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## The Caring Elderly of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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**The SNSF project Ageing, Agency and Health in Urbanizing Tanzania examines Tanzanian elderly as social actors whose lived experience of ageing and health draws on broader cultural representations and at the same time shapes and possibly even transforms them in engagement with others in specific living and care arrangements. The focus of this PhD project is on elderly persons in Dar es Salaam, the largest city of Tanzania.**

- **Supervisors:** Prof. Dr. Brigit Obrist, Prof. Dr. Till Förster, Dr. Piet van Eeuwijk
- **Funding:** Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF
- **Collaboration:** University of Dar es Salaam, State University of Zanzibar
- **Duration:** 2012 – 2016
- **Key words:** Health, Ageing, Care, Agency, Resilience, Transnationalism, Gender

### Background

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the study of ageing and health is still a new and interdisciplinary field of research. The present project aims to add new theoretical and empirical insights and thus make a contribution to this research field from the perspective of social anthropology.

### Specific Objectives

In rapidly changing demographic, urban and transnational contexts, the PhD project aims at gaining a deeper understanding of

- 1) the lived experience of ageing and health as expressed, for instance, in living and care arrangements, and of
- 2) forms of agency in response to problematic situations in everyday life.

### Methodology

In order to include elderly with diverse educational, religious, occupational and cultural backgrounds, households with at least one elderly person have been sampled through transects in four different residential areas of Dar es Salaam. Fifty elderly have been interviewed by using an interview guideline with open-ended questions. Based on the findings, twenty elderly with translocal and transnational family networks will be selected for further study of intergenerational transformations.



Babu who is looking after his grandson while his daughter is working.

(Photo: A. Grolimund, 2012)

### First Results

The national ageing policy of Tanzania and commonly articulated social norms expect families (and communities) to take care of the elderly. However, first findings show that in most of the households the Mabibi and Mababu (grandmothers and grandfathers) are the main caregivers of the family: As long as their physical and mental health allows, they raise grandchildren, provide financial support or advise family members.

### Relevance

Through constant exchange with local universities, state actors and NGOs the project tries to provide solid qualitative information for further quantitative studies and health initiatives.