

# **Methodology and Tools for Supporting the Formulation of Evidence-based Policies in Response to the Challenge of Population Ageing in Malawi**

**By**

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# Outline

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# Introduction

- Projected population 16.8 million (NSO, 2010)
- TFR 5.0 children per woman (MDG Endline Survey, 2014)
- Rapid population growth (2.8%) per annum (NSO, 2010)
- HIV prevalence has remained stable, 10% (NSO, 2011)
- Improvements in ART
- Improvements in life expectancy
- Proportion of persons aged 60+ will increase from 4.9% (2015) to 7.6% (2050), (United Nations, 2015).
- In absolute terms this equates to 0.85 million to 3.3 million persons

# Need for Data and Statistics on Older Persons

- The increase in proportion of older persons has both opportunities and challenges
- Older people have the knowledge and skills which they can use to help families or communities deal with different challenges
- Population of older persons steadily increases in the country, the social, economic and cultural challenges associated with ageing populations are likely to multiply
- Hence, UNDESA and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs), commissioned a study to investigate available data and statistics on older persons that can inform socio-economic planning.

# Study Objectives

- To assess the status of empirical data on older persons for supporting the formulation of evidence-based policies in response to the challenge of population ageing in Malawi
- Present evidence of available data on older persons,
- Identify existing gaps and,
- Make recommendations on improving the data situation.

# Study Methods

## Document review

- The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi,
- National Pensions Act,
- National Policy for Older Persons (draft),
- National Social Support Policy, and Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II.
- The National Statistical Act
- National Commission on Science and Technology (NCST) research and ethics guidelines

## Database search

- Search from different producers, however, NSO was the main source
- collection instruments were closely studied to obtain an idea of the type of data collected by the data producers in the country

## Electronic/internet literature search

- A search engine of Google was conducted to identify publications on older persons which could not be sourced using the above two study methods.

# Overview of Data Sources

Main Sources of Population data in Malawi are:

- Population and Housing Censuses
- Surveys
- Vital Registration System
- Administrative sources (Immigration & Police Services)
- International sources (UN, Census Bureau, Population Reference Bureau, UNFPA, HelpAge, World Health Organisation)

# Main Findings

## The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi

- 1) *All persons and people have a right to development and therefore to the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural and political development.....*
- 2) *The State shall take all the necessary measures for the realization of the right to development.*
- 3) *Measures to introduce reforms aimed at eradicating social injustices and inequalities.*
- 4) *The State has the responsibility to respect the right to development and justify its policies in accordance with this responsibility.*

# Policies and frameworks regarding older persons

- National Pensions Act: employees who qualify to participate under the NPF provisions are required to make periodic contributions to the pension scheme from their pensionable salaries
- National Policy for Older Persons (draft) led by the MGCDSW.
- National Social Support Policy targets the ultra-poor and vulnerable groups, and provides public works programme.
- MGDS has six priority areas, which deal with older persons
  - Malawi Network of Elderly Persons Organization (MANEPO), an umbrella organization of local NGOs dealing with older persons related concerns

# Producers of Data on Older Persons

Data on issues concerning older persons are scanty in Malawi compared to data on other subpopulation groups.

- National Statistical Office (NSO)
- Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC)
- National Registration Bureau (NRB)
- Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and Development
- The Ministry of Health
- University of Malawi (Centre for Social Research)

# Access to Health Services and Challenges the Older Persons Face

- Although access to good quality health services is one of the three priorities of the MIPAA, distances to health facilities can be considerable, particularly in rural areas, and vehicles for transport are rarely available
- The 2008 census and DHS did not include a question on access to health services by the older persons
- The 2014 and 2008 WMS collected data that could be used to assess older persons' access to health care.
- Questions include health service provider consulted.

# Morbidity and Mortality among Older Persons

- Information on morbidity among older persons is collected through HMIS of the Ministry of Health.
- A health passport is used to collect information on the diseases and date of onset.
- These data could be used to analyse the cause specific morbidity rates among older persons.
- Limitation of the health administrative data: largely captures morbidity cases which are presented at the health facility
- Census data do not permit analysis of cause specific mortality rates.
- Censuses and surveys collect data on survivorship of biological parents, however, collected on residents less than 18 years old

# Older persons and HIV and AIDS

- HIV/AIDS remains a significant public health and socioeconomic challenge,
- Much research focus on the population aged 15-49, as it is the group.
- Older persons remain a neglected group.
- Common misconception that elderly persons are sexually inactive and not at risk of HIV infection.
- HIV/AIDS data on older persons is scanty in Malawi

# Disability among the Older Persons

- The 2008 census collected information on disability for the first time for all persons including older persons who usually stay in the household.
- Persons were asked if they have problems with the following: seeing, speaking, hearing, walking/climbing and/or any other problem.
- These data sources could be used to develop age disability friendly environment.

# Supportive and Enabling Environment

- The 2008 census asked a question on remittances made by household members who had emigrated 5 years before the census. The asked was:

*Did the household receive remittance cash or goods?*

- Data captured through this question indirectly indicate the type and extent of support given to older persons
- Limitation: data refer to the household

# Access to Water

- 2008 census collected information on the main source of water of residents of a dwelling unit used in both the dry and rainy seasons.
- The 2000, 2004 and 2010 DHS surveys also collected information on access to water, though it is limited.
- It is possible to link the responses to individual older persons in the household by assuming that these facilities are also accessed by the older persons within the household.

# Nutritional Status of Older Persons

- The 2014 WMS generated data to assess the nutrition pattern of older persons.
- The limitation: the head of the household responds on behalf of older persons.
- DHS 2010 only asked of the children aged 5-17, and not for older persons.
- Gap: it is not possible to know the meals older person consumed, hence there is a gap.

# Housing Conditions

- The censuses, and all major surveys (MDHS, IHS, WMS) collect information on housing and household characteristics
- Question asked include: type of household; type of dwelling structure; and tenure of the dwelling structure
- The 2014 WMS asked information on the occupancy tenure to the arrangements under which the household resides in a dwelling.

# **Access (Distance) to Institutions Providing Basic Services for Older Persons**

- The 2014 WMS also collected information on access to various social amenities measured by the time taken to reach the nearest source of drinking water, health facility, food market, all season roads, public transport boarding point, primary and secondary school and the means of transportation.
- There are data gaps in the area of age-friendly transport facilities, urban pavements, walk-ways, stairways, recreation facilities or sanitation facilities.

# Abuse and Rights Violation of Older Persons

- 2004 and 2010 MDHS have data on domestic violence representative at national level
- Questions are limited to women and men aged 15-49 and 15-54, respectively.

# Witchcraft

- Censuses do not collect data on witchcraft.
- The 2008 WMS is the only nationally representative survey that collected data on witchcraft, however not is subsequent WMS.
- Chilimampunga and Thindwa (2012) also conducted study on witchcraft-based violence toward women, the elderly and children.
- The study was limited to eight districts in the country

# Conclusion

- Sound policy and regulatory frameworks for achieving the MIPAA and national objectives on population ageing are in place
- A substantial amount of data on older persons is available but not much of it has been analyzed for policy purposes
- There is no current and up-to-date information on abuse and rights violations of older persons at national level.

## Recommendation

- Malawi's draft National Policy on Older Persons ought to be informed and strengthened by evidence drawn from data and statistics of older persons in the country
- Need to use the existing census and survey data for mainstreaming programs that affect older persons
- Need to build capacity of relevant departments in data collection, analysis
- Institutions need to make clear guidelines in accessing the data for national consumption
- A survey may be considered to fill out the gaps identified in the study in order to give a holistic picture

Thank you very much