

## Preface

# Aging in Africa and Asia

Perspective and Prospective from Public Health and Ethnography

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## Introduction

The International Workshop “Aging in Africa and Asia: Perspective and Prospective from Public Health and Ethnography” is held in Kwale in the Republic of Kenya as a research meeting of our two Grant-in-Aid Projects. The conference should appear its particularity in a sense that doctors and professors both in public health and ethnography participate and collaborate in a current and future issue.

The meeting consists of two parts. In the first part, topics on aging care and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) both in Kenya and Japan will be presented from the perspective of health policy. In the second part, some ethnographic findings on elderly life and care will be provided by experienced anthropologists.

Global aging is rapidly becoming a focus on public attention. Organizations predict a rapid population growth that in 2100 the worldwide population will reach ten billion, 40% of which will exist in Africa. The process of population growth accompanies that of changing demographic structure. The age of population aging is approaching Africa.

The population aging is introduced by two different phenomena on health improvement: epidemiological transition and demographic transition. Epidemiological transition describes changes in disease pattern. The population grows older, and noninfectious diseases become the main cause of ill health.

The model of demographic transition explains the process from “high birth rate and death rate” to “low birth rate and death rate”.

Stage 1: death rates and birth rates are high and roughly in balance

Stage 2: the death rates drop rapidly due to improvements in food supply and sanitation, which increase life spans and reduce disease.

Stage 3: birth rates fall due to access to contraception, increases in wages, urbanization, a reduction in subsistence agriculture, an increase in the status and education of women, a reduction in the value of children's

work, an increase in parental investment in the education of children and other social changes. Population growth begins to level off.

Stage 4: both low birth rates and low death rates.

Japan, a country where people enjoy long life expectancy, has experienced both rising life expectancy and/or declining birth rates in the past decades, however the changes result in many other issues such as medical care for non-communicable diseases, elderly care, welfare policy, etc.

### **Approaches to Elderly Life and Care**

The meeting is organized as a joint session of two research projects.

A research project organized by Professor Nanako TAMIYA (Tsukuba University) focuses on global aging from the perspective of healthcare service. Tsukuba University held an intensive program on global aging in 2013 where students, undergraduates to Ph.D candidates, Asians and Africans, met, reported and discussed issues on population aging and care in each country. The discussion leads us to understanding current on-going transition of social institution like elderly care, family and kinship tie as well as relationship between family and community.

Professor Hideki YAMAMOTO (Teikyo University) and Ken MASUDA (Nagasaki University) are appointed to work on elderly life and care in Africa. Our strategy of research is structured basically in four steps: 1. HDSS research and analysis, 2. complementary approach with qualitative description, 3. integration, and 4. prospects and proposal.

There appear some difficulties in approaching aging issue in Africa. Who should be classified as the elderly? By which criteria should the elderly be identified? How do they live in their elderly life in certain social environment?

As Aboderin (2010) mentions, theories in African gerontology since 1960s have been developed based on “modernization theory” by which researchers views society transition as modernization and westernization process; changes from familism and filial obligations to individualism, from rural to urban, from traditional and pre-industrial to modern. However, the perspective is not strictly based on quantitative and qualitative in-depth evidences.

We are now preparing a research proposal to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research on current situation of elderly life and care in Kwale with cooperation of health and demographic surveillance system (HDSS) that is launched by KEMRI and Nagasaki University. Through the investigation, it is expected to deeply

identify geographical distribution, economic status, health condition, household circumstances of elderly people.

It is significant to describe quantitatively and ethnographically for detailed understanding of elderly life and care. Anthropology has a technique of detailed description by participant observation and of understanding family and kinship relation as cultural system. Some participants of the meeting are anthropologists who have been engaged in ethnographic research in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, and members of Japan Association for African Studies.

The purposes of the meeting are three. First purpose is promotion of exchange of knowledge and information among participants. The second is sharing ethnographic insights on elderly and kinship relations in the cases from Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Ethiopia. Thirdly, we explore the possibility of long-term relation between Asia and Africa on the forthcoming social problem.

## Reference

Aboderin, I (2010) "Global Ageing: Perspectives from Sub-Saharan Africa." In *SAGE Handbook of Social Gerontology*. SAGE Publications, pp. 405-419

## Notes

The meeting is organized with financial supports from two grant-in-aid research projects.

1. *Interdisciplinary Study of "Premature Aging" and Cultural Diversity of Aging Care in East Africa*. (Project Leader: Ken MASUDA, Nagasaki University) Grant-in Aid for Scientific Research (B) of the Ministry for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.
2. *Challenges of Global Aging without Borders: Studies on the Recommendations by an Interdisciplinary Network Originating in Japan to Support the Sharing of Experiences and Mutual Respect*. (Project Leader: Nanako TAMIYA, Tsukuba University) Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Promote global health challenges research project)

## Presenters and Commentators

- **Muthoni GICHU** is Head of Health and Aging Unit, Ministry of Health.
- **Hideki YAMAMOTO** is professor of public health and global health at the Graduate School of Public Health, Teikyo University.
- **Haruko NOGUCHI** is professor of health economics at the Faculty of Political

Science and Economics, Waseda University.

- **Gen TAGAWA** is associate professor of cultural anthropology at the Faculty of International Studies, Hiroshima City University.
- **Shinji MIYAMOTO** is associate professor of Geography and Environmental History at the Faculty of Biosphere-Geosphere Science, Okayama University of Science.
- **Itsuhiro HAZAMA** is assistant professor of anthropology at the Graduate School of International Health Development, Nagasaki University.
- **Kaori MIYACHI** is assistant professor at Gender Equality Office, Saga University.
- **Mariko NOGUCHI** is graduate student at the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University.
- **Ken MASUDA** is associate professor of social anthropology at the Graduate School of International Health Development and Faculty of Environmental Studies, Nagasaki University.