



GENDER EQUALITY: KEY TO FOOD SECURITY

Taking action to address gender and HIV with rural communities

Burundi | Central African Republic | Democratic Republic of the Congo | Kenya | Rwanda | Uganda

East and Central Africa continues to face acute and chronic emergencies that severely impact the vulnerability of rural communities who are affected by food insecurity, gender inequalities and HIV/AIDS. The region also experiences a large number of conflicts and human rights violations which restricts development and significantly increases human suffering.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

There are 67 million undernourished people and 3.5 million living with HIV in the region, a large percentage of whom are rural women. In emergency situations, HIV risks are increased through exposure to sexual exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence. This is triggered not only by the surrounding insecurity but also by vulnerability linked to food insecurity. Furthermore, the situation of people living with HIV is aggravated by food insecurity and malnutrition which can accelerate the development of the virus towards full blown AIDS.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT DOING?

The project, supported by the Swedish International Development Agency, is bridging the gap between food security and nutrition responses and interventions targeting HIV/AIDS, conflict and gender inequities. Through trainings and using the junior and adult Farmer Field and Life School (J/FFLS) methodology, the project is delivering an integrated intervention that increases awareness on gender issues, reduces the stigma of HIV and improves the levels of nutrition and food security of 80,000 men, women, boys and girls in the most vulnerable communities.

“FAO’s gender policy underlines the Organization’s commitment to address gender and women’s issues to eradicate hunger and poverty.”

José Graziano da Silva
FAO Director-General

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) together with its partners in food security and nutrition response has established 135 FFLS and 73 JFFLS groups. The JFFLS are known as ‘schools without walls’ where groups of male and female farmers learn through observation and experimentation in their own context. Beneficiaries of the field schools also receive agricultural inputs to assist them to diversify and increase the productivity of their farms.

In addition, 39 Master Trainers were trained on the JFFLS approach along with 261 facilitators (40 percent of which were female). The trainees are now fully equipped to train others, facilitate field schools and also address HIV and gender issues. This knowledge subsequently improves the decision-making capacity of participants and enables them to integrate HIV and gender into their own work and daily lives. They are also a resource within their respective countries to provide additional training for local non-government organizations (NGOs) and government partners.



for a world without hunger

The positive and wide-reaching impact of the J/FFLS approach has gained widespread recognition from governments and other partners, which have increasingly adopted the approach in their own activities and interventions. The project reinforces this trend by building the capacity of partners—both governmental and non-governmental—to integrate HIV and gender into their agricultural sector programming.

IMPACT

The livelihoods of men, women, boys and girls affected by HIV, gender inequity and food insecurity in the region have improved through the J/FFLS trainings and subsequently through the adoption of better agricultural techniques and nutrition practices. This in turn has led to enhanced nutritional status, greater quantity and diversity of food produced and increased incomes through the sale of surplus produce.

Results from this project have also shown that capacity training, combined with the popularity of the J/FFLS approach among local populations, has created a positive flow-on effect. The intervention has not only supported the reintegration of affected individuals in the communities; it has also reduced the stigma associated with HIV. The observed impact extends far beyond the boundaries of the project sites: the people trained in the schools have become role models and are in turn promoting and starting new field schools in response to increased demand from neighboring communities. These extended field schools also integrate HIV and gender training and promote discussion among members of the community.

The coordination role of FAO has also contributed to the Inter Agency Working Group on HIV and gender based violence in Nairobi, which under its leadership has been recognized by

PARTNERS :

Ministries of Agriculture in all countries; Lutheran World Federation (Kenya and Uganda); Anglican Church of Kenya; War Child – UK (Uganda); Association of Volunteers in Intentional Service (Rwanda); Caritas (Rwanda); Agence Centrafricaine de Developement Agricole (CAR); Society of Women Against AIDS (Burundi); Organisation Paysanne pour l'Elevage (Burundi); Samwaki (DRC); and Hope in Action (DRC).

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the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS as the most active HIV in emergencies platform globally.

At the national and regional levels partnerships have been developed in new coordination forums such as the regional network on gender and rural livelihoods (with the International Livestock Research Institute, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the International Center for Research on Women, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and others) along with additional joint project opportunities at the national level (with the United Nations Population Fund, UN Women and others).

WHAT NEXT?

We are continuing our efforts to advocate for integrated food security and nutrition responses to gender and HIV. This is currently taking place with partners, including governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs, at national and regional levels within food security groups and within HIV and gender interagency groups.

Building on the project experience, additional programmes will be developed to include strong engagement with national joint teams on gender and HIV in each country. Furthermore, the J/FFLS will be expanded and integrated into new and emerging projects in the region with additional support to develop business and marketing initiatives for the farmer groups.

In addition, exchange visits between countries participating in the project will be carried out to share experiences and best practices. Results from the project will be documented and distributed for replication in other communities in the region.