

# From Cure to Care

## Care practices among elderly people in urban Tanzania

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**In medical anthropology the focus has long been on health and illness in relation to curative practices. This research project however, tries to deepen the knowledge on care practices with a special focus on elderly people. Long-term research was conducted in Dar es Salaam in a neighbourhood with a high burden of diseases. The initial findings suggest that elderly people not only receive care but actually are the main care providers.**



Photo: Old man calling his son who is in the hospital (JG 2010)

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[www.socialresilience.ch](http://www.socialresilience.ch)

*„My mobile phone connects me and my children“*  
(man, 72 years, Dar es Salaam, 2010)

### Background

This research project looks at elderly people, illness and care practices. The main interest lies in the analysis of care relationships and care practices of elderly people in the context of health vulnerabilities.

### Specific Objectives/Research Questions

The main aim in this research project is to understand the local context of care practices around illness with a special focus on elderly people, living in an urban rather poor neighbourhood in Dar es Salaam. How do actors perceive, judge and represent old age and the ageing process? How is the household composition related to the provision of care during illness? What are the care practices as well as capacities of older care givers? What are the dimensions of rural-urban relations in the context of care?

### Methodology

The research approach consists of four separate but consecutive steps. The focus is narrowed from the mapping of actors to the community to the households (N 50) and to the individual elderly (N 25). The qualitative data is based on practice as well as discourse analysis.

### Expected/First Results

When experiencing illness elderly people are still highly mobile; either providing or receiving care.

### Relevance

To better understand lay care provision among elderly people during illness and its impact for public health service provision. The findings are presented to policy makers and interested organizations throughout the research project.