

Title: The Influence of Poverty and Well Being of the Elderly People in Nyanza Province, Kenya

Author: Alice, Nyamanga Ondigi; Samson, Rosana Ondigi

Kenya's population aged 60+ is estimated to be 1.8 million, that is, 9% of the total population and is projected to increase to about 2.2 million by 2012. This raises questions as to the socio-economic situation and well-being of the older population given the prevailing economic conditions and decreasing family sizes occasioned by family planning and the migration of the youth to urban areas in search of employment. A descriptive study using quantitative survey questionnaires, qualitative interviews and observation checklist was conducted among a sample of 120 older men and women aged 60+ in three districts in Nyanza province. The majority (57%) of older people earned incomes of less than Ksh. 2000 (US \$25), older people's major source of income was from small-scale growing and selling of vegetables, eggs, milk, and fruits. The majority of the sample (64%) had only completed primary education, 68% had low food nutrient intake, 66.7% hypertension, 13% diabetes, 73% joint aches, 22% suffered from HIV/AIDS, 29% were affected by HIV/AIDS, 77.5% of women had menopause related discomforts, and 19.2% of men had prostate problems. Although 82% had geographical access to health facilities, services were experienced as unaffordable or inadequate. In conclusion, older people's poverty produces vulnerability to malnutrition and untreated degenerative diseases. Dependence on help from children and well-wishers is older people's main, but inadequate, resource for trying to cope with this vulnerability. Despite formal government commitment, concrete policies to ensure the economic well-being of older people are absent. National level research to establish the nature and determinants of older people's socio-economic situation is needed to promote and inform such policy development.