sustainable livelihoods approach can be useful for understanding the complexity of the issues surrounding the impacts of AIDS on young people's livelihoods and calls for further research to explore how their access to future sustainable livelihoods in rural southern Africa might be supported.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, geographers have begun to focus extensively on young people's geographies, with a growing body of research emerging on African childhood(s) and youth. This has developed in line with the emergence of the New Social Studies of Childhood, a conceptual approach to understanding the contributions young people make to the societies in which they live. The New Social Studies of Childhood is interdisciplinary in nature and has permeated research across the social sciences, including Geography. The principal tenets are: childhood and youth are social constructions; and young people are social actors in their own right, influencing and affecting the world around them (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). This has fuelled research into young people's lives both in the context of family and community relations and their independent socio-spatial experiences.

Although the emphasis on children as independent actors has been questioned with a call for researchers to consider a relational approach to children's geographies (Pain and Hopkins, 2007), aspects of the New Social Studies of Childhood approach are still useful for researchers working in southern Africa. In this context where young people's lives are complex and fluid, children's experiences cannot be assumed from a knowledge of household experiences, as children's lives are often experienced independently from family life making it necessary for academics to conduct research with children themselves. For example, Ansell (2004) notes that many high school students in rural Lesotho live separately from their families while attending school, either renting houses in local villages or living in hostel accommodation. Similarly, the relatively autonomous experiences of homeless youth

living on the streets of African cities have been documented (Evans, 2006; Young, 2003). In southern Africa, a new layer to the complexity of young people's lives, particularly over the last decade, has been the severity with which the AIDS pandemic has taken hold across the region, with the majority of countries having adult (15-49) prevalence rates ranging between 14% and 33% (UNAIDS, 2006). Therefore, the lives of youth in southern Africa cannot be separated from the context of AIDS.

This paper reviews the AIDS literature with particular reference to key aspects of the lives of rural youth. Principally, this paper will focus on 15 to 24 year olds (the UN definition for youth)ⁱ, and their access to future livelihood strategies – this is a pertinent issue facing this age cohort, but one that has generally been overlooked with regard to the impacts of AIDS in the region.

We start by clarifying the concept of livelihoods. Chambers and Conway's (1992:7) definition of a livelihood is perhaps the most widely cited (albeit with minor modifications): "the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living". A central part of this livelihood concept is that it includes non-material aspects of well-being. Therefore, in this context, livelihoods are considered holistically, encompassing the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Carney, 1998). Furthermore, although rural livelihoods are often linked to subsistence agriculture, patterns of livelihood diversity, including many non-agricultural activities, exist in many African settings. During the 1990s, research around livelihood diversification in rural Africa concluded that households tend to depend on a diverse

portfolio of activities, including both formal and informal strategies, where individual members of a household have paid employment or trades with particular skills such as brick making or fishing (Hajdu, 2006). In addition, livelihoods are also dynamic, as local situations in terms of available livelihood options are continuously changing, including through seasonal fluctuations and other recurring changes as well as sudden and unique changes (Hajdu, 2006). Given this diversity and dynamism of livelihood strategies it is important to consider the means by which youth access the necessary skills to pursue various livelihood strategies and how AIDS impacts on their abilities to do so.

In the remainder of the paper we begin by reviewing the issues affecting youth in the context of the AIDS pandemic in southern Africa more generally, before adopting a fresh approach and exploring how this impacts on young people's access to rural livelihoods. This is achieved by drawing on the sustainable livelihoods approach and considering its usefulness as a tool for understanding the interconnectedness of youth, livelihoods and AIDS. We conclude the paper by offering some new directions for future research.

Youth and the AIDS pandemic in southern Africa: the issues

The AIDS pandemic manifests itself in a myriad of complex ways in the lives of youth. Despite this, youth as a distinct group are largely excluded from much of the AIDS literature, which tends to focus on impacts at the national level, or more directly on families/communities, adults or children. However, this paper argues that youth need to be considered separately as their stage in the life course makes them especially vulnerable to the impacts of AIDS. Youth are more likely than children or

older adults to be experimenting with, and engaging in, sexual relationships that could put them at risk of infection, while their position in the household/family, especially if they have younger siblings, may result in the heaviest AIDS-related burdens of care, domestic and agricultural chores falling on their shoulders.

Therefore, young people are affected by AIDS in two major ways: by being infected with the HIV virus themselves but also by taking on additional roles and responsibilities if family/community members are HIV positive and unable to work/care because of illness.

Life course and HIV infection

UNAIDS (2006) data demonstrates that youth, and in particular female youth, have high HIV prevalence rates in southern Africa (see Figure 1). The reasons for this higher incidence level are well documented. Larger numbers of sexual partners among unmarried youth, coupled with traditional rites of passage for some involving (unprotected) sexual intercourse, lack of access to condoms, and sex as a taboo subject for discussion across generations are all cited as heightening HIV prevalence. The much higher infection rates for young women is also a product of biology i.e. easier male to female transmission; coupled with cultural factors. These include the conventional expectation that male partners in any heterosexual relationship will be older, as well as the practice of younger women forming relationships with older men who support them financially and through engaging in, sometimes intermittent, and often transactional, sex (Akeroyd, 2004). Further, men, fearful of contracting the virus, are known to seek younger female partners and myths surrounding the pandemic include a widely held belief that sex with a virgin is a cure for AIDS (Akeroyd, 2004).

Figure 1: HIV prevalence among youth in southern Africa (data taken from UNAIDS 2006)

	HIV prevalence rate 15-24 year old women	HIV prevalence rate 15-24 year old men
	2005	2005
Botswana	15.3	5.7
Lesotho	14.1	5.9
Malawi	9.6	3.4
Mozambique	10.7	3.6
Swaziland	22.7	7.7
Zambia	12.7	3.8
Zimbabwe	14.7	4.4

Once infected, young people's physical capacities are diminished as bouts of illness reduce productivity and can cause intermittent attendance at school or college, thereby impacting on livelihood opportunities for the future. In addition, although access to anti-retroviral medicines has improved they are still not easily accessed by many of the rural poor in southern Africa. In the absence of these treatments, life span is greatly reduced and few people living with AIDS (PLWAs) are able to contribute productively to the economy (van den Boogaard *et al* 2004), yet it is hoped that wider access to anti-retroviral treatments will be available in the near future enabling young HIV+ people to extend their life expectancy.

Although the infected proportion of the youth population is substantial, ranging between 10% and 23% for 15-24 year old young women and girls and between 4% and 8% for 15-24 year old young men and boys in southern Africa (UNAIDS 2006), the effects of AIDS on households/families extends much more widely among young

people. Even those that are not infected are likely to be affected to some degree. This has different implications in the short and long term for youth.

AIDS-affected youth: the impacts

Across the social sciences there is a growing body of literature that seeks to document the effects of the AIDS pandemic for families and communities, and it is possible to tease out the effects on youth. Young people are commonly viewed as victims of the pandemic and burdens on households, with much of the literature concentrating on children and orphanhood in particular (Ghosh and Kalipeni, 2004). However, if we recognise youth as social actors, constructing lives for themselves, we must renounce this image of vulnerable victims of the pandemic. In fact, even without AIDS, young people already contribute to the livelihood strategies of the households that care for them. Therefore, this paper argues that the effects of AIDS on adults in a household/family (including sickness, employment loss, death of breadwinners), usually results in heavier burdens of care and work falling on youth, as they make valuable contributions to household responses to AIDS.

Research has demonstrated that young people may be withdrawn from school to help in the household taking on caring responsibilities for sick relatives (Robson 2000; Robson 2004; Robson and Ansell 2000; Robson et al. 2006). For example, in Zimbabwe Tendai was pulled out of school at the age of 15 and sent from her rural mining community to the city where she took on the caring duties for her sick uncle. Tendai's aunt was unable to undertake the caring work having just given birth to her fourth child and the other children in the household were too young to take on such responsibilities (Robson, 2004). Tendai's story demonstrates that not only do young

people care for the sick in their own household, but they may also be sent to look after relatives if there is no one suitable to do the work. In addition, sometimes young people also end up doing additional work within and outside the home (Ansell and van Blerk, 2004; Robson et al. 2006). The type of additional activities undertaken are also usually highly gendered with young women and girls more likely to look after young siblings, cook and clean, while young men and boys take on a greater amount of agricultural tasks tending fields and animals (van Blerk and Ansell, 2006).

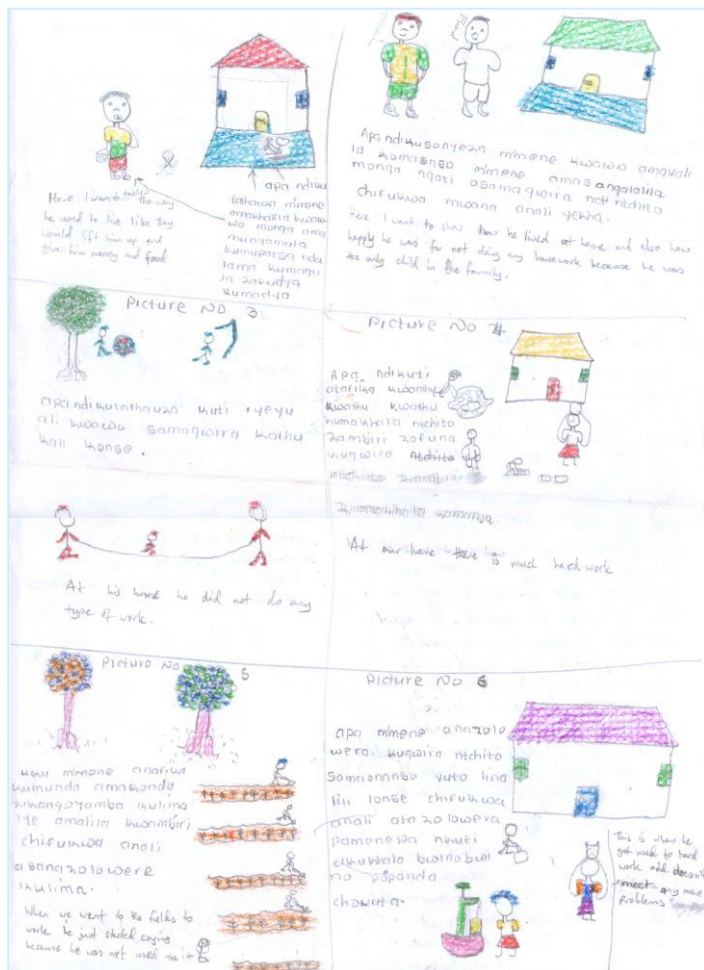
However, in some cases these gender roles become blurred and, for example, young men may find themselves caring for sick family members in the absence of a female relative (Robson, 2004). In the short term, these impacts can diminish future livelihood opportunities for young people by reducing their access to education and social resources, including peer interaction and intergenerational knowledge transfer (although they can also impart certain valuable skills).

Not only are young people affected by the impoverishment of their own households, however; AIDS is exacerbating poverty more generally, especially among the rural poor (Negin 2005). Rural families, often with larger families to start with, find their households swollen by large numbers of children from urban backgrounds who are sent to be cared for when their parents fall sick (Ghosh and Kalipeni, 2004; Young and Ansell, 2003). This can increase the burden on youth within the receiving households who have taken on caring responsibilities. Youth may also have to find work outside the household as a means of supporting the larger family. For example, Anna lived with her mother in a village in Malawi. She had older sisters who were already married. One of her sisters passed away and the orphaned children were sent to live with their grandmother, Anna's mother. The burden of extra mouths to

feed was too much for the household and Anna was pulled out of school to work as a housemaid for a rich family in the nearby town. This was very hard for Anna and she was only able to visit her family occasionally, although she supported the household (Young and Ansell, 2003).

In the medium term, the impact of AIDS on families amplifies, especially for youth. The additional household responsibilities continue and, following the death of family breadwinners, young people have been found to migrate, often to unfamiliar places to join alternative households where they contribute to livelihoods (Ansell and van Blerk 2004; van Blerk and Ansell 2006; Young and Ansell 2003). This can often mean undertaking unfamiliar tasks, for example where a young person, who has grown up in the city, is expected to contribute to agriculture or other livelihood strategies. This has been noted to be a source of anguish for such youth, who feel ill-equipped to carry out the tasks, lacking the capacities and knowledge for these rural livelihoods (van Blerk and Ansell, 2006). Figure 2 exemplifies this using a case study from van Blerk and Ansell's (2006) work in Malawi. The figure shows a storyboard drawn by Bertha (aged 15). She explains how her cousin had moved to live with them in their rural village from town following the death of his parents. He was expected to contribute to household livelihoods by working in the fields and moulding bricks. He was unsure how to do this causing upset to himself and the rest of the family who felt he was lazy.

Figure 2: Bertha's storyboard



When my cousin's parents died he came to live with us... But he had never worked before... We used to tease him because he wouldn't help. We wouldn't give him any food when he didn't work, only when he started working... My father used to mould bricks for a living and he used to teach us those skills but my cousin didn't like it and wouldn't do it... [Also] when he was given the hoe [to work in the fields] he just cried. This made me angry and I used to shout at him... He had never worked in a field before so he found it really difficult... After some time he got used to this and living with us and he even began to mould bricks on his own...

The gendered work experiences of young people within the household are also replicated in their migration experiences. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to migration between households in the extended family, viewed as a source of labour, undertaking cooking, cleaning and caring duties; or as an asset to be exchanged in marriage (Loevinsohn and Gillespie 2003). Undertaking paid work in addition to household tasks is also gendered with the responsibility generally falling to young men and boys. This has resulted in some young people moving to the streets of large cities to find employment and support, which invariably results in

homelessness, and they end up swelling the ranks of ‘street children’ (Bourdillon, 2001, Evans, 2005; Young, 2004).

In the absence of relatives able to support young people sometimes the responsibility falls to the oldest sibling to care for their brothers and sisters. Increasingly this is occurring as the pandemic takes hold, affecting multiple households within the extended family. Youth then find themselves as the principal carers within ‘sibling headed households’ taking on the roles of their parents for the upbringing of their siblings (Barnett and Whiteside, 2002). This is particularly the case for young people from single parent households. Foster et al (1997) note from their work in Zimbabwe that when a single parent dies children can sometimes be neglected by their relatives who refuse to offer support because they consider the children to be illegitimate.

AIDS-affected youth and livelihoods

This discussion of the effects of AIDS illustrates that by placing extra burdens on youth, their ability to secure future livelihoods may be constrained and it is important to investigate this issue further. Instead of focusing on the immediate effects of AIDS or on the duration of the disease itself, from HIV infection to the onset of AIDS to sickness and death (approximately 5 to 7 years without anti-retroviral medicine), we argue that it is also necessary to consider how these impacts on youth translate in the long term for securing future livelihoods. For rural youth located in mainly subsistence agricultural communities across southern Africa, their livelihoods are entwined with ensuring food security. Taking the AIDS pandemic as a ‘long wave disaster’ (Barnett and Blaikie 1992), AIDS’ impacts on young people’s livelihoods

and continued food security lie mainly in the future, suggesting that youth require 'sustained support to ensure that they will be in a position to grow or procure food for themselves as adults' (FAO 2003). However, numerous reports suggest AIDS will diminish long-term food security through the multiple ways it impacts on young people today. A careful analysis of the literature points to three key ways in which young people's future livelihoods may be affected. These are outlined below:

First, inheritance of property and assets such as land and other productive equipment, including agricultural tools, bicycles and livestock is vital for young people's future livelihoods. However, many children lose property when their parents die. Loss of inheritance by widows and offspring is common across southern Africa where, in most cases, national legislation and customary law offer no protection of young people's rights to inherit their parents' property. Misappropriation by relatives is common and in some cases relatives will take on the responsibility for the remaining family members merely as a means for acquiring property (Kimario *et al* 2003). Property grabbing at funerals also takes place. This is particularly important in the context of AIDS as men tend to die before their wives, and generally women have no access to title deeds. This leaves their children with even greater insecurity regarding their access to assets (White and Robinson 2000). For example, in Malawian patrilineal societies the death of the father affects the children because insecure property and inheritance rights favour the man's relatives (Ngwira, 2001). Furthermore, access to inheritance may also be diminished before parents die, as assets can be used up as a means for reducing debt. It is not uncommon for livestock and equipment to be sold to fund medical and funeral costs (Kimario *et al* 2003; Munthali and Ali 2000).

Second, it is not only loss of inheritance that may affect young people's future livelihoods but lack of knowledge regarding how to carry out various livelihood activities properly. For instance, youth who succeed in receiving inherited land may be too young or inexperienced to manage farms and it is increasingly unlikely that relatives will have time and resources to manage farms for them until they are old enough (White and Robinson 2000). In such circumstances usufruct rights may be lost, leaving them landless as adults (Slater and Wiggins 2005; White and Robinson 2000). Traditionally, children acquire livelihood skills by working with parents and older siblings, whose repeated bouts of illness and premature death may disrupt transmission of knowledge and skills between the generations leaving youth ill-prepared to carry out successful livelihood strategies for themselves (Hlanze *et al* 2005; Loevinsohn and Gillespie 2003; Mphale *et al* 2002; White and Robinson 2000). With regard to agriculture, the loss of indigenous methods and knowledge of specialised farming skills may result in young people employing less appropriate farming practices. Youth may also be less strong than adults making it harder to carry out certain labour tasks. An increasing number of young farmers are inexperienced, requiring training and role models, yet the infrastructure is not in place to provide this and traditionally younger farmers do not always have the respect of older men who may therefore be unwilling to offer support (Carnegie and Marumo 2002; Haddad and Gillespie 2001; White and Robinson 2000).

It is not only farming knowledge that is lost in the breakdown of intergenerational knowledge transfers. There are many other areas of knowledge that are important to achieving secure livelihoods, and where knowledge is traditionally differentiated by

age and gender, there may be a loss of gendered knowledges, and difficulties may be exacerbated if it is considered inappropriate to pass on such knowledges before a particular stage in the life course (Alumira *et al* 2005; Haddad and Gillespie 2001). For example, this can result in a loss of important skills traditionally passed from mother to daughter including a knowledge of wild foods and how to prepare them, and an understanding of local kinship networks (de Waal and Whiteside 2003).

Finally, schooling has become increasingly important in the last two decades with access to primary education improving throughout the region. Parents are also becoming more aware of the benefits of sending their children to school and there are generally expectations that schooling will enable rural youth to find better jobs. As noted previously, AIDS is resulting in many youth dropping out of school to help the family or because resources needed to buy uniforms, learning materials and pay for top-up fees are constrained (Hunter and Williamson, 2000).

Therefore, most recommendations concerning the livelihood needs of AIDS-affected young people focus on minimising school drop out and sometimes providing nutrition – often combining the two, for example, through school gardening (Morris and Lewis 2003), school feeding programmes or take home rations. Schooling, however, provides few rural southern African youth with access to paid employment (Ansell 2004), contributes little to other rural livelihood skills (Ansell 2000), and can alienate young people from older generations (Boehm 2003; Bryceson *et al* 2004).

Furthermore, ‘educated’ youth are reluctant to engage in agriculture (Gill-Watson 2004). For example, Sipho, a young man from the Eastern Cape in South Africa, identifies that farming cannot give him the money he needs to access all the

commodities he would like. He says: "...farming and fishing and those things are not for me, you see. I don't want food for today or for tomorrow, I want all those things that you see that people have on TV. I want to build a big house here in the village, and have another house in Port St Johns where I can go on holiday. I want a small car that I can use for myself, and a big van... I will hire someone to work for me driving it as a taxi. I have big plans you know... This is why I will have to work hard the next few years to earn lots of money.... I have no time for ploughing the field" (Hajdu, 2006:167). Further, advocates of sharing agricultural knowledge also tend towards a simplistic view of knowledge transfer and learning practices. Minimal attention is given to non-agricultural livelihoods or the removal of other constraints.

This latter point is important given the diverse range of livelihood strategies available to rural populations and as Hajdu (2006) notes, they are often considered more important than agricultural livelihood options. Taking Malawi as an example, diverse rural livelihoods include fishing, for communities located on the lakeshore (Mvula, 2002) or other water bodies, migration of individual members to work on tea, coffee and sugar estates (Kydd and Christensen, 1982), and more informal activities such as cross-border trade with Mozambique where Malawian consumer goods are exchanged for farm produce (van Geenen et al., 2005). More localised livelihood activities also include a range of exchangeable skills such as traditional house building, charcoal making, thatching and brick or basket/mat making (Tsoka, 2003). These small, informal businesses are, however, particularly dependent on individual members and, as Mann (2001) points out, need to have a succession strategy otherwise businesses collapse in the wake of the AIDS pandemic. Such strategies could also be beneficial for supporting future livelihood options for youth.

Despite this analysis of the literature indicating that AIDS is having important impacts on youth and their future livelihoods, as yet there has been little empirical research on this issue (Turner 2003). Research is urgently needed to improve understanding of AIDS' medium-to-long-term impacts, enabling proactive approaches to anticipated challenges (DFID 2004). Moreover, no studies have examined rural livelihoods from young people's own perspectives (White and Robinson 2000). Yet if children contribute to household livelihoods, make decisions about their own lives and are in some cases household heads, they can and should be consulted. We suggest that in order to shape future research, the sustainable livelihoods approach offers a useful framework for generating new analyses of the interconnections between AIDS and future livelihood strategies for rural youth. In the section that follows, we demonstrate how this can be used to develop possible directions for research, in order to influence the development of policies and interventions that enhance AIDS-affected youth's prospects of achieving sustainable, food-secure livelihoods throughout the region.

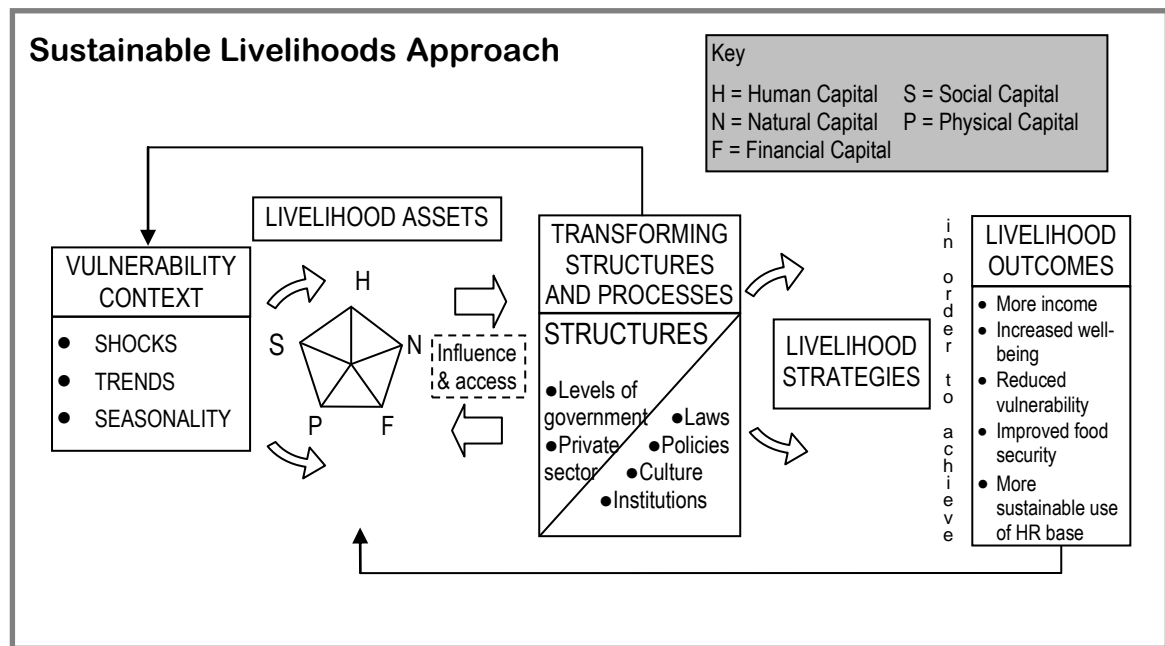
The sustainable livelihoods approach

The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) was initially developed by a number of academics in the 1990s (including Chambers and Conway, 1992; Farrington et al, 1999; Scoones, 1998). The sustainable livelihoods approach is centred on the development objective of alleviating poverty (Baumann and Sinha 2001), and has therefore been adopted widely by bilateral and multilateral agencies and NGOs. Since its inception in the 1990s it has been used as a tool for policy-making and designing livelihood projects in rural areas. The SLA is also an analytical framework

that provides a way of understanding the factors influencing people's ability to enhance their livelihoods (Hajdu, 2006). From the perspective of this paper, this must include a focus on AIDS when exploring livelihoods in the southern African context. However, as we will argue here, more research is needed to explore the specific impacts of AIDS and other factors on youth's ability to secure and maintain sustainable livelihoods. To do this we will first focus on the SLA before exploring the impacts of AIDS.

According to Scoones (1998), a livelihood is said to be sustainable when it has the resilience to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, including sickness, deaths or environmental disasters. This holistic, actor-centred approach to understanding dimensions of poverty is outlined in Figure 3. Here, the different (agricultural and non-agricultural) livelihood strategies people adopt, which depend on access to a diverse range of assets and are filtered through structures (government, private sector) and processes (laws, culture, institutions), determine their resilience or vulnerability. Carney (1998) separates these assets into five categories: human capital, which refers to skills, knowledge, and ability to labour (including health); natural capital, such as access to land, trees or plants; financial capital, being savings and income; social capital, referring to networks and relationships; and physical capital, such as production equipment and livestock. Therefore depending on their vulnerability and the assets available to them, people will achieve varying degrees of livelihood outcomes, including monetary outcomes, but also a sense of empowerment which can enable them to make better choices in the future.

Figure 3: The sustainable livelihoods approach (adapted from Carney, 1998)



While SLA can be a useful tool for understanding livelihoods, it is useful here to offer a cautionary note. From a careful reading of critiques of SLA in the literature, we suggest that SLA needs to be employed flexibly (Hinshelwood 2003), taking into account three sets of criticisms. First, in codifying complexity, SLA analyses often underplay the significance of macro-level political economy. This both obscures understanding of the wider context of livelihoods and risks casting the poor as responsible for their own situations (Arce 2003; Murray 2002; Toner 2003). Second, SLA is criticised for its relative blindness to social relations within households and communities (Sneddon 2000). However, access to livelihood opportunities between and within households is mediated by the power-laden social relations of age, gender, class, kinship and generation (de Haan and Zoomers 2005; Murray 2001), and shaped by rights, tradition and law (Blaikie *et al* 1994). Therefore, we cannot ignore inter-personal relations and must agree that assets, in terms of the different capitals available to people, are fundamentally relational (Whitehead 2000). Finally, SLA has not adequately recognised that decisions about livelihoods are seldom

rational pro-active strategies determined by coherent households or independent individuals (de Haan and Zoomers 2005). They also reflect contests over social value and differing understandings of 'reality' (Arce 2003) and therefore individual agency needs to be given more attention within SLA's more structural approach. This will enable us to further understand how individuals draw upon cultural understandings and institutional processes in making (and re-making) decisions through relationships with other actors (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

Taking these criticisms into account, the SLA approach is useful for understanding young people's future in terms of their access to sustainable livelihoods. It would seem highly likely that AIDS is impacting in multiple ways on young people's access to the different types of capital (assets). For instance, young people orphaned due to AIDS may fail to inherit land or livestock; their human capital may be diminished if they are unable to attend school regularly, or fail to acquire skills from their parents' generation. They may lack financial capital if their household's income is spent on medicines or funerals, and their social capital may be diminished if they are uprooted from their community to live among distant relatives in unfamiliar places. Since it is access to assets and opportunities that enables youth to pursue particular livelihood strategies, albeit shaped by structures and processes operating at both micro- and macro-levels, when aspects of capital are diminished due to AIDS, it is important to ensure that the structures and processes in place are not further hindering young people's access to future livelihoods for example, through their exclusion from inheritance law or policy relating to child/youth labour. Research is needed in these areas to more fully understand the position of AIDS-affected youth in relation to securing future livelihoods.

Conclusions and future research directions

Youth cannot escape the overwhelming impact that AIDS is inflicting on individuals, families and communities in southern Africa. Yet, youth have received much less attention than other groups in research on the impacts of AIDS. Through our analysis of the literature we have demonstrated that youth are not only presently affected by AIDS but that increased responsibility due to the effects of the pandemic has implications for their ability to secure future sustainable rural livelihoods.

Research is required to understand more fully the ways AIDS is affecting youth's access to livelihood opportunities and we suggest that the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach could be useful for exploring AIDS-affected youth's future livelihood strategies and for identifying a clear need for interventions. There is some literature suggesting a need for productivity-enhancing interventions that are relevant and accessible to children, including those engaged in on-farm food production, on-farm cash-generating and off-farm cash generating activities (Haan *et al* 2003). Suggestions in relation to agriculture include integrating agricultural extension into school curricula, focusing on techniques, tools and crops that are less labour intensive, including lighter ploughs, promoting low labour nutritious crops and supporting/reviving communal labour practices. Also agricultural extension needs to integrate agricultural productivity into a broader understanding of livelihoods and AIDS if it is to empower rural people (Haan *et al* 2003).

However, clearly there is also a need for new research to take more seriously the position of young people. To date this is a gap in the knowledge surrounding rural

youth and livelihoods, thus new research needs to explore in more detail the ways youth, AIDS and rural livelihoods interconnect. This could include research that identifies the impacts of AIDS on young people's current and future livelihood strategies taking into account all the variables raised in Figure 3 for achieving sustainable livelihoods. The policy implications of conducting research with young people concerning their livelihoods would enable policy-makers to implement strategies that would ensure young people affected by AIDS can have secure rural futures.

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ⁱ Following UN definitions children are generally considered as those under the age of 18. However, almost all official HIV prevalence figures categorise children separately from adults but not youth with statistics represented for the 0-14 and 15-49 population sub groups. This excludes youth from any analyses of the impact of AIDS on young people, subsuming them within the adult population.