

HIV/AIDS resource guide for extension workers

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Produced by the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)
in collaboration with the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment (FAO)



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Produced by
the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) in Uganda

in collaboration with
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the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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As we enter the third decade of living with the AIDS epidemic, evidence of its impact on rural households is undeniable. Despite commendable result that Uganda has achieved in reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence from 25% to 6% within ten years, coupled with the introduction of anti retrovirals on the market at more affordable prices, HIV/AIDS still remains a long-term challenge for this country.



HIV/AIDS has had a disproportionate impact on the agriculture sector in comparison to other sectors, and is closely associated with rural poverty, poor nutrition and household food and livelihood insecurity. Agriculture being the backbone of the Ugandan economy, contributes over 70% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 95% of the export earnings. The agriculture sector provides employment for over 80% of the rural population, the majority of whom are women, who are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because of biological vulnerability and prevailing socio-cultural practices. The devastating impact of HIV/AIDS has the potential to undermine the government's efforts geared towards increasing economic empowerment among the rural poor, as mandated in the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture in Uganda.

The Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries and all sector programmes recognise the negative impact that HIV/AIDS has on rural households capacity to keep up sustainable production levels, and has therefore taken a strong stand to integrate and mainstream HIV/AIDS issues in the sector as a policy to promote mitigation of the impact of the disease on rural livelihoods.

This HIV/AIDS resource guide is therefore one of the tools developed by the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), that will facilitate mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS issues within the agriculture sector, through promoting understanding of what responses are available to rural farming communities to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS, from the perspective of agriculture extension. Application of this HIV/AIDS resource guide by the extension worker and particularly those in agriculture extension, will increase attention to and recognition of the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods and create conditions and circumstances that should enable extension services to help people to have more information on how to access social services - including advice and information on agriculture, reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and promote resilience among household affected by HIV/AIDS, thereby increasing their potential to live productive lives for their good, the good of their families and the good of society at large.

I believe that the lessons that will be learnt through operationalising this resource guide will continue to inform and strengthen community extension services, and should challenge stakeholders at all levels to strengthen collaboration in order to respond more efficiently and effectively to the emerging needs and concerns of rural farm households made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.

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Executive Director, NAADS

Acknowledgement



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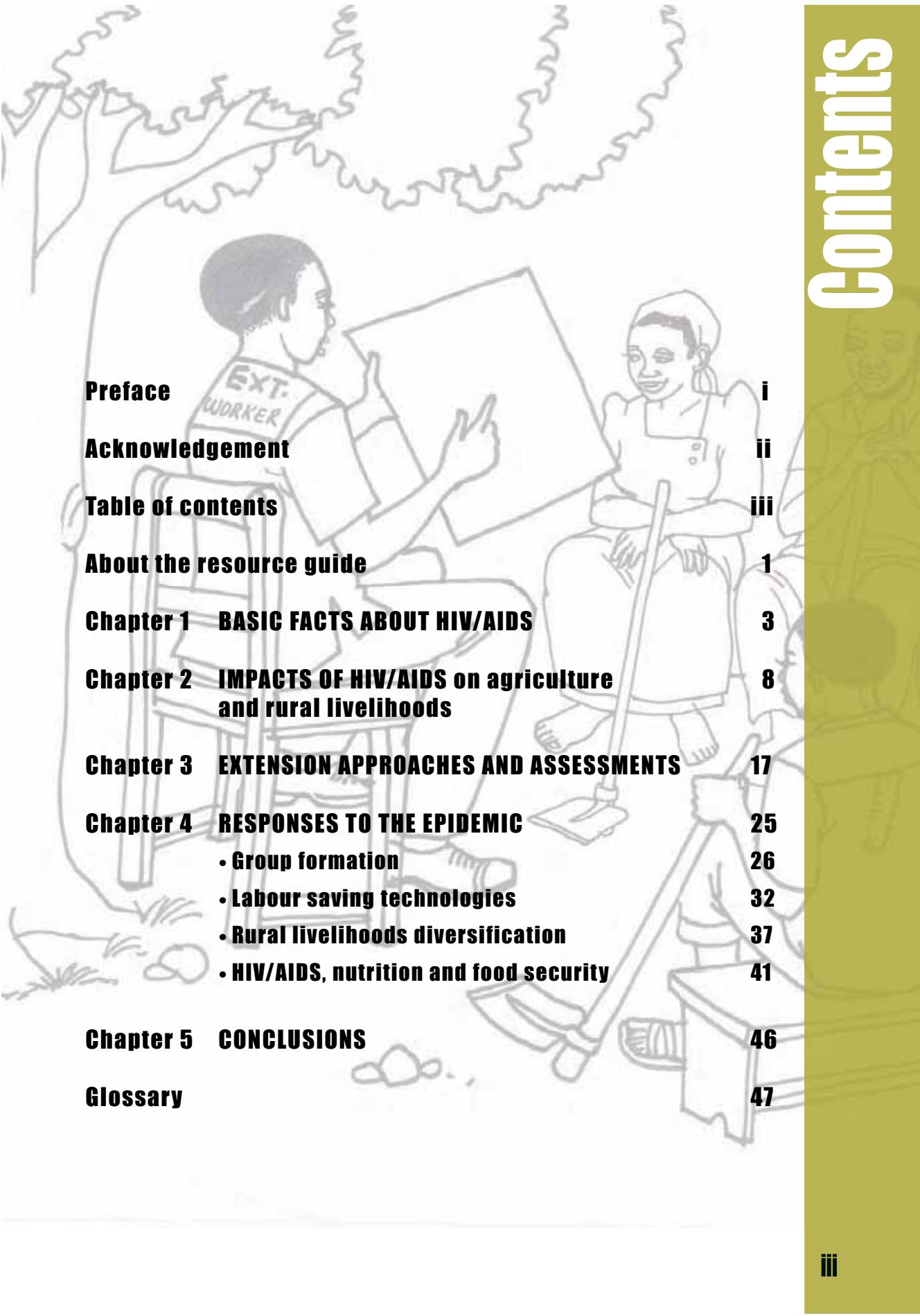
1. Agriculture Sector Programme Support
2. Department For International Development
3. FAO Office in Uganda
4. FAO Netherlands' Partnership Programme in Uganda
5. Integrated Lake Management Programme
6. Makerere University – Faculty of Agriculture
7. Iganga Local Government
8. Luweero Local Government
9. Masaka Local Government
10. Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries
11. National Agriculture Research Organisation (Kawanda and Namulonge)
12. Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture secretariat
13. Uganda AIDS Commission
14. Uganda AIDS Control Programme
15. Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association
16. Uganda Media Women Association
17. Uganda National Farmers Federation

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Lastly, thanks go to the Norwegian Government for providing finances for respectively, the study on the impact of HIV/AIDS and the development of this HIV/AIDS resource guide.

*FAO Netherlands' Partnership Programme: "Building Sustainable Livelihoods for the Food Insecure and Nutritionally Vulnerable in Fishing Communities at Lake Victoria, Masaka District"

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HIV/AIDS has had a devastating impact on rural women, men, youth and children. The epidemic gradually reduces the opportunities for rural households to sustain themselves and pushes poor households into further impoverishment, making it harder for them to live and earn a living. Extension services could and should play a role in trying to work towards controlling the further spread of the epidemic and in reducing its' impact on rural livelihoods.

HIV/AIDS has often been referred to as an unusual challenge for agricultural extension organisations, firstly because they are directly affected by HIV/AIDS through loss of employees and absenteeism and secondly because the epidemic is changing the needs and priorities among extension clients. Extension services now more than ever need to adjust their programmes to meet these rising needs and concerns, using approaches that make sure people suffering from and those affected by HIV/AIDS are not marginalized, but included in extension services.

The immediate impact of HIV/AIDS on a person is on his/her health. The second stage of impact at the rural level is on what that household can do to continue to produce, access and distribute food, reallocate available labour for both productive and reproductive activities - including caring for their sick household member(s). All of these activities have to take place in circumstances where there are less men and women available to provide labour, people have less and less assets because they are forced to sell them to cover medical and food costs, they have low or no income and a greater demand for health care and social support. After the death of their family member, many find themselves (especially women and youths) without land or assets, either because they have been sold it or it was grabbed. It is important to understand and take into account the various stages of progression of HIV/AIDS because it will largely determine the kind of problems that a particular household is facing at that point in time as well as understanding what real opportunities (given their situation) they have to maintain or improve their livelihoods.

This Resource guide suggests a series of actions and approaches to reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural farming households and communities. A broader interdisciplinary approach and collaboration at all levels (international, national, local government and community) is recommended because no single intervention or programme can address or solve the problems of HIV/AIDS.

This Resource guide is developed on the understanding that prevention and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural households must build on a deeper understanding of how the epidemic drastically reduces the agricultural labour force; how it affects the time and energy available to people (required to produce food and income) as well as the impact it has on knowledge transfer systems. The Guide also shows that various groups of people are affected in different ways, depending on their age, gender roles and socioeconomic status and opportunities, and that responses must be designed to meet differences in needs, constraints and priorities.

What is contained in this HIV/AIDS Resource Guide?

This HIV/AIDS Resource Guide contains information on the linkages between HIV/AIDS, agriculture, extension and rural livelihoods. It provides some basic facts on HIV/AIDS and outlines the major impacts of the epidemic on farm households and rural men, women, youth and children. It also aims to equip the community worker with skills to identify and support vulnerable groups, and suggests possible responses on how extension services can respond.



The HIV/AIDS Resource Guide tries to illustrate the impacts of the epidemic by drawing on studies and information from Uganda in the context of different livelihood systems. Each section dealing with possible responses is reinforced by a list of key resource materials that can support the extension worker to get more in-depth information on the subject. The guide also contains a glossary and several checklists aimed at assisting the extension worker to include a HIV/AIDS dimension in his/her work.

How the HIV/AIDS Resource Guide was developed

This HIV/AIDS Resource Guide was developed with the assistance of the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) of Uganda and FAO, with funding from the Netherlands Government, because of the need that was recognised from a study on the Impacts of HIV/AIDS on the Agriculture Sector to address HIV/AIDS issues in rural farming communities. The hope is that this Guide will also be of relevance to a wide range of extension workers in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, livestock, forestry, social support, community development, health and education as well as those working with Non-Governmental Organisations and Faith-Based Organisations.

Who is it for?

This guide is to be used mainly by extension workers at the community level where most of them have to deal with the practical problems of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods on a daily basis. We know that the issue is complicated and that the approach has to be sensitive, because many vulnerable households are suffering enormously from stigma, lack of food, lack of income and lack of hope for the future, so this guide aims to help create awareness of such problems, but also to provide suggested approaches that the extension workers can share with men and women in communities to try and overcome some of these obstacles in a sustainable way.

How to use this HIV/AIDS Resource Guide

The guide should be used in combination with other resource material, including documents referred to at the end of each chapter. It encourages extension workers to ensure that the HIV/AIDS situation in the community is analysed in-depth with the participation of men and women living in the community. Individual chapters can be used to facilitate dialogue and planning with men and women's farmer groups, using gender-sensitive participatory tools and approaches.

This HIV/AIDS Resource Guide does not recommend specific solutions to reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS but aims to provide the extension worker with an understanding and application of a range of possible responses on specific issues that they can share with the community and other service providers.

Some suggested responses will be specific for certain situations to help address the different needs of groups (such as youths, men and women, the elderly and children) involved in mixed farming, pastoral and fishing activities.

At the end of each section there is a box containing a set of questions to help the extension worker to reflect on the practical issues that need to be considered in order to build his/her confidence and capacity to deal with the realities surrounding vulnerable households in the rural setting. The idea is that the extension worker uses these questions as a kind of checklist to reflect upon before he/she organises to talk to the community and other service providers.