



UNI
BASEL

Health and Care of Elderly: "Children may help, Insha'Allah!"

Ageing, Agency and Health in the City of Zanzibar, Tanzania

Sandra Staudacher Institute of Social Anthropology (Sandra.Staudacher@unibas.ch)

This PhD project explores on how people at the age of sixty years and above organize and practise their living and care arrangements in a changing urban and transnational Swahili society in the city of Zanzibar, Tanzania. Further, the thesis aims at examining forms of agency in response to critical situations in everyday life of elderly persons.



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

Grandmother and grandchild. The children of the elderly woman stay in other parts of the country and send money, while she lives with her granddaughter who takes care of her. (Photo: S. Staudacher, 2012)

Background

In Africa, the study of ageing and health is a new field of research, which is not yet well explored. The present project intends to make a contribution from the perspective of social anthropology to better understand the situation of elderly persons in the city of Zanzibar.

Specific Objectives

The aim of this PhD project is

- to explore the lived experience of ageing and health as expressed, for instance in living and care arrangements,
- to analyze forms of agency in response to critical situations in everyday life of elderly people,
- to examine gender roles in connection with ageing and health of elderly persons.

Methodology

In order to obtain a random selection of fifty elderly in Zanzibar, transect walks were conducted in four areas of the city. In the first six months of fieldwork three visits of each selected person were organized. Through guided interviews with open-ended questions, informal talks and observations, information was gathered. Based on

www.socialresilience.ch

these findings, twenty elderly with translocal and transnational family networks will be selected to study intergenerational transformations.

First Results

The elderly informants live mostly in extended families. Many of the elderly people have children or other relatives in the United Kingdom, Oman or in the United Arab Emirates. No matter where their children or grandchildren stay, in almost all cases they are the most important supporters of elderly in their everyday life and critical health moments. In cases where the children do not manage to support their parents, the elderly persons are struggling to meet their daily needs. Not any of the randomly sampled women is living together with a husband; its implications regarding their health will be further examined.

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.