

L'enfant et ses proches.
Dynamiques familiales en Afrique Subsaharienne
Children and family dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa

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Intergenerational care for and by children: Reciprocity and impacts on children's wellbeing in rural Uganda /

*Les soins donnés par et pour les enfants dans les relations intergénérationnelles :
réciprocité et impacts sur le bien-être des enfants en milieu rural en Ouganda*

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Quels réseaux de parenté sont mobilisés autour des enfants ?

The role of extended kin in the life of children

***INTERGENERATIONAL
CARE FOR AND BY
CHILDREN:
RECIPROCITY AND
IMPACTS ON
CHILDREN'S
WELLBEING IN RURAL
UGANDA***

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A MULTIGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- Children's wellbeing in sub-Saharan Africa is dependent on resources and capabilities of
 - immediate family &
 - extended kin network
- Older persons contribute to children's needs
- Taking a multigenerational perspective is crucial to understanding children's wellbeing
- Conceptual grounding exists, but need new tools to capture
 - Multi-generational, reciprocal relationships
 - Impacts of these relationships on children's wellbeing



INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN SSA

- **Families do most of the caring for children, the sick and aged** (Apt, 2012; Freeman & Nkomo, 2006; Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009; Opong, 2006; Richter et al., 2009)
- **Multigenerational households are often the locus of carework (financial, physical, emotional, and psychosocial) for old and young alike** (Settles et al., 2009)
- **Multigenerational networks serve as a means to support children and promote their wellbeing** (Madhavan, Clark, Beguy, Kabiru, & Gross, 2016; Schatz & Ogunmefun, 2007)
- **Long tradition of fostering by extended kin for childcare, socialization & character building** (Goody, 1982; Grant & Yeatman, 2012; Kasedde, Doyle, Seeley, & Ross, 2014; Madhavan, 2004)

THREE KEY QUESTIONS

1. What do multigenerational and reciprocal support structures look like?
2. How does caregiving by older persons for children impact children's wellbeing?
3. How does caregiving by children (aged 5-15) for older persons' impact children's wellbeing?



BEGINNING TO ANSWER...



1. Provide evidence of the importance of reciprocal and multigenerational support to children's wellbeing
2. Provide a conceptual framework that expands the determinants of children's wellbeing
3. How to capture better multigenerational relationships, reciprocity and their impacts on children's wellbeing

DATA & METHODS



- Rural southwest Uganda
- 9 focus group discussions
 - Sample drawn from GPC or the MRC/UVRI Clinic
 - Persons 60-plus; Men/women; HIV and/or NCD diagnosis, or no known diagnosis
- Inductive thematic analysis
 - social support by children for older persons and by older persons for children
 - older persons' perceptions of social isolation, reciprocity and obligation

OLDER PERSONS' PERSPECTIVE

- **Participants report**
 - spending considerable physical, emotional and financial resources to support children in their networks
 - simultaneously are dependent upon younger generations for social, emotional and financial support
- **Both the receipt and provision of care from/to the older generation is likely to impact children's wellbeing**



WHAT OLDER PEOPLE DO FOR CHILDREN

- Older persons' agriculture & “breadwinning” central to the wellbeing and survival of household members
 - We do some work to be able to obtain something little that can still keep the family going such as growing food, making sure that essentials such as paraffin, salt and sugar are availed. Now that the children are in UPE schools, you try to buy them books, uniforms and in that case you realise you have also gained some momentum to fit within the family. (FGD3-MHIV)
- Make decisions about spending remittances
 - It is like this; when a child sends you some money which is somehow a reasonable amount and you have a [grand]child at home who has been sent back home for school fees, you divert this money for school fees first even when it came purposely for buying sugar and other essentials. (FGD3-MHIV)

WHAT OLDER PEOPLE DO FOR CHILDREN

- **What we don't know**
 - Meaning of these connections
 - Balance of care and transfers to/from other kin
 - Whether care and transfers are restricted to particular lineal lines, or gendered in their focus
 - Impacts and outcomes of care and transfers
 - Quality of care children receive
- **Do these transfers mean that children with grandparents who provide resources fare better in terms of nutrition, in terms of schooling, in terms of general health and wellbeing?**

WHAT CHILDREN DO FOR OLDER PERSONS

- Flows of resources and assistance are not unidirectional
- Older persons rely on the companionship, physical labor, carework, memory assistance of children
 - “Grandchildren are among those people who remind the elderly to take their drugs (FGD8-FANY).”
 - “Water sources [wells] are far, children are in school and we can’t fetch it ourselves. In case there is no water we don’t eat at home and wait until children return from school to collect some water (FGD5-FANY).”

WHAT CHILDREN DO FOR OLDER PERSONS

■ What we don't know

- Opportunity costs in terms of schooling or work, when children must provide assistance to older persons
- Whether certain types of assistance have greater costs for children's health and wellbeing than others
- Relative importance of grandparents' support in an overall network: is reciprocity (and opportunity costs) due to necessity or values related to supporting elders, or some other meaning

MULTIGENERATIONAL SUPPORT IN CONTEXT

- Filling a gap & investing in the future:
 - “We have those that lost their parents, there are those that a son brings to you and he never comes back to check on them!” (FGD8-FANY)
 - If you are staying with the grandchildren you want them to go to school. You may tell your son [biological son and father of the grand children] that I want grandchildren to go to school. Instead of sending them to school with money for school fees, he goes to the bar to drink alcohol, leaving the children at home [i.e. not in school]. Because we want these grandchildren to have an education, you [the grandparent] may go to school to see if the grandchildren are at school [those who stay with their biological parents]. You observe that a child was not well cared for and got affected by jiggers. You start arguing with your son that personally I brought you up well and never affected with jiggers, why don't you care for your children! (FGD1-FNCD)

MULTIGENERATIONAL SUPPORT IN CONTEXT

- What we don't know
 - How and why care and resources are used to secure wellbeing of each generation
 - Gendered nature of this exchange
 - Mostly older women who speak to these issues, although we know that men also provide carework (Mugisha, Schatz, Seeley, & Kowal, 2015)
 - Do adult children co-residing with older carers improve children's outcomes
 - Do older carers impart values/skills to grandchildren that help them sustain themselves in future
- Need more information on:
 - Types, amounts, direction of support, geographical distribution of networks of exchange,
 - Impacts on children's wellbeing of providing/receiving care
 - Circumstances under which exchanges take place

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR RECIPROcity

- Reciprocity of care and resources may improve or decrease children's (and older persons') emotional and physical wellbeing
- A holistic understanding of children's wellbeing must be viewed from a multigenerational perspective
- Make use of literatures and theories on intergenerational exchange (wealth flow, social capital, children's support networks, feminist carework)



BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR RECIPROcity



- **Need to track**
 - Living arrangements
 - Inter- and intra- household division of labor and carework
 - Use and distribution of limited resources
 - Differences by demographic characteristics of older person & child, and reasons for fostering/caring

DATA TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF RECIPROcity

- **Adapt Kinship Support Tree (KST) (Madhavan et al. 2016)**
 - **Current:**
 - Focal individual is child (G3)
 - (1) a (child's) kinship tree, (2) distant kin and non-biological sources of support, social, (3) economic & demographic data, (4) geo-spatial data, and (5) type of support
 - **Adapted:**
 - Two focal individuals—an older person (G1 – age 60+) and a child (G3 – age 5-15)
 - Capture data in format of 1-5 from KST on BOTH support for G1 and G3 in same networks
 - Care for and by G1, care by G2, and care by and for G3

WHAT WE THINK WE'LL GAIN

- 1. Learn more about the reasons and ways that reciprocity of care impacts children's wellbeing**
- 2. Capture the trade-offs involved and ways these relationships influence those at either end of the life course**
- 3. Learn how carers and children in this particular context define intergenerational relationships**
- 4. Be able to compare data within networks to assess reliability of the instruments.**

THANK YOU!

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