



PhD Studentship

Assessing the Role of Structural Drivers in the HIV/AIDS Pandemic: A Case Study of the Link Between Socio-Economic Indicators and Prevalence Patterns

Supervisor: Dr Deborah Johnston, Department of Economics (SOAS)

Co-Supervisor: Dr Justin Parkhurst, Health Policy Unit (LSHTM)

UNAIDS estimates three out of four HIV/AIDS deaths occur in sub Saharan Africa. Many prevention activities, such as education and subsidized condom access, assume that HIV transmission is driven by poverty and ignorance. However, population-based studies of HIV prevalence often find that prevalence increases with both wealth and education. The Tanzanian HIV/AIDS Indicator Survey 2003-2004 (THIS) found the poorest 20% of households had a prevalence rate of 3.4%, while the richest 20% had one of 10.5%. However, surveys of HIV/AIDS prevalence are not large in number, are often limited in terms of the socio-economic data they include and have also been subject to relatively little scrutiny.

This research aims to provide an empirically-based investigation of the hypothesised links between broader structural factors and HIV transmission in a sub-Saharan African setting (possibly Tanzania). It will do so by generating two kinds of information: on the detailed statistical relationships between these structural indicators and patterns of behaviour which are assumed to be linked to HIV transmission. The project aims to go beyond simple assumptions of a universal link between structures such as wealth and education and HIV to instead investigate how particular structural elements manifest themselves in patterns of behaviour in given contexts - patterns of behaviour that may be more or less conducive to the spread of HIV at a population level.

Candidates should have an undergraduate and masters level degree in Economics, Sociology, Development Studies or similar. They should have good quantitative skills and experience in the analysis of social and micro-level data. Ideally, they should have some knowledge or experience with African development issues and have an interest in the social epidemiology of HIV.

The successful candidate will be able to assess SOAS expertise in economic theory, fieldwork methodology, data analysis and language training. LSHTM would provide support with understanding of epidemiological and public health information, as well as expertise on health and behaviour.

Key References

- Bujira, J., Class Relations: AIDS and Socio-Economic Privilege in Africa. (2006). Review of African Political Economy, No. 7, pp 113-129.
- Johnston, D. Bias, not error: Assessments of the economic impact of HIV/AIDS in sub Saharan Africa, Feminist Economics, (2008) forthcoming November.
- Gupta, G.R., Parkhurst, J.O., Ogden, J.A., Aggleton P. & Mahal, A. Structural Approaches to HIV Prevention, The Lancet: 52-63 (2008)
- Hallman, K. Gendered socio economic conditions and HIV risk behaviours among young people in South Africa. African Journal of AIDS Research 4 (1): 37-50.

Further details about the project may be obtained from:

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Further information about PhDs at SOAS is available from:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/research/degrees/research-degrees.html>

Application forms and details about how to apply are available from:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/howtoapply/postgraduate-application.html>

Scholarships Officer: scholarships@soas.ac.uk

Additional Application Requirements

In addition to the standard application form, applicants should provide the following information: a statement of not more than 1000 words explaining their suitability for the Studentship. This should be sent to the Scholarships Officer by e-mail: scholarships@soas.ac.uk
Applicants should be available for interview.

Closing date for applications is 25 February 2009