

CONTRIBUTION OF TREES AND FOREST TO THE LIVELIHOODS OF HIV/AIDS AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS



Most people are not aware of the interface between the forestry sector and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including: the potential role of trees, natural woodlands, forests and agroforestry in contributing to livelihood responses to HIV/AIDS affected households; the impact that loss of life and peoples response strategies to coping with the disease can have on the demand and supply of forest products at local, national and regional levels; and the loss of local knowledge about the sustainable use of forests and non-wood forest products

P EOPLE LIVING IN FOREST AND WOODLAND AREAS ARE OFTEN MARGINALISED AND HIV/AIDS INCREASES THEIR VULNERABILITY

When a person is sick, the household has less labour available and this disrupts food production and consumption by:



- leading to a reduction in the area cultivated and poor timing of cropping operations
- changing cropping patterns, including the reduction in time spent on soil and water conservation measures
- reducing security of land tenure (ownership/access) if land is left fallow
- increasing reliance on communally-owned resources, such as forests and woodlands, as sources of food, medicines and income
- increasing the use of uncontrolled fires to clear land for agriculture, which may also lead to greater destruction of woodlands and the many products and services that they provide.

ROLE OF FOREST AND WOODLANDS IN SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

- Trees, forests and woodlands provide materials for housing, roofing, and lighting. They provide fuelwood which is essential for cooking, as well as drying and heating.
- Poor households often rely upon tree and forest products such as wild food plants, bush meat, nuts, leaves and roots, to complement their diets
- forest products are good sources of vitamins and minerals essential for good health which are especially important for HIV/AIDS-affected households
- forests and trees provide fibre, timber, fodder and mushrooms which can be used to generate income and develop alternative sources of livelihood, such as handicrafts, furniture making and bee keeping.



ROLE OF FOREST AND WOODLANDS IN LONGER-TERM LIVELIHOODS

Land tenure: trees are traditionally regarded as an indicator of tenure and can assist in securing land

Agroforestry systems: integrating tree and crop production enable:

- the productive capacity of the soil to be maintained
- production to be maintained even if households face labour shortages
- multiple household needs (food, food, fuel wood) to be met.

Medicinal properties: leaves, fruits and berries of wild plants often have medicinal value and may:

- help to treat opportunistic infections that are associated with AIDS
- may boost the immune system of people living with HIV/AIDS



FOREST EXTENSION WORKERS CAN ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS BY:

- providing specialist advice about the contribution of trees and woodlands to rural livelihoods
- supporting and developing the capacity of local organisations
- facilitating the relationship between local forest institutions and non-governmental organizations to ensure that they respond effectively to community needs arising from the epidemic

BY ENCOURAGING BETTER MANAGEMENT OF TREES, FARMERS CAN:

- maintain land productivity
- enhance soil fertility
- reduce wind and water erosion
- support other farm enterprises such as fodder
- for livestock, shade for tea and coffee plants
- diversify agricultural production
- provide an emergency source of food
- reduce the burden of domestic tasks on women

BY IMPROVING FALLOWS THROUGH PLANTING TREES AND SHRUBS, FARMERS CAN:

- improve soil fertility and food production
- reinforce soil production
- provide a source of fodder and fuelwood in proximity of the household
- harvest products after two to eight years
- depending on the species planted

BY INTRODUCING AGROFORESTY, FARMERS CAN:

- reduce the amount of labour required by
- maximising the productivity of biological systems
- improve the efficiency of labour through positive interaction between trees and farm enterprises

BY INTRODUCING FUEL EFFICIENT STOVES: households can reduce the amount of fuel required.