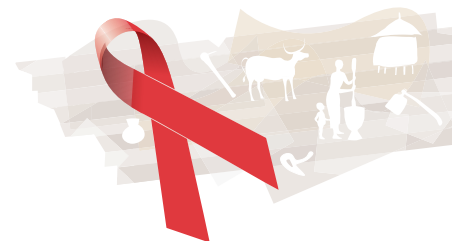# INFLUENCING POLICY

Poverty, inequality, and food and livelihood insecurity all influence the spread and impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In combination with these factors, HIV/AIDS is undermining development efforts. In countries where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is severe and large numbers or subsistence farmers are affected, agriculture and food security policies can provide a national framework for addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS.

The failure of policy frameworks to address food security and HIV/AIDS was highlighted by the Special Envoy of the UN-Secretary-General as a facilitating factor in the southern African food crisis. FAO recognizes that agriculture and food security policies play an important role in reaching the 1996 World Food Summit Goal of reducing by half the 800 million people who suffer from hunger.

The relative importance of HIV/AIDS for agricultural and food security policies will vary according to the scale and stage of the epidemic, the relative share of agriculture in the national economy and the type of farming and livelihood systems in place. Many highly impacted countries are now developing multi-sectoral HIV prevention and AIDS mitigation strategies that include the agriculture and food security sectors. For HIV/AIDS activities to be successful, policies and strategies must be developed across sectors to support the multi-faceted nature of rural people's lives.

FAO'S RESPONSE

FAO provides support to member countries, the UN and its specialized agencies, and other global, regional and national institutions in formulating development policies and strategies in the agriculture sector with the aim of successfully promoting food security and sustainable rural development. The support involves the following areas of work:

(i) assisting FAO members countries in strengthening their capacity in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of food, agriculture, fishery, forestry and rural development policies;

(ii) promoting effective partnerships between and within regions and countries, in order to work towards a common goal of alleviating the global burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and

(iii) helping planners and policy makers to create multi-sectoral policy frameworks that encompass agricultural responses to both short-term emergencies and long-term sustainable food security, particularly in view of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

In low-income countries with an HIV epidemic, HIV/AIDS has considerably worsened existing human resource capacities. All civil service providers, including ministries of agriculture, have suffered increasing staff losses due to HIV/AIDS and thus have fewer resources to maintain their personnel skills base. Training in policy and HIV/AIDS competencies needs to take place within this context of diminishing professional and operational capacity. Building HIV/AIDS-sensitive food and agricultural policies and strategies that guide agricultural ministries and their staff would assist in meeting this need.

In 2003, FAO's Agricultural and Development Economics Division and the Population and Development Service jointly organized an international workshop in Mozambique to address the linkages between agricultural policy and HIV/AIDS. The workshop brought together policy makers and planners from nine African countries, Europe and the USA to identify how agricultural and food security policy can play a catalytic role in preventing the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. The workshop also explored adjustments needed to ensure the continued relevance and sustainability of agricultural and food security policies. Issues such as the modernization of agriculture, labour shortages, food aid and access to assets in the context of the epidemic were discussed.

MAINSTREAMING HIV/AIDS INTO AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SECURITY POLICIES

During the Mozambique workshop participants developed a seven-step model for incorporating HIV/AIDS into agricultural and food security policies. Mainstreaming was defined as a systematic process for considering HIV/AIDS-related concerns during policy design, formulation and implementation and identifying relevant stakeholders at each step.

Step 1 **Situation analysis** of the socio-economic context, AIDS impact and institutional arrangements, which requires a good understanding of the evidence base.

Step 2 **Policy review** that includes an inventory of existing policies and programmes for agriculture, food security and rural development.

Step 3 **Policy dialogue and negotiation** involving ministries of agriculture and other stakeholders in government (ministries of finance and health, national AIDS commissions) and beyond (civil society, NGOs, religious organizations, etc.).

Step 4 **Policy formulation and adaptation** entailing an adjustment of existing policies or the development of new policies in HIV/AIDS contexts.

Step 5 **Implementation** involving linking policies to programmes at national level or in pilot areas.

Step 6 **Monitoring and evaluation** to measure progress and identify factors that enhance or constrain achievements. Indicators would need to be revised periodically.

Step 7 **Communication** to create awareness of the nature and dimensions of the problems related to the epidemic and of the objectives of adjusted policies to support implementation.

ENABLING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

A thorough analysis of the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on rural livelihoods is imperative in building policy responses. However, there is still a need to identify effective approaches to implement policies and strategies, to integrate HIV/AIDS-related concerns into current agricultural activities and to build upon practices already tried and tested in other countries. FAO plays an important role in developing effective partnerships between and within regions and countries, in order to work towards a common goal of alleviating the global burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

PROMOTING INTERREGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In 2002, the UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Programme, in collaboration with FAO, organized a joint consultation between African and Asian countries on agriculture, development and HIV vulnerability reduction in Thailand. Participants from the Ministries of Agriculture, Poverty Alleviation or Rural Development, National AIDS Authorities, and NGOs were invited to attend. The objective of the consultation was to: provide a clear understanding of the interaction between HIV/AIDS and agriculture based on current knowledge; identify agricultural interventions that can mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural communities; and exchange experiences, form a knowledge network and increase collaboration between countries of Africa and South East Asia on this subject.

ADDRESSING LONG-TERM FOOD SECURITY NEEDS IN SITUATIONS OF PROTRACTED CRISIS

Conflict is one of the most common causes of food insecurity, and the interface between food security policy and conflict prevention requires further debate. The scale of conflict-related, food security emergencies is increasing and the role of conflict in accelerating a natural crisis, such as a drought, to a food security emergency, needs to be examined.

HIV/AIDS provides an additional level of complexity to crisis situations and reduces the ability of communities to respond. For communities to recover and achieve a degree of self-sufficiency, they need both food assistance and agricultural development programmes that address their needs. The challenge for planners and policy makers is to create multi-sectoral policy frameworks that encompass agricultural responses to both short-term emergencies and long-term sustainable food security.

POLICY FRAMEWORKS: FOOD SECURITY AND EMERGENCIES

In 2003 FAO's Agricultural and Development Economics Division organized a workshop on food security in complex emergencies with the aim to explore how policy frameworks can enhance the resilience of food systems in different emergency contexts and the role of information in supporting those frameworks. The event was funded by the European Commission and brought together 36 people from 20 agencies, including the UN, governments, NGOs, civil society, donors and research institutions from across the world.

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

The State of Food Insecurity in the World
http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/J0083E/J0083E00.htm

Food security and crisis
http://www.fao.org/crisisandhunger/root/index.jsp?lang=en

Agricultural policy and HIV/AIDS workshop
http://www.fao.org/es/ESA/en/conf_past_hiv.htm

FAO HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME