

SECTORAL RESPONSES



It is recognized that the agricultural and natural resources sector can be developed in such a way as to increase the resilience of rural populations and contribute significantly to HIV prevention. In addition to the current health-based strategies in combating HIV/AIDS, sectoral and multi-sectoral development strategies – for example, fisheries, livestock and forestry -- can play an innovative and essential role in controlling epidemics, especially when they integrate one or more of the responses presented in the other briefs into their work. Following are some examples of some of the sector projects that have “mainstreamed” HIV/AIDS into their activities.

FAO'S FISHERIES SECTOR

Fishing communities are often the hardest hit by HIV/AIDS. Fisherfolk are considered at high-risk of contracting HIV as they are often young, have mobile lifestyles and irregular settlement patterns. Fishing households that are affected by HIV/AIDS often resort to less labour-intensive fishing techniques, such as shallow-water fishing instead of sailing to deep waters where there are more fish. They also spend less time on maintaining fishing boats, nets and other equipment. Moreover, fishing is a highly skilled profession, especially in deep waters, and as more fisherfolk become sick, fishing communities lose their knowledge related to the forecast of seasons, the movement of fish shoals and safety in the water.

Onshore fish processing activities also change when households and communities are struck by the virus. Women may choose to sun dry fish instead of smoke them, as the former technique demands less labour. However, it has a lower market value than salted or smoked fish. Many fishing households earn a living from activities associated exclusively with fishing. There are few other employment opportunities at landing sites. With fewer livelihood diversification options, more affected households rely on working as casual labourers, which is seasonal work. Access to, and availability of, food often depend on a household's ability to purchase it, so times of income insecurity are also times of food insecurity. In addition, in West Africa, many women actually purchase the fish from their husband to process and sell, especially along the coast where there are usually few alternatives for generating income. When a husband falls ill or dies, their wives lose their main source of raw material.

Not only does the livelihood lifestyle influence people's susceptibility to becoming infected with HIV, but it is also a major determinant of their vulnerability to the impacts of AIDS. Amongst the most immediately vulnerable are those whose livelihood depends on their physical well-being, such as the fishing crew and fish traders who cycle considerable distances to market. Once fishermen start becoming sick, they try to avoid catching chills by stopping fishing at night.

Other members of the community may continue with their businesses but the fear of stigmatization and discrimination (once their sickness becomes apparent) may force them to withdraw from daily life and even retreat from the community.

The ability to withstand the impacts of AIDS (resilience) is particularly weak amongst the resource poor, the majority of whom are women and the youth. Women, even if not infected, have low levels of resilience because they often abandon their own livelihoods to care for sick family members. Although rich boat owners are at risk from HIV infection, they are often the only group considered by a community to have some resilience to the impacts, derived from their relative wealth and the diversified nature of their work (hiring crew for fishing and operating small businesses). Those considered highly vulnerable to the impacts of the epidemic are children of sick parents and orphans, and family members residing elsewhere.

Fishing communities tend to lack any form of resilience to AIDS impacts. Often there is an absence of any community initiatives to offer comfort, support, home-based care or care for the orphans; a narrow livelihood base (highly dependant on fishing); and, despite the daily flow of cash, few make any savings.

FAO/DFID SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME (SFLP) HIV/AIDS PREVENTION IN BENIN AND CONGO AMONG SMALL-SCALE FISHING COMMUNITIES

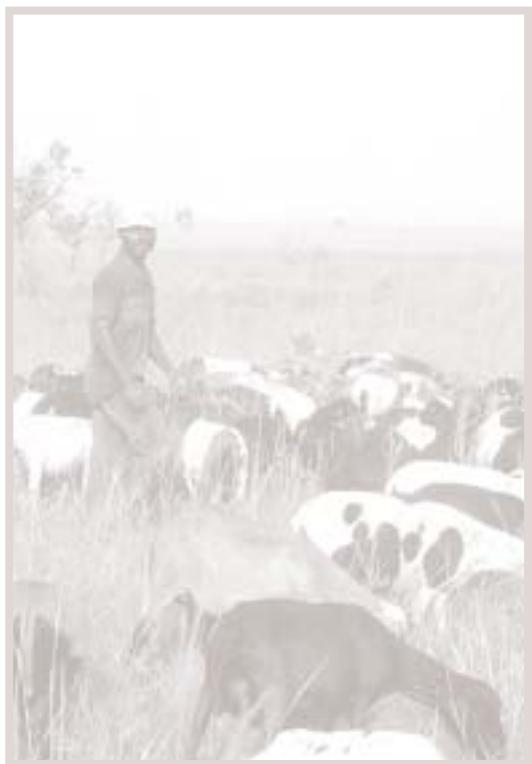
Small-scale fisheries communities are the poor relation in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in Africa. However, given the conditions of migration and poverty in which they live, these communities are extremely vulnerable to the disease. In an attempt to reduce their vulnerability, a collaborative project between SFLP and local NGOs has been set up in small-scale fisheries communities in two countries -- Benin and Congo. The project includes a detailed survey in pilot villages to assess the level of knowledge of HIV/AIDS in fisheries communities and people's attitudes to the pandemic. The survey will make it possible to design awareness messages and encourage social mobilization, as well as to eventually promote the better integration of these communities into national HIV/AIDS control campaigns.

The project will start with a test phase in four villages in south Benin. The target is 408 villages covered in partnership with other agencies (the World Bank's multi-sector programme and other specialized programmes). These are rural populations, most of whom live on the coast and include sea-going and lagoon fishers, fish vendors, input suppliers, boat builders, mechanics and small traders. In Congo, the project will start with three communities, one located on the River Congo and the two others on the coast, covering a total of about 6 000 people.

FAO/GTZ STUDY IN UGANDA

Like all sectors of the Ugandan economy, the fisheries sector has not been spared the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Fisherfolk have been described as among the "most vulnerable to HIV infection" but accurate information has not been produced and there are crucial gaps in the knowledge base regarding HIV/AIDS and small-scale fishing communities.

This study went beyond perceptions of fisherfolk as high-HIV risk categories, and tried to understand the dynamics of inland small-scale fishing communities' livelihoods and map their contexts of vulnerability, in order to design operational responses that effectively support these groups and, in doing so, influence relevant policy platforms. Fieldwork was conducted at four fish landing sites -- two on Lake Victoria (Central and Eastern Regions) and two on Lake George (Western Region).



FAO'S LIVESTOCK SECTOR

The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on livestock-raising practices has been felt in several ways. Many HIV/AIDS-affected households resort to selling livestock to cover medical or funeral expenses. Sale of cattle often means reduced sales of milk and thus a declining resource base. The decreases in labour availability result in lower levels of care of livestock. Partially as a result of the latter, there appears to be a parallel trend towards keeping smaller stock, mostly notably pigs, poultry, sheep and goats, which are less labour demanding. As a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, one or more family members often leave the community in search of paid work (or marriage), thus reducing the labour force even more, along with their valuable skills and knowledge.

In addition to HIV/AIDS affecting the active workforce involved in livestock, it also has serious effects on veterinary extension services, and thus on a country's ability to contain and eliminate livestock diseases. Where local veterinarians and livestock inspectors have been claimed by AIDS, this may seriously compromise the ability of the veterinary service to react to livestock diseases.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY FLOCKS IN LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND

Community flocks serve a number of purposes. They provide a source of young stock, which can then be distributed to the most vulnerable households in the community. They also provide a source of income for the community or group that could be used as the basis of a savings scheme, development activities or as an emergency fund (for funeral expenses, etc.). In addition, they can be a focus for teaching and passing on traditional skills in animal husbandry, especially for children and young adults.

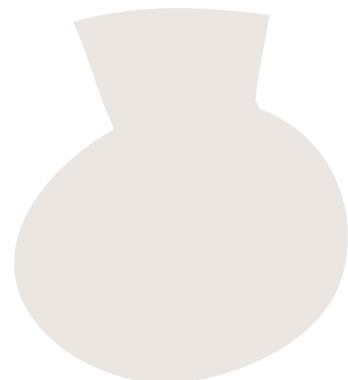
Given these distinct advantages, particularly in communities affected by HIV/AIDS, community-owned and -managed 'community flocks' are being promoted by FAO in Swaziland and Lesotho, as a means of increasing self-reliance.

The project provides:

- initial capital to acquire and establish the flocks;
- assistance in group formation;
- training of 'master farmers' (flock managers) and group members;
- problem-solving techniques (farmer field school approach); and
- improved husbandry interventions (with training, information material) appropriate to the communities, plus the necessary initial capital for inputs (vaccines, etc.).

FAO'S FORESTRY SECTOR

For information on FAO's Forestry Sector responses to HIV/AIDS, please see the brief entitled, "Forestry and Agroforestry in Multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS Programming".



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>

Animal production and health
<http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/home/en/home.html>

HIV/AIDS and livestock in Namibia
<http://www.fao.org/sd/WPdirect/WPan0046.htm>

Fisheries
<http://www.fao.org/fi>

Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme
<http://www.sflp.org/>

Fishing communities and HIV/AIDS in Uganda
http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe3/pe3_040101_en.htm

HIV/AIDS and forestry
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/hiv-aids>