

Social cash transfers, generational relations and youth poverty trajectories in rural Lesotho and Malawi

Research highlight 2 (Lesotho): Young people's poverty trajectories 2008-16

Preliminary findings from an ESRC-DFID-funded research project April 2017



Of the 50 young people who participated in research in 2008, 31 young people have been interviewed for this project. Of these 31, 25 were staying in or near the village at the time of interview, and 6 in or near Maseru. The interviews uncovered a variety of experiences among the young people who were aged 10-24 in 2008 and aged 18-32 in 2016.

Education

- * While some young men had never attended school, most young people had completed a few years of primary education and nearly half had started secondary school.
- * Several young men had left primary school because they were required to herd family livestock.
- * At secondary level, reasons for dropping out were usually associated with inability to pay fees, in several cases because a father had died.
- * While some left school after failing the year, others passed but were unable to return.
- * The only participant currently in education is a young woman now staying in Maseru who is doing Form D through LDTC.
- * Few young people were engaged in livelihoods that required more than minimal education.

Marriage and children

- * Only five of the young men had married in contrast with most of the young women, one of whom was separated and another divorced.
- * Almost all of the married women, and some who were not married, had one or more children, but none had more than four.
- * Women who remained single and childless were all living in Maseru.
- * For some, marriage was an unplanned response to pregnancy or elopement.
- * Others, particularly the young men, thought seriously about the commitment that marriage required and were reluctant to marry until they had accumulated the resources they thought necessary (although *bohali* was seldom paid).



Employment and migration

- * Almost all of the young men were herding, around half for their own families and half employed by others.
- * About half of the young men had engaged in herding in other villages, while two had worked in Maseru and one in South Africa.
- * The most common work among young women was domestic or child care work. Six had worked in Maseru in these occupations.
- * Only three young women had not had employment; these engaged in trade or piecework.
- * Both marriage and childbearing were constraints for young women's livelihoods, limiting their ability to migrate for work.
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In August 2016, of the original 50 participants:

- 17 were in the village
- 4 were staying nearby in the neighbouring village
- 4 were staying nearby in the larger settlement of Marakabei
- 1 was in Thaba Tseka
- 11 were in Maseru
- 4 were near Maseru
- 2 had died (another has since died)



Acquisition of assets

- * None of the participants had been allocated their own fields in the village although two brothers who had been orphaned as teenagers shared fields.
- * Three young people were sharecropping.
- * Around 12 young men owned livestock; most herds were small, the largest amounting to 5 cows, 10 sheep and 50 goats.
- * Livestock constrained young men's access to more lucrative livelihoods as they were unable or unwilling to employ others to care for their animals and also reluctant to sell them.

Deaths

- * Three former participants have died since the research in 2008, two of these having been struck by lightning while herding.

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www.cashtransfers-youth.net

Email nicola.ansell@brunel.ac.uk
thandiek@hotmail.com

Prof Nicola Ansell, Brunel University

Prof Lorraine van Blerk, University of Dundee

Dr Elsbeth Robson, University of Hull

Dr Flora Hajdu, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Dr Evance Mwachunga, University of Malawi

Ms Thandie Hlabana, National University of Lesotho

Mr Roeland Hemsteede, University of Dundee



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