



# Planning Livestock Interventions with a Gender and HIV/AIDS Lens



PHOTO: ELLEN GEERLINGS

## WHY A GENDER AND HIV/AIDS FOCUS?



HIV/AIDS is having a profound impact on agriculture in many countries, including on the livestock sector. The challenges to men and women livestock keepers are increasing. At the same time, farm animals offer food, income and livelihood opportunities for rural households. It is important to understand the gendered dimensions of different livestock production systems to identify and plan appropriate livestock interventions that can reduce women and men's livelihood vulnerability, and to mitigate the impacts of HIV/AIDS on household food security.

## Why a Gender and HIV/AIDS focus?

**A key challenge to livestock keepers:** Livestock provide income, quality food, fuel, draught power, building material and fertilizer, thus contributing to household livelihoods and food security. Livestock also provide security as a tangible and appreciated asset that can be sold or exchanged in times of need. Women and men typically face different livelihood opportunities and constraints in managing livestock as well as in coping with the impact of HIV/AIDS. Small livestock keepers, particularly women, face many challenges including: poor access to markets, goods, services and technical information; periodic drought and disease; competing resource uses, policies that favour larger-scale producers or external markets; and weak institutions<sup>i</sup>. Combined with the impacts of chronic illness such as HIV/AIDS, the challenge to fully exploit the potential of keeping livestock is daunting for households, communities, institutions and governments alike. Yet, there are simple, affordable and proven interventions that can ensure that livestock make an even greater contribution to household security and the well-being of people.

**Different impacts:** For various reasons (e.g. political, legal, economic, environmental, cultural, religious), the impacts of HIV/AIDS can affect men and women differently. Gender inequality is at the core of the spread of the epidemic and is one of the main factors associated with vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and its impacts<sup>ii</sup> (see textbox to the right). Women typically face greater challenges than men as they have different access to, and control over, livestock and other resources such as land, credit, labour, technology, and services. It is often women who tend to care for the sick in the household. They typically suffer greater losses in terms of access to livestock and other resources when a spouse dies. The result is that both production and productivity for small livestock keepers, especially women, remain well below potential.<sup>iii</sup>

**Roles and responsibilities:** Women and men of different ages often have different and quite specific knowledge about, and responsibilities for, various aspects of animal husbandry and livestock production. For example, a woman might be responsible for preventing or treating illness in the household's livestock, the man for milking or marketing, boys for grazing or watering, and girls for providing fodder in zero grazing. Should one or more household members die, critical knowledge and skills may be lost along with them.

**Towards more effective interventions:** The impacts of HIV/AIDS on specific aspects of animal husbandry are not well understood, particularly in pastoralist communities. Strategies to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on livestock production may not be well articulated due to this lack of understanding.<sup>v</sup> To identify and plan appropriate livestock interventions that can i.) reduce women's and men's vulnerability to HIV transmission, and; ii.) mitigate the impacts of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods and food security, it is important to understand the gendered dimensions of different livestock production systems.

## Some gendered impacts of HIV/AIDS on livestock production

HIV/AIDS has an increasing impact on rural household labour -- changing roles and responsibilities along gender and age lines as the disease progresses. It also affects a rural household's use of resources in many ways; for example, when someone falls sick, a household may be forced to sell some (or eventually all) of its resources, including livestock, land, and implements to pay for treatment or burial.

Inheritance practices overlaid with HIV/AIDS-related stigma may lead to a woman or her children losing access to productive resources upon the death of her husband. This includes livestock and related resources useful for production such as grazing lands, plots, and agricultural implements including ploughs, hand hoes, etc. A woman may be stripped of the livestock that provides her family with the very milk and meat they need to maintain their own health.

Some of the broader impacts on livestock production, many of which have a more obvious gender dimension, include:<sup>vi</sup>

- Reduced capacity of men, women, boys and girls to manage livestock resources (e.g. manure, fuel, building materials) because of a decrease in labour due to sickness or death;

## Gender inequality and HIV/AIDS

Gender inequality is one of the driving forces behind the spread of HIV. Women are more vulnerable to HIV-infection than men, both due to biological factors and traditional gender roles and cultural factors.

- Men and women face different challenges in living with HIV and AIDS, in access to health and support services, and with regard to stigma attached to the epidemic.

- HIV/AIDS affects the the livelihoods of women and men differently: activity and work patterns change, care activities are most commonly taken on by women, and the death of a spouse will have different implications for women compared to men, and for young compared to older generations;

\* Inequalities in access to, and ownership of land and other resources can leave widows and orphans in especially precarious situations, in some cultural contexts relying upon male family members or individual social assets for continued access to housing, land and resources needed for sustaining their livelihoods.

Gender-sensitive responses to the epidemic are therefore needed.

## Linking HIV/AIDS, Gender and Livestock to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The Millennium Development Goals promote human development as the key towards social and economic progress. Livestock contribute to poverty and hunger eradication (MDG1) through provision of food and income for rural households. Low-cost investments in small livestock, such as poultry and goats, can offer rural women and men opportunities to diversify income, improve livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to the impacts of HIV/AIDS and other external shocks. Tackling gender inequalities (MDG3) is at the core of poverty elimination and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases (MDG6).

For more about the MDGs, see the Millennium Development Goals website: <http://www.developmentgoals.org>

- Less time and resources to care for and invest in animal disease prevention and treatment;
- Decreased output of livestock products (milk, meat, etc.) and related sales and transactions. As women and men may have different production responsibilities, i.e. men may milk, women may prepare cheese, etc., the impacts may be different depending on who is affected in the household;
- Loss of knowledge about livestock husbandry, breeds, etc. (women, men, boys and girls may have different knowledge about different aspects of the production cycle);
- More attention needs to be given to ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS avoid exposure to zoonoses from livestock<sup>vii</sup> - i.e. that they avoid animal faeces and even direct contact with infected animals; need for pasteurised milk/milk products, etc.;
- Increased sale/slaughter of livestock (including reduction in number of draught animals) to pay for treatment or funeral;
- Loss of livestock, land and other assets among households who have suffered the loss of a spouse or parent(s) – especially in cases where inheritance practices or property rights do not favour the surviving household members. Women and children are often at a disadvantage in this respect.
- Reduced veterinary and livestock extension services as staff fall sick or die.

### Mitigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS on food security and nutrition: the role of livestock production<sup>viii</sup>

While livestock production is affected by HIV/AIDS, it can also play an important role in mitigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS on the livelihoods, food security and overall wellbeing of rural households. To be truly effective, any mitigating strategy must also address peoples' values, beliefs, misconceptions, and most importantly, HIV/AIDS-related stigma. It is also important to build on existing good practices and to mainstream, in a gender-sensitive way, HIV/AIDS issues into livestock activities and institutional policies and practices. Any strategy should include awareness raising and capacity building with the relevant stakeholders (i.e. livestock officers and extension workers, community members, etc.)<sup>ix</sup>

### Examples of concrete actions

**Promote** small livestock production where appropriate; it is relatively low in labour and capital demands and a potential source of income for resource-poor and HIV-affected households that often have little assets to invest.

**Improve** household nutrition: meat, eggs and milk are rich in proteins, minerals and vitamins and can help boost the immune system of people living with HIV/AIDS.

**Empower** orphaned and vulnerable boys and girls to develop and maintain their livestock skills, knowledge and practices.

**Provide** gender, HIV/AIDS, and stigma training and sensitisation to livestock staff (e.g. veterinarians, livestock extension workers, policy makers and researchers).

**Incorporate** gender-sensitive HIV/AIDS messages in livestock extension work and materials.

**Support** efforts that improve women and men's equal access to livestock information and services, i.e. marketing, appropriate breeds and husbandry practices, veterinary assistance and labour-saving technologies. Consider inclusion of information on inheritance and property rights that can be useful for the remaining spouse and/or orphans to sustain their livelihoods (i.e. access to or ownership of livestock, land, housing and other property) after the death of their partner or parent(s).

**Provide** information to rural women and men about the potential contribution of small livestock to nutrition and livelihoods for people living with HIV/AIDS.

**Offer** advice on how to avoid zoonoses and other food-borne diseases.

**Develop** strategies that ensure better outreach and information on HIV/AIDS prevention and care for men, women, boys and girls in pastoralist communities.

### Different access to services

In Rakai, Uganda, researchers observed that when the male head of a household died, women and children often did not have the knowledge or financial resources to care for cattle.

This was in part because women did not have the same access to institutions and services that shared knowledge (e.g. livestock extension services and other institutions).

Source: Haslwimmer, M. Is HIV/AIDS a threat to livestock production? The example of Rakai, Uganda, FAO Rome, 2000.



### Gender, inheritance customs and livestock

While legislation exists to prevent property/asset grabbing in Namibia, it is still common practice in many areas of northern Namibia for a husband's family to take livestock and other resources from a widow and/or remaining children upon the husband's death. The loss of livestock has immediate impacts on the woman and/or her children as she loses her "food security bank", potential draught power, fertilizer, and source of income.

Source: FAO. HIV/AIDS in Namibia: The impact on the livestock sector, February 2000.



### Orphans and Goats

Practical Action supported a project in Chimanimani Community Based Orphanage in Zimbabwe that offers socio-psycho support to AIDS orphans. As a way of boosting the livelihood base for the 360 orphans (130 boys, 230 girls) in Rupise Ward, the community in 2002 ventured into a goat husbandry project. The project comprises 38 foster parents (12 men and 26 women). Initially, it started with 12 female and five male goats. By May 2003, the flock had increased to 35.

Source: Practical Action – <http://www.itdg.org>

**Target** action-oriented research on formal and informal livestock-focused community institutions, to better understand the different roles they play and for whom; what constraints they face; how they are being affected by HIV/AIDS; and how negative impacts can be mitigated.

### Key principles to guide livestock sector staff on HIV/AIDS\*

- Become HIV/AIDS competent and understand the implications of the disease for one's own life and one's own work;
- Mainstream HIV/AIDS considerations in a gender-responsive way into livestock initiatives;
- Reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in livestock-focused institutions and all activities with communities;
- Encourage and support communities to be actively involved in addressing the disease, including reviewing their norms and behaviours which contribute to the spread of the disease;
- Promote gender equality as a means of reducing the risk of HIV infection and vulnerability to the impacts of AIDS;
- Ensure that livestock initiatives recognize and address HIV/AIDS-related needs and priorities of vulnerable groups and households;
- Use flexible and gender-responsive participatory livestock development processes with the community;
- Adopt inter-disciplinary and innovative responses that develop or strengthen linkages between livestock/veterinary services and partnerships with other government services, NGOs and private sector;
- Advocate and increase understanding among other stakeholders of the potential contribution of livestock and agriculture to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS.

### Useful resources

**FAO.** HIV/AIDS and Food Security <http://www.fao.org/sd/hiv aids>

**FAO.** Gender and Development [http://www.fao.org/sd/pe1\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/pe1_en.htm)

**FAO.** Contribution of Livestock to Poverty Alleviation  
<http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/A3.html>

**FAO.** HIV Infections and Zoonoses <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5516e/y5516e00.pdf>

**International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)** <http://www.ilri.org>

**VETAID** <http://www.vetaid.org>

**Heifer International** <http://www.heifer.org>

<sup>i</sup> Based on FAO. HIV/AIDS in Namibia: The impact on the livestock sector, February 2000.

<sup>ii</sup> Wieggers, E. HIV/AIDS, Gender inequality, & the agricultural sector: Guidelines for incorporating HIV/AIDS & gender considerations into agricultural programming in high incidence countries. ICAD, Ottawa 2004.

<sup>vi</sup> Adapted from FAO Website, Morton, J. Conceptualising the links between HIV/AIDS and pastoralist livelihoods. Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Development Studies Association, Amended draft 31 October, 2003. <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/subjects/en/poverty.html>

<sup>v</sup> Based on FAO (2002) HIV/AIDS in Namibia: The impact on the livestock sector, and on Goe, Michael R. HIV/AIDS and the livestock sector: Need to better understand linkages. Internal seminar for Livestock Production Group (AGA), FAO, December 9, 2003.

<sup>vi</sup> Based on Engh, I., L. Stloukal, J. du Guerny. HIV/AIDS in Namibia: The impact on the livestock sector. FAO, (Posted February, 2000). <http://www.fao.org/sd/wpdirect/Wpan0046.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> Pasquali, P. HIV Infections and Zoonoses. FAO, Rome 2004.

<sup>viii</sup> See the SEAGA Livestock Guide for more detailed information on the potential roles of livestock in mitigating strategies and some specific actions. <http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/downloads/EN/livestocken.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> Emmanuelle Guerne-Bleich, Officer, Animal Production and Health Division, FAO, Personal communication, 2004.

<sup>x</sup> Adapted from: Bishop-Sambrook, Clare. Addressing HIV/AIDS through Agriculture and Natural Resource Sectors: A guide for extension workers. FAO, 2004.

## SEAGA Livestock Guide: Planning with a Gender and HIV/AIDS Lens

FAO's Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Programme has developed a guide to support those working on livestock-related programmes and projects so that they can respond more effectively to the different needs, priorities, constraints, and livelihood strategies present in rural households, including those resulting from the impact of HIV/AIDS.

**The SEAGA Livestock Guide: - Planning with a Gender and HIV/AIDS Lens** looks at some of the socio-economic and gender issues related to livestock production, particularly in terms of the impacts of HIV/AIDS; and outlines potential roles for livestock in strategies to mitigate the impacts of HIV/AIDS on food security and agriculture. The guide also provides pullout sections to help users consider HIV/AIDS and gender in planning and implementing livestock initiatives, appraising livestock project designs, and addressing these issues in livestock-focused institutions. The guide also contains participatory tools to help in community level livestock assessments. For more information, contact: [seaga@fao.org](mailto:seaga@fao.org) or download the guide directly from [http://www.fao.org/WA-ICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/dim\\_pe1/docs/pe1\\_050901d1\\_en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/WA-ICENT/FAOINFO/SUSTDEV/dim_pe1/docs/pe1_050901d1_en.pdf)