

Cross-sectoral responses to HIV/AIDS



Impacts of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural livelihoods

The sustained and long-term impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is slowly eroding food security, damaging rural livelihoods and exacerbating poverty. The countries with high HIV prevalence are also the countries where the majority of their populations live in rural areas and whose livelihoods largely depend on agriculture. Here the epidemic is plunging communities further into destitution as their labour capacity weakens, incomes dwindle and assets are depleted.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects different households in different ways and produces a variety of coping strategies. Female headed households, those fostering orphans and people living with HIV/AIDS are particularly susceptible to the impacts of the epidemic and their vulnerability often leads to the adoption of risky survival strategies.

Food security must be seen as an essential component towards preventing the spread of AIDS, and of mitigating its impact at national and household levels. Ultimately, improving a household's food security

reduces vulnerability to HIV infection as food secure households' do not have to resort to detrimental livelihood strategies in order to survive.

FAO recognizes that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is slowly eroding food security, ravaging rural livelihoods and exacerbating poverty. If left unchecked, the epidemic risks undermining all other efforts aimed at achieving the **Millennium Development Goals** of halving the number of poor and hungry in the world by 2015.



Orphans in Uganda (Lambu landing site, Masaka District)

FAO Integrated Programme and HIV/AIDS

The **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** has been working on the issue of HIV/AIDS and the agricultural sector since 1988 and signed a Cooperation Framework with UNAIDS in July 1999.

The linkages at household level between gender, HIV/AIDS and food security and rural livelihoods are being explored by **FAO's Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme (IP)** in Zambia, Uganda and Namibia.

Baseline surveys

The agricultural sector in the three IP partner countries recognises the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on agriculture, but are searching for concrete mitigating strategies. To devise appropriate and sustainable strategies, development planners need

to know the interrelations between the HIV/AIDS epidemic and agricultural production and rural livelihoods.

Systematically collected information on the impacts of the epidemic on the agricultural sector is limited. Therefore, the IP partner countries decided that the initial step in the programme was to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the impacts of HIV/AIDS and other chronic diseases on agricultural production and food security in rural households and communities. Baseline surveys were conducted during the last half of 2002, and the preliminary survey findings are presented on pages 3 to 7.

Strategies for action

The findings of the baseline surveys were presented and discussed at national IP stakeholder workshops in February and March 2003. Based on the findings, stakeholders from the public sector and civil society,

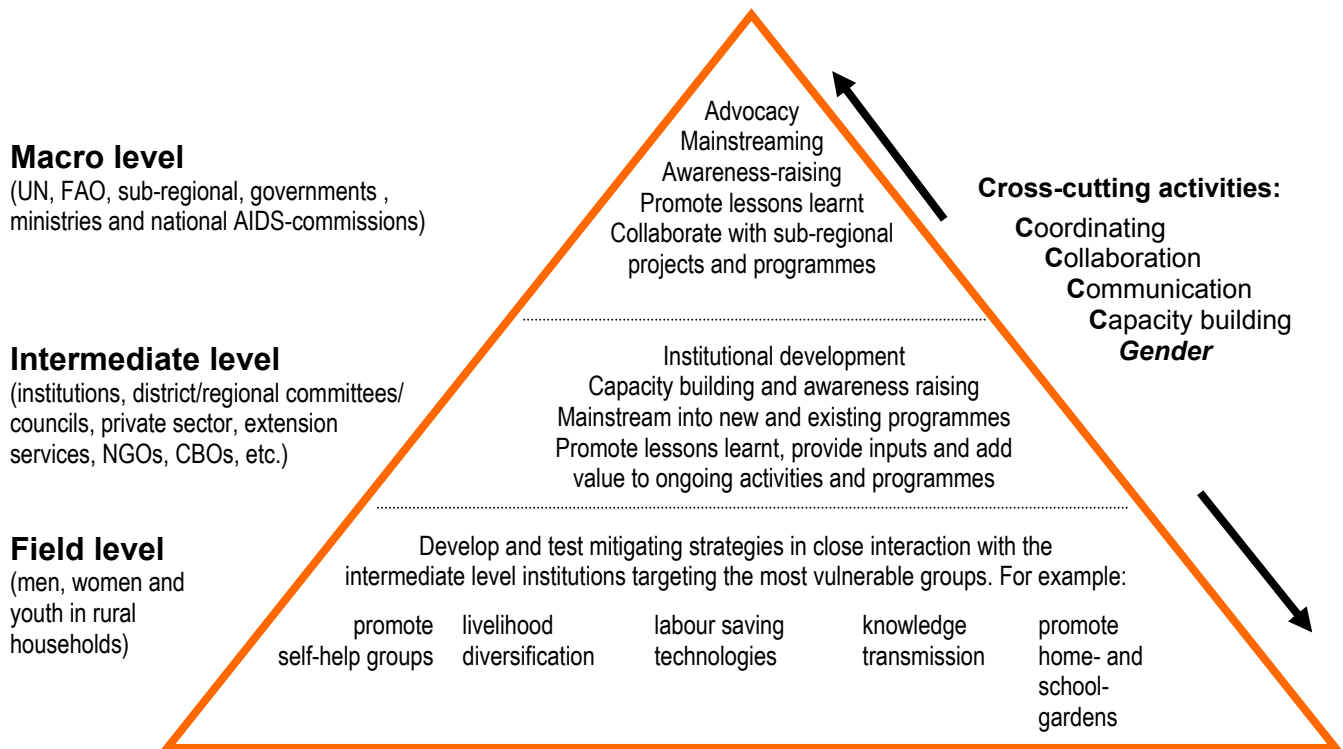
collaboration needed

rural women and men, as well as traditional village leaders, identified several strategies to mitigate some of the negative trends identified in the surveys.

These negative trends are often interlinked, so the strategies are cutting across a range of problem-areas and target groups.

All the suggested HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation strategies will require interdisciplinary collaboration and involvement of partners from civil society and the public and private sectors and at grassroots level.

This model illustrates the main activities and areas of concerns at the different levels:



Strategies for action

Based on recommendations from the workshops in Namibia, Uganda and Zambia, the IP has outlined **several strategies for action**.

The **objective** is to develop and test strategies that mitigate the negative impacts of HIV/AIDS on the agricultural sector on a pilot basis. The activities will build on or add value to existing initiatives, and will be implemented in collaboration with different partners from local to national level, as well as within different FAO units.

The main **target group** is people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS affects both sexes, but is not gender neutral. The epidemic can both be fuelled by and can exacerbate gender inequalities. The IP seeks to mainstream **gender** in all activities.

It is important to overcome barriers of stigma, discrimination and denial related to HIV/AIDS. The involvement of **people living with HIV/AIDS** (PLWHA) in the project will be strongly encouraged, as well as to make sure that national policies safeguard the fundamental human rights of PLWHA.

On the following pages, you will find strategies for action related to:

- ❑ Livelihood diversification
- ❑ Alternative labour-saving technologies
- ❑ Self-help groups and community mobilisation
- ❑ Transmission of knowledge
- ❑ Nutrition
- ❑ Legal assistance and training to prevent asset stripping
- ❑ Capacity-building and sensitization
- ❑ Normative activities

Preliminary findings from the surveys

Definitions: *Affected households* are households where at least one family member has been lost to HIV/AIDS or related illnesses (TB and pneumonia), and/or in which at least one family member is suffering from frequent or long illness due to or related to HIV/AIDS. *Non-affected households* are households where no member has died of, or are suffering from HIV/AIDS related diseases or illness. In the communities where the HIV prevalence was high, most households defined themselves as affected. Even if these households had not experienced HIV/AIDS-related death and illness themselves, the quantity of illness in the community meant that all households were involved in assisting and so were affected (e.g. fostering orphans).

Analyses: To identify specific impacts, the study findings are disaggregated by household type and gender. Change over time was measured by using a recall period of five years.

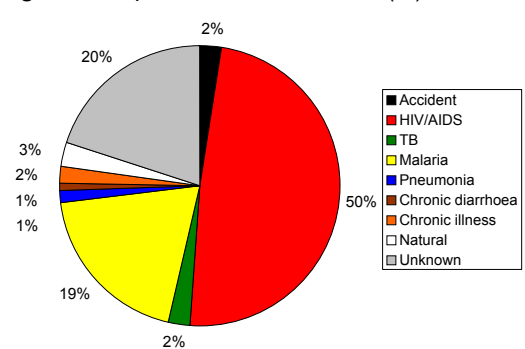
The questionnaire included: 631 households in **Uganda** from three livelihood systems: mixed-agriculture (Iganga); fishery (Masaka) and pastoralism (Luwero); 514 households in **Namibia** in three health districts in Ohangwena; 766 households in **Zambia** in three districts in Southern province (Choma, Monze, Sinazongwe).

Changes in household demography

Lower life expectancy

In Namibia and Uganda, various reports show that life expectancy has dropped from more than 60 years in the early 1990's to just above 40 in 2001 due to the epidemic. This trend is supported by the study findings in Uganda and Namibia (figure 2 and 3).

Figure 2 Uganda: Reported causes of death (%)



In the survey areas in Uganda HIV/AIDS was the most frequently reported cause of death, and the average age of people dying was 28 years.

Promote livelihood diversification

To overcome the problems related to competing cash needs over limited income, which result in increased food insecurity and unsafe coping strategies, the following activities have been identified:

Promotion of micro-enterprise development

- ❑ Investigate locally appropriate, less input demanding enterprises (e.g. bee-keeping, bull fattening, fruit trees, home-gardens) and conduct a market assessment of opportunities, risks and possible action;
- ❑ Develop training material for promoting livelihood diversification options in the context of HIV/AIDS;
- ❑ Encourage and support micro-enterprise development.

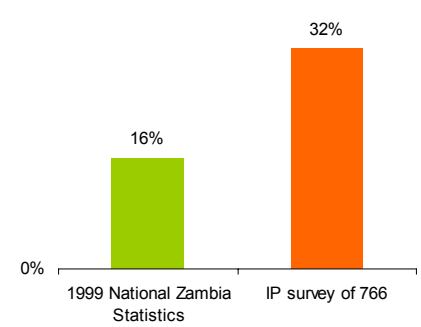
Improved access to rural finance schemes

- ❑ Analyze the constraints vulnerable households have in accessing micro-credit;
- ❑ Develop and implement strategies for micro-credit programmes adapted to meet these challenges.

High number of female-headed households

In the survey area, the number of female headed households was high: 50% of the households in **Namibia**, and 18% and 32% in **Uganda** and **Zambia** respectively.

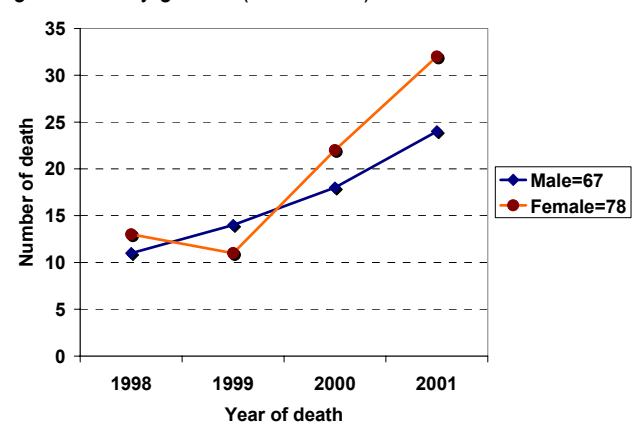
Figure 1 Zambia: % of female headed households



Source: Ministry of Agriculture 1999

About 32% of the randomly selected households in Zambia were female headed. This is significantly higher than the % in the 1999 National Survey.

Figure 3 Namibia: Number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths for ages 15-49 by gender (1998-2001)



In Namibia the people dying of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses are within their productive age (15-64 yrs), and increasingly female.

Promote alternative labour technologies

Existing technologies are often inappropriate or unavailable for households vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. It is therefore necessary to analyse the problems vulnerable households face in accessing and adopting alternative technologies. Subsequently, a strategy can be developed and activities can be implemented to:

- ❑ Enhance farmers' skills to develop/absorb appropriate alternative technologies;
- ❑ Reorient extension messages to reach/assist vulnerable groups (youth, elderly and widows);
- ❑ Lobby for increased (immediate and long term) national and donor inputs to enhance agricultural technologies.

Alternative labour saving technologies can include:

- ❑ lighter ploughs/ tools
- ❑ conservation agriculture
- ❑ minimum tillage
- ❑ improved seed varieties
- ❑ fuel efficient stoves
- ❑ improved water harvesting
- ❑ improved agro-processing

▲ Increase in the number of orphans cared for by rural households

Households reporting to foster orphans were: 20% in **Namibia**, 31% in **Zambia** and 14% in **Uganda**. The 95 female-headed households in Zambia with orphans had an average of 1.7 extra children to feed, clothe and house, while the male-headed households fostering orphans had on average 1.6 extra children.

▼ Lowering of educational attainment by children in vulnerable households

Labour constraints faced by affected households in **Uganda**, has increased the drop-out rate and children are assisting the family in agricultural activities. In **Zambia**, 7% of the children in female headed households with orphans dropped out of primary school as a result of “no support”. This was three times higher than the drop-out rate in male-headed households with orphans.

▲ Increase in property grabbing

Asset stripping is a difficult subject to discuss. However, it remains a problem for widows and orphans trying to survive. In **Namibia**, 44% of the widows reported to have lost cattle, 28% had lost small livestock and 41% had lost farm equipment to relatives after the household’s male head had died.

▲ Increase in risky survival strategies

Male out-migration in **Namibia** increases the probability of sexual relationships outside of the family with the attendant risks of HIV. In the fishing community in **Uganda**, widows and orphans reported to have engaged in sexual relationships to get cash, food or other favours.

Changes in traditional safety nets

In the pastoral communities in **Uganda**, widows used to receive quite a number of cattle from community members when the husband died. Due to high numbers of deaths, this number has declined, or no cattle are given at all. In **Namibia**, very few received any kind of support by government or other institutions, but 60% of the affected households relied more on support from relatives.

Decline in agricultural production

▼ Decrease in crop/livestock production

Affected households cultivate less land, decrease their crop diversity and use less agricultural inputs.

▼ Decrease in labour availability and productivity result in increasing workloads for able-bodied household members (e.g. use of child labour) and changing gender roles.

Female-headed households in **Zambia**, and in particular those taking care of orphans, experience greater labour shortages compared to male-headed households. This is because they have less family members in the economically active age category compared to male-headed households. Moreover, they have little resources to hire labour. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that these households have a higher proportion of elderly members, thus implying that increasingly more grandmothers are heading the households and taking care of orphans. Also, female-headed households with orphans have relatively fewer productive assets such as land (about 30% less than other households), ploughs, ox carts, cattle, goats and chickens. Consequently, female-headed households cultivate only 0,59 ha per economically active household member compared to 0,72 ha in male-headed households and households without orphans.

Strategies for action

Self-help groups and community mobilisation

Labour-shortages result in reduced production and income, post-harvest losses, less time and access to extension services and increase in school drop-out. Other related problems are the collapse of social and economic safety-nets. Solutions can be found within the communities themselves, by mobilizing labour-pooling groups, funeral banks, community counsellors and community health insurance. Proposed actions are:

- ❑ Analyse existing self-help groups and their functioning;
- ❑ Adapt and test existing training material to support group mobilisation as a means for mitigation, as well as to provide training to extension staff;
- ❑ Support mechanisms to ensure continued assistance to self-help groups.

Promote preservation and transmission of knowledge

The increasing number of orphans and the collapse of extended family networks lead to inadequate transmission

and preservation of knowledge. To counteract this trend, the following strategies for action have been suggested:

i) Promote agricultural training and school gardens

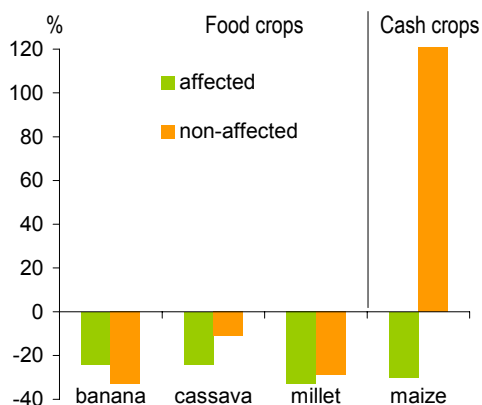
- ❑ Develop practical school gardens at selected pilot schools to build agricultural skills and transmit knowledge;
- ❑ Develop and test training material as input for curriculum development in schools from primary to university level.

ii) Promotion of youth organizations

- ❑ Adapt and test existing training material to support youth clubs. Training material will include leadership skills, organisational development, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, vegetable gardening and business skills;
- ❑ Conduct training and Training-of-Trainers of youth;
- ❑ Involve the elderly and grandparents in training of youth;
- ❑ Organize apprenticeships and exchange visits.

Figure 4 Uganda: Cash vs. food crops

% change in cultivation of cash and food crops in affected households (1996-2001)



Many countries are in the process of shifting from subsistence to commercial agriculture. From the FAO survey, it appears that non-affected households are better able to respond to these development initiatives than affected households. In **Uganda** affected families reduce the overall cultivation of labour-intensive food crops as a result of labour constraints, thus leaving more land fallow. On the contrary, non-affected families are better equipped to respond to the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture and gradually shift from cultivating subsistence crops to cash crops, and have increased the area cultivated by maize (cash-crop), for which there is a ready market.

In **Namibia** affected households were more subject to reduction in their number of cattle, compared to the non-affected households. 89% of widow-headed households reported to have experienced a sharp decline in cattle. They lost in average 6 cattle as a result of distress sale and property grabbing.

In agricultural production labour constraints were mostly felt in weeding and ploughing, in particular for families headed by women. They were also to a greater extent depending upon hand-hoe alone and less on draught power for land preparations.



A group of widows in Uganda discussing the labour constraints they experience due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

▼ Decrease in extension services

HIV/AIDS is also having an impact on the provision of government services, in particular extension services.

Due to illness and death among both farmers and extension staff, the quality and number of messages and training sessions are being reduced.

▼ Decrease in inter-generational transfer of knowledge

The IP surveys showed that indigenous knowledge of local agro-ecology and farming practices is being lost. One of the most pertinent areas of knowledge-loss in **Namibia** was in forecasting of rainfall and rotational cropping. In the long-term, agriculture production will be affected by loss of knowledge related to the good management and treatment of crop pests. Knowledge and practice of traditional storage methods is in decline as well.

In **Uganda**, limited new knowledge is being sought by affected households due to loss of confidence in the future. Their planning perspective is focused on the short-term. Affected household members are participating less and less in agriculture-related seminars due to ill health, hence not gaining new knowledge on modern farming methods. There is increasing inability of fisher-folk to predict seasons and times of safety on the lake. This has resulted in more accidents. The death of 4 extension workers in 4 years in the survey community demonstrated the problem fisher-folk confront in accessing extension knowledge.

iii) Encourage farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing

iv) Documentation of traditional indigenous knowledge

v) Develop village based business modules focusing on indigenous products

- ❑ Conduct a local participatory assessment of indigenous products with a market niche that could be grown in home/school gardens;
- ❑ Conduct a market assessment of opportunities, risks and their respective possible strategies;
- ❑ Develop a strategy for marketing these products;
- ❑ Conduct training for women's/youth's/self-help groups focusing on indigenous knowledge of crops and wild plants, processing skills of indigenous products, business skills and marketing;
- ❑ Document knowledge associated with the development of these products.

Improving nutrition

Insufficient availability of food and inadequate knowledge of nutritional needs of PLWHA are widespread. A response could be improved home gardening comprising nutritious and medicinal crops and nutrition education through the following activities:

- ❑ Adapt existing training material on home gardening and medicinal crops;
- ❑ Conduct training for extension staff and community leaders, NGOs and CBOs;
- ❑ Develop and disseminate material on nutrition through appropriate channels.

Changes in income and expenditure patterns

- ▼ Decline in rural household and per capita income, particularly among vulnerable groups
- ▲ Increase in distress sale of productive and household resources
- ▲ Increase in difficulties for vulnerable groups to access loans

In **Zambia** female-headed households caring for orphans have experienced a disproportionate loss of productive assets due to sale for meeting household expenses. These same households also suffer significantly higher animal losses due to diseases and sale to meet household needs than do households who are not fostering children.

In **Uganda**, affected households reported to have increased their expenditures for medical care and burial expenses, for hired labour for tasks previously done by household members, and for food items previously



produced on the farm. Increase in expenditures results in depletion of household savings, leaving little financial resources to invest in expanding and diversifying agro-business. In cases where affected households have sold off their assets, they cannot access rural micro-credit institutions for lack of collateral. Also, affected families reported that they faced difficulties finding loan co-signers.

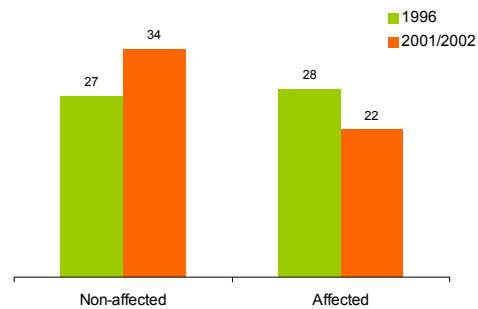
Continue Strategies for action

Provide legal assistance and training to prevent asset stripping

Loss of land and property (such as livestock and farm equipment) to close relatives, can be addressed through the following:

- ❑ Develop awareness-raising information packages, specifically targeting farmers in rural areas;
- ❑ Focus on promoting women's inheritance rights and participation in judiciary structures;
- ❑ Training-of-trainers of community based paralegals, perhaps the church and village council could play a role;
- ❑ Conducting awareness-raising workshops for traditional leaders, extension workers and the regional council;
- ❑ Sharing lessons learnt and carrying out advocacy work at national level.

Figure 5 Namibia: Proportion of household income deriving from wages (5 yrs recall period)



Among the households who received salaries from the formal wage sector, affected households reported to have experienced a proportional decrease in salaries compared to five years ago, while non-affected households had increased salaried work. The survey further found that affected households, as a result of illness and insufficient labour to carry out agricultural tasks, were diversifying their livelihoods to cope with the current situation. The research indicated an increase in income from crafts, beer making, selling street food and nuts, especially among women. Affected households also reported an increased dependence on remittances and pensions.

Food insecurity and malnutrition

- ▼ Reduced intake of key food groups among vulnerable household members
- ▼ Decrease in access to food among vulnerable groups

Due to lower production levels and less income, the most vulnerable groups reported that they had to decrease their number of meals, often consumed inadequate amounts of key foods and food groups (such as starchy staples, animal products, legumes, fruits and vegetables), and at times had an insufficient amount of food for the entire household.

Capacity-building and sensitization

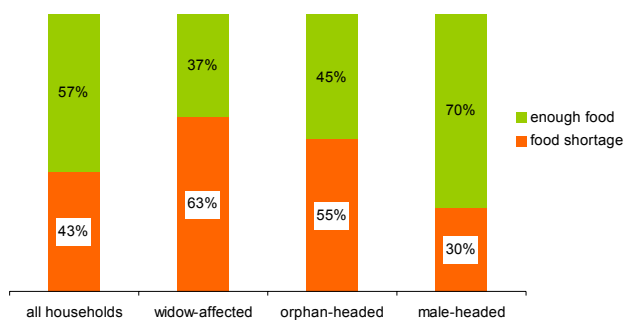
Inadequate knowledge and awareness related to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in government and extension services can be counteracted through the following action:

Equip extension staff with skills to address different needs of emerging vulnerable groups

- ❑ Develop and/or adapt existing training material to support participatory appraisal of vulnerable households' needs in order to strengthen their ability in coping with the AIDS impact and to equip extension staff with skills to address HIV/AIDS in their ongoing work;
- ❑ Organise and facilitate training workshops for extension staff and development of a "para-extension" volunteer network.

Increase the awareness of staff in district development committees of the linkages between HIV/AIDS, food security and rural livelihoods

- ❑ Develop and/or adapt existing training and background material on HIV/AIDS, food security, gender and poverty interlinkages;
- ❑ Organise and facilitate a training workshops;
- ❑ Organise short sensitisation sessions for staff on HIV/AIDS and its implication for their work.

Figure 6 Namibia: Food insecurity (2002)


Food insecurity is a widespread problem in **Namibia**. 43% of the total sample stated that they had experienced food shortages during the month prior to the survey. Widow- and orphan-headed households were less able to cope with the drought. This was reflected in the high proportion of these households reporting on food shortage, respectively 63% of the widow-affected and 55% of the orphan-headed.

People usually did not have the ability to provide particularly nutritious food to HIV positive people. The comment heard was: **“the food that we eat is the same for everybody”**.

Food insecurity was a serious problem in the study area in **Zambia**. The findings showed that 30 to 40% of all households had only 2 meals a day and 7 to 12% had only 1 meal a day. Female-headed households, and in particular those fostering orphans, are more vulnerable to the food crisis than male-headed households, as is reflected by a lower food-intake: 10 percentage points

less female-headed households with orphans consume 3 meals a day as compared to male-headed households. Another important proxy indicator used is the consumption of meat. In the study area, meat is only consumed within male-headed households. Moreover, the number of male-headed households with orphans perceiving their intake of meat as adequate is half of those without orphans.

In **Uganda**, families in mixed and fishing communities have a high awareness of HIV-nutrition linkages, but do not prepare special meals due to competing demands on limited financial resources and time.

Affected households, especially widow- and orphan-headed households, have less access to food as a result of decreased production and, since they are more dependent on hiring out their labour to access food, they tend to experience food problems during times of sickness of household members.

Affected households in the pastoral communities increase the sale of milk over consumption in order to pay for medication. Consequently, water is added to the porridge as a substitute for milk, thus lowering the nutritional status.

In the fishing communities, it was observed that widows sometimes sent their children to live with relatives where they would be able to eat. When in desperate need, it was noted that households have to resort to begging food from neighbours.

Essential activities

- ❑ Integrate HIV/AIDS in information messages for extension services and agricultural institutions, and incorporate HIV/AIDS messages into their communication strategies;
- ❑ Sensitize and raise awareness about the impacts of HIV/AIDS on agriculture, food security and rural livelihoods;
- ❑ Influence policymakers and development-planners to integrate HIV/AIDS concerns in their agricultural sector plans and policies.
- ❑ Share knowledge and experiences with programmes at field, national and regional level to replicate successful activities on a wider scale.

Analyse existing policies and mechanisms

Many countries (including Namibia, Uganda and Zambia) have mechanisms to coordinate the efforts and initiatives among government ministries (nationally/decentralized), NGOs, UN system and donors when addressing HIV/AIDS.

A closer analysis of these mechanisms will be necessary in order to identify and better understand how to play an effective and proactive role at national level, as well as to add value to existing programmes and policies.



At the market in Zambia

IP's collaborating partners at Headquarters:

The **Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF)** is an interdepartmental task force at FAO Headquarters acting as an interdisciplinary mechanism that brings together the various technical issues addressed within the programme. PITF consists of technical staff of the following 10 services from the three departments Sustainable Development, Agriculture and Economic and Social:

- ❑ Animal Production Service (AGAP)
- ❑ Environment and Natural Resources Service (SDRN)
- ❑ Extension, Education and Communications Service (SDRE)
- ❑ Food Security and Agricultural Projects Analysis Service (ESAF)
- ❑ Gender and Development Service (SDWW)
- ❑ Nutrition Programmes Service (ESNP)
- ❑ Population and Development Service (SDWP)
- ❑ Research and Technology Development Service (SDRR)
- ❑ Rural Development Division (SDAR)
- ❑ Statistical Analysis Service (ESSA)

Other services are associated on an ad-hoc basis.

The IP is also collaborating with ongoing programmes within these services, such as the Socioeconomic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA), the Youth Programme, Linking gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems (LinKS), the Livelihood Support Programme (LSP), the HIV/AIDS and Food Security Programme, Gender-Disaggregated Data (GDD) in agriculture and rural development, as well as the FAO Focal Point on HIV/AIDS.

About the Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme (IP)

The IP is a **normative programme**, which means that the IP supports activities like policy support, action-oriented research, training, capacity building and awareness-raising.

The **aim** of the programme is to enhance sustainable development and food security through promoting integrated and collaborative approaches both within FAO and in partner countries.

Guiding principles

- ❑ interdisciplinarity to address multi-sectoral issues that underlie poverty and food security;
- ❑ partnerships within FAO and with governments, other organisations and civil society;
- ❑ continuous learning process;
- ❑ demand-driven.

The programme is coordinated by the Gender and Population Division in FAO and has been funded by the Norwegian Government.

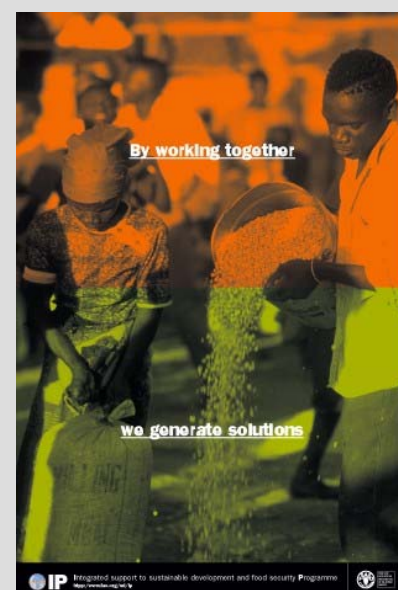


The epidemic is wiping out entire age groups, and with them, the agricultural skills, knowledge and capacity. The most vulnerable are being left behind. What matters in the end is what we can do, collectively and urgently, for this grandmother with six of her nine grandchildren, all of whom have lost their parents to AIDS.

IP's partners in the countries

Lead institutions have been selected in each country to administrate and coordinate the activities together with national stakeholders and under supervision of national interdisciplinary task forces. The key collaborating partners at national level are: FAO Representatives in Namibia, Zambia and Uganda, Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Health, Ministries of Gender/Women, National HIV/AIDS Commission, Local Governments, universities and selected NGOs. The lead institutions are:

- ❑ **Uganda:** The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), <http://www.naads.or.ug/> e-mail: naads@utlonline.co.ug
- ❑ **Namibia:** Africa Institutional Management Services (AIMS), Windhoek. E-mail: iprogram@mwweb.com.na
- ❑ **Zambia:** Farming Systems Association of Zambia (FASAZ), <http://www.fasaz.org/> and fasaz@zamnet.zm



For more detailed information about the survey and strategies for action, please contact:

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See also FAO's new website on HIV/AIDS: <http://www.fao.org/hivaids>