RAPID URBANIZATION AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN AFRICA

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centrality and social roles for older persons. There is no simple panacea for addressing the problem of meeting the social and economic needs of an ageing world. The orthodoxy of the industrialized world! the welfare state, old-style public pension schemes and public-financed medical provision - are all experiencing major

URBANIZATION TRENDS IN AFRICA: IMPACT ON OLDER PERSONS

It is generally accepted that all countries of the world are passing through two fundamental demographic changes, namely, the urbanization of most cities and towns and the rapid ageing of the population. In reviewing the effects of urbanization on older persons, the writer was constrained by the lack of literature in

within the continent. What is of consequence with regard to migration in contemporary Africa is the rapidity with which populations, mostly young people, are moving from rural areas to towns and cities. Although sub-Saharan African countries are even now overwhelmingly rural, the continuous depletion in the size of the young

giving way to the Western style of marriage. The family, which was sanctified by the traditional culture, has virtually degenerated into a profane association of partners who believe more in trial than in permanent marriage.

Consequently, it is argued, traditional family patterns are disintegrating owing to reasons of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization and the resultant complex factors such as education, the introduction of convertible monetary systems, easy travelling, and the establishment of social and economic values and political patterns. These, then, conclusively make up a modern society, with stratifying factors like being rich or poor, being educated or not and having this or that other thing or not. It is important now, in present African society, to be a member of this social stratum or of a professional group or a partner in politics or other interest groups. The current trend is to be recognized, and the values now being accepted by the young, educated, ambitious and urbanized population are a pertinent and also a detrimental factor to the old family pattern, where cash is a scarce commodity.

It is against this background of rapid change that we examine the elderly generation's existence and traditional pattern of support.

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT: AGEING AND THE AFRICAN FAMILY

African values

Historically, African communities had a well-articulated caring structure that preserved the quality of life of older persons, but this was linked to the low probability of survival of large numbers of older persons. The situation is changing, albeit, gradually; early mortality no longer limits the number of surviving elderly persons and traditional respect and caring structures are now facing substantial social challenge (Habte-Gabr, Blum and Smith, 1987; El-Badry,1988; Adamchak,1995; AGES, 1995; Vatuk, 1996). The literature on informal support systems characteristic of the African model frequently forewarns of the weakening of African traditional family structures. Much of the literature cites the modern nuclear family's inability to continue its caregiving roles in the context of the current monetized urbanizational life, as women increasingly join the labour force. The impact of world economic trends on family living standards is likewise projected as paving the way for extended family exclusivity (Mosamba, 1984; Shuman, 1991; Apt, 1992, 1996). The family's capacity to cushion older members depends essentially on three variables: its social and economic situation; whether it falls within the ambit of a social security system and the actual nature and structure of the family (Chawla, 1996).

When elderly Nigerians were asked "what sort of things give the most status today" (Ekpenong, Oyeneye and Pell, 1987, pp. 16-17), the general agreement was that money, character and education (in that order) were most important. Only a few respondents mentioned the traditionally accepted norm, namely, children and family. The majority of Nigerian elders are said to be pessimistic about modern circumstances in Nigeria and about the present and future situation of older persons. In the final analysis, the conclusion drawn by the authors was that even though elderly Nigerians continue their traditional roles, those roles are now less important in an increasingly materialistic society. Elderly Temne of Sierra Leone, also in Western Africa, summarize the situation in their reflective assessment of themselves as "a short-changed generation" (Dorjahn, 1989, pp. 272-275). In this reflection, they meant that they had "paid their dues" when they were young but their turn for a pay-off was

By tradition, older people in Africa are not excluded from the process of productive and social participation. In a typical African household, each person has a role to play, whether young or old. The elder plays an important role in the social upbringing of the young and thereby becomes the educator and guiding spirit behind many initiatives of the young, psychologically a very satisfying role. As one entrusted with family land, property and family wealth, the elder is consulted in administrative matters and is always consulted when important decisions are to be made, a role that is linked to their closeness to ancestors. Consequently, the Shona of Zimbabwe refer to the old as "ancestral spirits". In this role, the elders officiate in marriage, birth and death ceremonies, and act as adjucators to ensure that peace and harmony prevails within the greater family.

This social arrangement enables the young and the old to engage in productive intercourse, and intergenerational experiences are shared; the young have something to learn from the old and the old person is given a helping hand. Daily encounters between generations place the elderly person in a strong position that is useful, challenging and ego-building. This domain of kinship network, within which the older person resides under traditional circumstances, acts as a protective environment, an economic and psychological social security system.

Jomo Kenyatta, in his book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965, p. 297), stresses the African seniority principle and societal inclusivity of elders:

> As a man grows old, his prestige increases according to the number of age grades he has passed. It is his seniority that makes an elder almost indispensable in the general life of the community. His presence or advice is sought in all functions. In religious ceremonies, the elders hold supreme authorities. The custom of the people demands that the elder should be given his due respect and honour.

On the isolation of older persons, Kenyatta (ibid.) makes the following observation, reflecting African moral and political thinking:

> Nobody is an isolated person. First and foremost, he is several people's relative and several people's contemporary.

The seniority principle, however, needs to be qualified. In the African ideology, old age is accompanied by certain roles and responsibilities that are bound to the elder's life experience and accumulated wisdom. Thus, the

It is not only the budgeting capabilities of the conjugal family that are affected by subdivision. Such subdivision also has consequences for the arrangement of various personal service and care arrangements within the extended family. For example, the traditional functions performed by older persons in respect of child care are negatively affected by domestic separation. Similarly, the caring services extended to the elderly within the traditional household become more problematic, sporadic and, on occasion, even impossible, when elderly people become geographically separated from kin, even within the same area of a city (Apt, 1993) or are forced to live with caregivers in an unfriendly urban environment. The Kenya case study below illustrates the latter example (Tout, 1989).

Uprooted from a rural area, Mrs. S tells her story:

> *When I was at home, I had a field and managed to do all I wanted, but here in town, I am hardly able to take a walk because I am old and, besides, in town there is a danger of cars. I always tell my son that I want to go home to live the life I am used to. I am, however, too old and sick and no one is prepared to come with me. I have no future but to wait for death.*

The reciprocity that existed between generations in the traditional extended family has thus been disrupted by urban life; in the process, the elderly, who were previously valued for their services, increasingly occupy the unenviable position of being viewed as useless consumers of scarce resources and uncooperative. When old people living in rural areas have no option but to migrate to the city to live with relatives there, it is not an easy situation for either side. It can be quite traumatic for the old person (HAG, 1999) and stressful for the relative.

Nevertheless, although signs of an imminent crisis concerning the social welfare of the old in Africa are already visible, currently, in most sub-Saharan African countries, owing to the lack of a comprehensive social security system for all, the family continues to be the dominant source of care and support for older persons.

THE GHANAIAN EXAMPLE: URBANIZATION AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF OLDER PERSONS

Demographic profile

The demographic profile of Ghana shows that people are living longer and will continue to live longer in the years ahead. The population of Ghana, which is relatively young, is currently estimated to be over 18 million. The population at the last census, in 1984, was 11 million. The next census, to confirm the 18 million estimate,

will begin in 2000. The Ghanaian population is not only youthful but is so in every subsection. The median age of a worker is only 30 years and one out of nine members of the labour force is over 50 years of age. Table 3 shows the population of Ghana, projected to 2000, for selected age groups.

(TABLE 3 HERE)

The post-independence population censuses carried out in Ghana in 1960, 1970 and 1984 gave total population figures of 6.7 million, 8.5 million and 12.5 million, respectively. The 1970 census shows an increase of 2.4 per cent per year over the population of the first census, while the 1984 census recorded an annual growth rate of 2.6 per cent during the period from 1970 to 1984. Between 1960 and 1970, the population aged 60 and above had increased by 3.2 per cent, the same increase observed for the period from 1970 to 1984 (see table 4). This suggests that Ghana's population is growing older. Table 5 shows the life expectancy of Ghanaians in 1990 at age 60, 65, 70 and 75. Table 6 shows the geographical distribution of the population aged 60 and over and it indicates, for all the computed years, that more older persons live in rural areas. The link between rural-urban migration in Ghana and the ageing of rural areas has been well documented by researchers (Engman, 1986; Caldwell, 1967; Addo, 1972; Nabilla, 1986). The movement from rural areas to towns, is dominated primarily by the youth (15 to 34 years).

(TABLES 4, 5, 6 HERE)

older people.

It is estimated that at least 50 per cent of the children of the elderly in Ghana migrate to distant places (Apt van Ham, 1989) and personal contact between children and the parents left behind is rather sporadic (Apt, 1971, 1972, 1980, 1986). The question of visits from children to their old parents is of crucial importance in the context of psychological or emotional support. Data collected in Ghana since the 1970s indicate that migrant children's visits to family members left behind average once or twice a year and that older people in rural areas are visited less often by their children than are their counterparts in urban areas (Apt, 1996, pp. 72-76).

Changing family structure: crowding out older persons

In Ghana, as in all Africa in general, the family is undergoing basic structural and functional modifications. It is, however, the type of changes occurring that remains debatable. The introduction of Western-type education, with its built-in ideologies on living, and wage and income-earning jobs, often channels young people's efforts away from their kith and kin and from their home areas; at the same time, it diminishes the value of the authority, knowledge and skills of the senior generation. The strain on traditional family structure that is introduced by distance is compounded by economic stagnation, individualization of the legal contract in the market economy and an increasing emphasis on romantic love as the basis for marriage. These reinforcing elements tend to create for individuals and couples a direction of independence from the larger family. This direction is further reinforced by the imposition of law courts in matters of property rights and so on, and in the nuclear family housing units provided by employers and public authorities for urban residents.

Migration, urbanization, education and wage labour are the main factors within a broad range of socio-economic changes that are affecting the living arrangements and support system of the family. They affect the care and well-being of the elderly at three levels. First, the departure of resourceful persons within the family and household, that is, the able-bodied and the young, whose services are needed in the processing of daily needs. Secondly, the departure of caregivers, mostly women, through modern education and employment, as providers of services within the household and, finally, the inability of the able-bodied to earn needed income as providers owing to increasing unemployment, underemployment and low salary levels even for the fully employed. Added to the above is income security of the elderly themselves, which diminishes with age as a result of the absence of pension and social security schemes for Ghanaian informal sector workers. The majority of older Ghanaians are small-scale farmers and artisans and have no benefits to rely on when they retire from active work.

Role

CONCLUSION

Traditional domestic arrangements had intergenerational support built into them; modern arrangements are in the process of destroying this key social welfare feature. Recognizing that this is the case raises the question of how to design intergenerational support back into mainstream social relations so that the elderly are not marginalized and put at risk by the urbanization process.

The impoverishment of Africa means a deterioration of living conditions, particularly of women who bear the triple responsibility of raising a family, working to bring home wages and upholding community structures. Africa has the largest number of old people who are forced by economic and family circumstances to work well beyond the age of 65 (International Labour Organization, 1993; Brown, 1984; Okraku, 1985). The problems of survival that they face leave them little opportunity or energy to develop measures of their own for qualitative living. In this respect, tax breaks for those taking care of older relatives, housing designs that permit multigenerational living, and social facilities, for example, day centres that can be used as meeting places or clubs by older persons, are worth considering. Each of these simple measures can play a part in sustaining an environment conducive to inter-generational solidarity.

Most importantly, the resource constraints experienced in Africa make it imperative that networks of policy makers and researchers be formed to develop continental policies on ageing. Networks are key to reducing research costs and to ensuring the efficient and inexpensive transmission of new policy approaches and developments.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GHANA

The following recommendations are specially aimed at improving the living standards of older persons in Ghana.

1. *Strengthening the capability of older farmers*

Since older people constitute an increasing portion of the rural agriculture labour force, economic policies should aim at enhancing their farming performance. Equitable access to financial resources and services should be provided. They will need credit and extension services and assistance in adopting improved farming practices and technologies that are suited to their capabilities. Such technologies should be simple, operationally safe, labour saving, without requiring expert skills, inexpensive and capable of enhancing the profitability of farming. Training will be a necessary precondition for technological innovation.

Increasing opportunities for employment

There should be an increase of opportunities for continued participation of both urban and rural elderly persons in productive work. Efforts should be made to encourage older persons to engage in self-employment, which would not only enable them to do things at their own pace but would also encourage them to introduce innovations for productivity and profit. In addition, the provision of opportunities for job training and continued education would enhance their self-employability. Retraining programmes should therefore be

Providing financial assistance for income generating projects

The establishment of income-generating projects targeted at older persons should be an important element in the employment strategy. The financing of such small economic undertakings can take several forms: (a) a no-interest and no-collateral assistance programme administered by the Government to help older workers; (b) the allocation of a lump sum from social security funds to workers upon retirement to provide the capital necessary for self-employment ventures; and (c) special government-subsidized community funds to finance development projects and assist destitute and disabled older persons to become self-supporting.

Encouraging participation in rural cooperatives

Cooperative ventures can play a key role in strengthening the capacity of the ageing to contribute to rural development by providing equipment, technical assistance, marketing access, and managerial and other inputs for farming and small non-farm activities. However, the successful participation of poor, ageing farmers in cooperative ventures will depend very much on the concurrent implementation of education and training programmes, input of managerial expertise, access to modern production tools and, in some cases, land reform.

Providing education and training

A continuous and progressive education and training programme, aimed at developing older person's awareness, favourable attitudes, leadership skills and management abilities, vocational competence and business management, should receive support from both local and external institutions. The well-being of older people, particularly women, is directly related to social and environmental circumstances and their ability to cope with those circumstances. Older women in general in sub-Saharan Africa face hardships that are directly linked to their economic condition. The main reasons for economic hardship are partly cultural and partly owing to the fact that existing pensions and social security schemes cover a small proportion of the female population. With inadequate and decreasing family support attributable to migration patterns in the region, the vulnerability of older women should become an important matter for technical assistance programmes in the future.

[1]The statements cited are representative of those of other African delegations. Statements are on file in the Centre for Social

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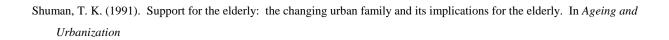   Ghana,*

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    Urbanization

TABLE 1. GROWTH OF 60+ POPULATION, 1950-1995: AFRICAN REGION

Region	Indicator (percentage)	Year									
		1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Africa	60+	5.1	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9
	65+	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
East Africa	60+	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.4
	65+	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
Middle Africa	60+	5.9	5.4	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.9
	65+	3.8	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1
North Africa	60+	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.7	6.1	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.7	5.9
	65+	3.5	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.8
West Africa	60+	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.7
	65+	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9
Southern Africa	60+	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.5
	65+	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4

Source: United Nations (1999a, 1999b).

TABLE 2. MEDIUM VARIANT PROJECTIONS: POPULATION 60+ FOR TWO REGIONS

Region	Indicator (percentage)	Year									
		1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2040	2050
Southern Africa	60+	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.2	6.6	7.3	7.9	10.1	13.5
	65+	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.9	4.3	4.7	5.3	6.6	9.0
Western Region	60+	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.6	6.2	8.2	11.2
	65+	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.5	4.0	5.3	7.4

Source: United Nations (1999a, 1999b).

TABLE 3. PROJECTED POPULATION OF GHANA BY SELECTED AGE GROUPS, 1985-2000

Year	Age group		
	0-14	15-59	60+
1960[a]	2 996 506 (44.5%)	3 398 795 (50.6%)	331 516 (4.9%)
1970[a]	4 015 956 (46.9%)	4 085 475 (47.8%)	457 873 (5.3%)
1984[a]	5 535 116 (45.0%)	6 041 830 (49.2%)	719 135 (5.8%)
1985	5 722 605 (45.0%)	6 296 185 (49.5%)	698 913 (5.5%)
1990	6 750 385 (45.8%)	7 249 841 (49.2%)	743 760 (5.0%)
1995	7 973 658 (46.4%)	8 410 459 (48.9%)	813 761 (4.7%)
1998	8 830 414 (46.7%)	9 194 404 (48.7%)	868 966 (4.6%)
2000	9 395 228 (46.7%)	9 782 500 (48.7%)	924 547 (4.6%)

[a]Data from the population censuses for 1960, 1970 and 1984.
Source: Analysis of Demographic Data, vol. 1, (Accra, Ghana Statistical Service).

TABLE 4. POPULATION OF GHANA AGED 60 AND ABOVE

Year	Absolute number	As a percentage of total population	Period	Increase
1960	331 516	4.6	1960-1970	3.2
1970	457 873	5.3	1970-1984	3.2
1984	719 135	5.8	1960-1984	3.2

Source: Ghana population census es 1960, 1970 and 1984.

TABLE 5. L

TABLE 6. PROJECTED GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF 60+ POPULATION

	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Total
			Age groups			
1984						
Urban	58 327	38 658	32 807	18 072	32 062	179 922
Rural	167 449	106 655	96 056	53 741	115 309	539 213
1991						
Urban	82 357	52 412	44 484	24 504	43 474	243 964
Rural	200 874	126 695	115 233	64 468	138 326	646 847
2000						
Urban	120 789	! 80 048	67 940	37 425	66 397	372 600
Rural	236 957	150 927	135 933	76 048	163 173	763 040
2025						
Urban	262 184	173 752	96 556	81 235	144 121	808 796
Rural	247 240	157 477	141 832	79 348	170 254	796 155

Sources: Computed from the *1984 Population Census of Ghana, Demographic and Economic Characteristics, Total Country*, table 1A, p. 1 (Accra: Ghana, Statistical Service, 1987); projections are based on 1984 census data.

TABLE 7. CHILDREN'S SUPPORT TO ELDERLY PARENTS

Type of assistance	Percentage receiving assistance	Percentage not receiving assistance	Number
Pay rent/provide housing	3.4	96.6	1 003
Provide money for food	91.5	8.5	957
Pay medical bills	52.2	47.8	956
Provide clothing	27.2	72.8	957
Provide other things	5.0	95.0	802

Source: Apt (1996), p. 84.

TABLE 8a. MARITAL STATUS, ELDERLY FEMALES

Status	Urban	Rural
	(Percentage)	
Married	28.1	39.6
Widowed	51.0	51.7
Separated/divorced	14.6	8.2
Never married	6.3	0.5
Total	100	100

Source: Apt (1994).

TABLE 8b. MARITAL STATUS, ELDERLY MALES

Status	Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Married	66	65.3	166	75.1
Widowed	22	21.8	38	17.2
Separated/divorced	9	8.9	16	7.2
Never married	3	3.0	1	.5
No answer	1	1.0	-	-
Total	101	100	221	100

Source:

TABLE 9. HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE ELDERLY, BY RESIDENCE TYPE

In whose house are you living?	Urban	Rural	Valid responses	
	(Percentage)		Number	Percentage
Own house	29.5	8.0	305	28.9
Family house	42.0	40.3	436	41.4
Child's house	10.6	19.0	145	13.8
Renting	12.4	1.5	87	8.3
Spouse's house	1.4	1.3	14	1.3
Father's/mother's house	1.1	.3	8	.8
Uncle's house	-	3.5	14	1.3
Brother's house	-	3.3	13	1.2
Other	3.1	3.0	32	3.0
Valid responses	100	100	1054	100

Source: Apt (1996), p. 68.