

## Research Project

### From "Cure to Care" among the Elderly. Old-Age Vulnerability in Tanzania

#### Third-party funded project

**Project title** From "Cure to Care" among the Elderly. Old-Age Vulnerability in Tanzania

**Principal Investigator(s)** Van Eeuwijk, Piet ;

**Co-Investigator(s)** Obrist van Eeuwijk, Brigit ;

**Project Members** Gerold, Jana ; Nyoni, Joyce ; Masanja, Honorati ; Simon, Vendelin Tarmo ;

**Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Gesellschaftswissenschaften / Fachbereich Ethnologie

Departement Gesellschaftswissenschaften / Medizinethnologie (Obrist)

Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) / Medical Anthropology (Obrist)

**Department**

**Project Website** <http://www.socialresilience.ch>

**Project start** 01.07.2008

**Probable end** 31.12.2011

**Status** Completed

Old-age research in relation to culture, health and illness in developing countries is gradually gaining in importance in the social sciences. However, social anthropology studies on elder care, care support schemes and burden of elder care are only in its initial stage. This proposed research builds on a selected review of current literature and on findings of a previous study of the applicant on old-age vulnerability in Southeast Asia, where care needs related to chronic illnesses were identified by the elderly persons as principal spheres of concern. As a matter of fact, in non-Western societies the degree of old-age vulnerability is influenced to a great extent by providing – or just failing – care support.

This medical anthropology research study is based upon the conceptual framework of 'health transition' – that includes rapid demographic and epidemiological transformation, socio-cultural change, fast urbanisation and migration as well as broad change of lifestyle in most developing countries – and correlates it with the assumption of growing social, economic and health uncertainties (i.e. uncertain family, kinship and community support; minimal state provision; increased risk of suffering concurrently from infectious and chronic disease) for elderly people nowadays in most developing countries. Harsh living conditions for many elderly people in Sub-Saharan Africa, shaped, for instance, by economic poverty, poor access to professional health services and last but not least the HIV/AIDS pandemic, put already a heavy burden and strain on the older persons whose most important asset is still a healthy body and mind. Along with the global processes of 'health transition' and above triple uncertainties, appropriate and adequate care for frail elderly may become a major challenge for most societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The above-stated transformations postulate a distinct shift 'from cure to care'. Care in this sense is understood as both practice and attitude and encompasses more than mere medical activities. Households 'produce' not only health, but also care which belongs to the biggest part into the realm of laypeople and of women as principal caregivers. The 'vulnerability' concept refines these approaches by regarding elderly individuals as being social actors who share particular risks and exposures, but who can mobilise coping resources and potentials to prevent, mitigate or overcome bad outcomes.

The six specific research objectives are (1) to investigate elderly persons' perception of 'old age' (emic view), (2) to identify relationship of main carer(s) to chronically ill elderly, (3) to look into resources and capacities of elderly people which strengthen their resilience regarding care and support, (4) to explore the significance of rural-urban relations for chronically ill elderly persons, (5) to find out the role and

burden of elder caregivers, and (6) to assess nature and priority of care improvements of chronically ill elderly people (emic view). Qualitative and, on a smaller scale, quantitative research methods are applied to achieve these objectives. The study approach comprises different societal levels, namely community, household and individuals, and diverse stakeholders.

The research period will last three years (January 2008-December 2010). In order to study urban-rural dynamics in relation to care schemes and old-age vulnerabilities as well as mobility of elderly people and their caregivers, we have designed a research approach that includes a rural and an urban area. Main research area and also 'point of departure' is the Rufiji District (in Pwani or Coast Region), and metropolitan Dar es Salaam will be the selected urban environment. In Tanzania, we have an interdisciplinary and international research team including one country and one field coordinator plus two PhD students (of social anthropology); the main applicant acts as principal project coordinator.

This project makes a major contribution to old-age research in developing countries, particularly to care schemes. The effects of 'health transition' and concomitant HIV/AIDS and poverty on elder care schemes in non-Western societies are not yet widely studied and understood, thus this research fills this gap of knowledge. Moreover, this study strengthens the international dimension of North-South research and exchange. And finally, it will provide empirically grounded recommendations for Tanzanian researchers, politicians and policy-makers.

**Keywords** Care, Elderly People, Old-Age Vulnerability, Health Transition, Medical Anthropology, Tanzania

**Financed by**

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)  
Public Administration

**Add publication**

**Published results**

1477985, Gerold, Jana, Using a Camera in Ethnographic Fieldwork, Tsantsa, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

1477991, Gerold, Jana, Kommunizieren ohne Worte : wie ältere Menschen in Tansania Mobiltelefone benutzen, Afrika Bulletin, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

1536194, Van Eeuwijk, Piet, Altern in Unsicherheit : Gesundheit und Pflege von alten Menschen in Indonesien und Tansania, 978-3-8376-1506-7, Alter: unbekannt, Publication: Book Item (Buchkap., Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden etc.)

1541451, Gerold, Jana, Full of Life. Old Age and Care in Urban Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Publication: Thesis (Dissertationen, Habilitationen)

1541360, Simon, Vendelin T., Ageing, Health and Care in Rural Tanzania, Publication: Thesis (Dissertationen, Habilitationen)

**Add documents**

**Specify cooperation partners**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Kreditinhaber</b>	<b>Kooperationspartner</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Laufzeit - von</b>	<b>Laufzeit - bis</b>
1017892	Obrist van Eeuwijk, Brigit	Nyoni, Joyce, Dr. Acting Head of Department	Department for Sociology, University of Dar es Salaam	01.01.2008	31.12.2014