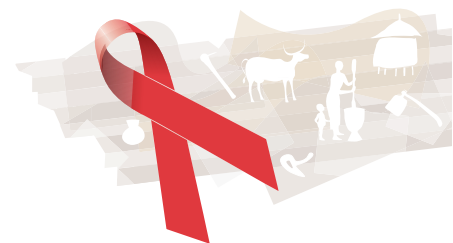


ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITIES



Gender inequality is one of the driving forces behind the spread and impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Gender relationships shape the extent to which men, women, boys and girls are vulnerable to HIV infection, the ways in which AIDS affects them, and the kinds of responses that are feasible in different communities and societies. In order to address gender concerns, it is therefore necessary to consider the wider social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which inequalities are generated and maintained.

In many places around the world, HIV infection rates are now higher among young women than young men. These differentials in HIV infection are partly explained by physiological factors which make women more susceptible to HIV infection but also reflect age differences between sexual partners, with younger women less able to express their wishes regarding their sexuality, choice of sexual partners and their ability to demand protected intercourse.

Gender inequalities render women more vulnerable to the impacts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. When a household member falls sick, women's domestic workload increases as they are usually the sole care providers. Access to productive resources, including land, labour, credit, training and technology, are strongly determined by gender and frequently favour men in the allocation of resources. As the household asset base dwindles and more members become sick, women's access to scarce resources is further diminished. Following the death of the spouse, a widow may not be granted access to household resources, resulting in further impoverishment.



Even though numerous and well-documented inequities contribute to the vulnerability of women and girls, nearly one-third of countries lack policies that ensure women's equal access to productive resources and services.

FAO's RESPONSE

The Gender and Population Division serves as FAO's focal point for gender, HIV/AIDS and population issues. It promotes the integration and mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS and gender into FAO's policy and programme work in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, rural development and food security, with a special emphasis on mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS on agricultural production and food security. It also facilitates FAO's follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action on Women, the Cairo Programme of Action on Population and Development, and the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

To meet international commitments and to understand and address the relationship between HIV/AIDS, gender and food security, FAO's key actions are related to:

- capacity building and enhancing skills
- information collection, analysis and dissemination
- promoting access to and control over productive resources
- policy analysis, support and advice

BUILDING CAPACITY AND ENHANCING SKILLS

FAO builds the capacity of national agricultural research organizations to be able to conduct relevant research on the impacts of HIV/AIDS on farming systems and rural livelihoods in order to guide policy makers and planners in devising strategies to mitigate these impacts.

PROMOTING THE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA

FAO has increased its support to member states to assist in producing and using gender-disaggregated data (GDD) and statistics. GDD seek to improve agricultural statistics by promoting the inclusion of gender, demographic factors and HIV/AIDS proxy indicators in agricultural censuses and surveys. Since 2002, the Gender and Development Service has been developing training methodologies and materials to help improve the skills of agricultural data personnel such as statisticians, planners and policy analysts.

FAO's Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) promotes gender awareness in rural development. SEAGA provides development workers with participatory and gender-sensitive tools and methods for project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. SEAGA can be used for analysis at household, community, institutional or policy level, and has training material tailored to technical areas such as irrigation, extension, livestock, emergency operations and management of the project cycle. SEAGA works with other technical services in FAO as well as with governments and civil society organizations all over the world.

SEAGA WORKSHOPS

SEAGA is mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into its activities, and has initiated work to better respond to the epidemic. A SEAGA guide called "Rural Households and Resources: a guide for extension workers" has been developed to assist community-based extension workers to apply gender analysis and participatory tools and methods in their work. The guide focuses on rural households and individual household members and their opportunities to manage resources. HIV/AIDS is highlighted as a major constraint to improved rural livelihoods, and HIV/AIDS concerns have been mainstreamed throughout the document, including in the toolbox. The guide has been developed and was tested in collaboration with extension workers in Namibia in 1999 and later in Uganda, eastern and southern Africa.

SEAGA materials and tools have been used to assist and prepare enumerators to conduct gender-sensitive and participatory household surveys among HIV/AIDS-affected households in Zambia, Uganda and Namibia. For example, in Zambia FAO trained agricultural extension officers from Northern Province on collecting data on the linkages between HIV/AIDS, gender and rural livelihoods in order to identify appropriate livelihood strategies for vulnerable and HIV/AIDS-affected households.

COLLECTING, ANALYSING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

Strategies to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic require an integrated and multidisciplinary approach based on good evidence. FAO plays an important role in supporting data collection capacity and in providing a global forum for dissemination.

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Under the Norwegian-funded Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme (IP), field surveys were conducted in selected rural areas which have been heavily affected by HIV/AIDS, in Uganda, Namibia and Zambia. Methodologies from SEAGA and GDD were adapted to obtain gender- and age-disaggregated information about the impact of the disease on the labour force, agricultural production and rural livelihoods as a basis for developing appropriate agriculture sector responses.

The IP is disseminating the research findings to policy makers nationally and internationally, as well as in the communities where the data have been collected.

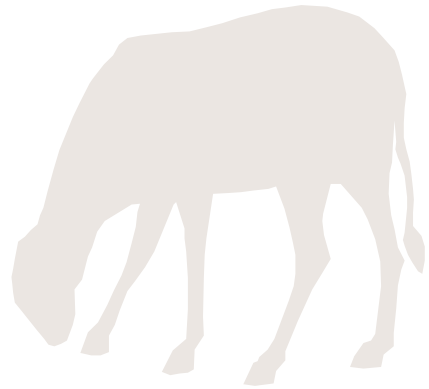


PROMOTING ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

FAO is raising awareness among policy makers about the relationship between HIV/AIDS, gender and access to productive resources. As the HIV/AIDS epidemic becomes widespread in rural areas, access to resources and services becomes vital for the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups. Following the death of a spouse, widows can lose common and inherited property, and without these assets their poverty notably increases. In some countries, legislation has been passed providing women with equal inheritance rights to land when their husband dies. While this is an important legal precedent, the enforcement of this law over local customary practices is equally critical. In this regard, the capacity of local officials needs to be supported so they are able to negotiate this sensitive process.

PROMOTING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO LAND

The FAO/IP study in Namibia showed that following the death of their husband, 44% of widows lost cattle, 28% small livestock and 41% farm equipment to their husband's family. As a response, the IP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare (MWACW) and the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), is implementing a pilot project to address property grabbing in the Ohangwena province. LAC has a number of years of experience in the legal litigation of property, and MWACW is committed to enforcing the Married Persons Equality Act. This project will sensitize and train local leaders and provide paralegal training for community-based support workers in the use of appropriate materials on the rights of women, orphans and vulnerable children. Members of MWACW will also receive paralegal training. Training material on property stripping has been adapted to local context. A national advocacy campaign on mitigating property stripping will be launched prior to a national conference in 2004.



USEFUL REFERENCES

FAO HIV/AIDS programme

<http://www.fao.org/hivaids>

Mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural poverty

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y8331E/Y8331E00.htm>

Gender and development

http://www.fao.org/sd/pe1_en.htm

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

<http://www.fao.org/sd/ip>

Social Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA)

http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/index_en.htm

Gender disaggregated data for agriculture and rural development

http://www.fao.org/sd/2002/PE0901a_en.htm