

Addressing HIV/AIDS among rural farming communities



What is the role of the extension worker?

In general the extension worker should:

- Assist men and women farmers to get knowledge and skills to improve their agricultural production
- Share technical advice and information with men and women farmers that will help to improve their farm management skills
- Support women and men farmers to form groups in order to increase their access to information, markets, credit, etc
- Encourage men and women farmers to work together so that they can be self reliant
- Work with men and women in the communities to understand what services already exist to assist them and how they can access them.

The changing situation for the extension worker and communities

The extension worker has an important role to play to address the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural farming communities. With this in mind it is important for the extension worker to appreciate that not all households are affected the same way, in fact it has been shown that HIV/AIDS is having many different effects on rural households.

For example, the clientele for agriculture extension has changed enormously. We now know that many households are being headed by the elderly (women and men) and in some cases by children; often such households are poor because they have been forced to sell their assets to look after their sick family members; farming knowledge and skills have not been shared with the orphans and the elderly, as such they are not able to produce enough food for sale or subsistence. Also children and the elderly do not have the physical stamina to cultivate large areas of land and produce enough foodstuff for sale and subsistence. Understanding factors and situations that increase rural people's vulnerability to food insecurity, loss of income and household and farm assets is usually the basis for the extension worker to determine interventions that will help to improve agriculture production among such households.

Identifying and working with households affected by HIV/AIDS

Often rural and agriculture development programmes which promote modernisation do not target vulnerable and poor community groups as these do not seem to have resources and motivation to invest in farming for profit. It is important for the extension worker to be sensitive when working with HIV/AIDS affected families because these families are

already disadvantaged by their poverty and often by the fact that HIV/AIDS is still considered shameful in some communities. Gender analysis and community participatory approaches are useful when working with vulnerable households and groups.

Gender-sensitive participatory approaches

Participatory approaches aim to support communities in identifying and achieving common development goals. Rural women and men farmers already know the problems, issues and opportunities that exist in the community and the extension worker can only facilitate them to find practical, efficient and sustainable solutions together.

There is increasing pressure being placed on an already overburdened extension service that has also suffered the impact of HIV/AIDS. As such, we are constantly being forced to re-think ways of encouraging more self-reliance at the community level, in our national efforts to work towards sustainable agricultural development. The extension worker needs to appreciate and understand that rural men and women farmers have different needs and live in different social and economic environments. If we try to promote approaches that involve rural men and women farmers in actively understanding, identifying and analyzing their own needs, our interventions will have a better chance of success.

The **Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA)** programme, developed by the FAO uses gender-sensitive participatory approaches to help development agents and communities to formulate projects, programmes and policies for a sustainable, equitable and efficient development process.

SEAGA recognises that rural development is complicated and requires technical and social knowledge to take a realistic look at development challenges. It looks at socio-economic patterns that include the:

- Socio-cultural environment
- Demographic (population and migration issues)
- Political environment
- Economic environment
- Physical environment and/or
- Institutional issues.



SEAGA analyses how these environments affect rural development in order to try and understand what influence they have on men and women's livelihoods opportunities. For example lack of food security can be an physical environmental issue caused by drought or can be caused by economic constraints such as lack of access to income generating opportunities. On the surface things may seem to come from one issue, but on further analysis with the men and women of the community we can see that there are many linkages between different patterns that can affect food security at the household level.

The purpose of doing this analysis is to try and understand not only the needs and concerns of the men and women farmers and how they themselves see them, but also how benefits are distributed, who has what and who controls what. This also mean that the extension worker, together with the men and women farmers can understand who are the people most in need of support and what needs to be done in order to improve the current situation.

SEAGA uses tools that are visual, oral or written methods for learning about lives in rural communities. It also divides these tools into three toolkits:

- **The development context toolkit:** that looks at the current situation in order to understand how people make a living and what their options for development are.
- **The livelihoods analysis toolkit:** that looks at individual households and groups, in trying to understand how they make a living and their access to resources.
- **The stakeholders' priorities for development toolkit:** that identifies all the different people (men and women) and institutions that can benefit from or be affected by a particular development activity in the community.

Some of the tools used by SEAGA are provided in a table here below and linked to gender, HIV/AIDS and extension analysis. In order to use these tools effectively the extension team needs to establish what information they would need on a particular community and select one or two of the tools (triangulation for the purpose of cross-checking information for accuracy) combined with a checklist/questionnaire and/or direct observation.

Participatory tools matrix

The matrix on the next two pages has been taken from the SEAGA manual on rural household and resources. The guide highlights major issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS and their effects on rural households. It has been developed to assist extension and community workers to apply participatory and gender sensitive approaches in planning and working with rural households. For further details please refer to the bibliography at the end of this chapter.

Issues Tools	Gender	HIV/AIDS	Extension
Resource Mapping	Resources and their importance for men and women and other socio-economic groups.	Looks at a range of resources to understand who does and does not access them.	Takes an overview of resources in abundance or shortage and generates preliminary ideas about extension needs.
Resource Ranking	Explains the importance of different resources for women, men, youth and various socio-economic groups.	Identifies resources that are particularly important for households with sick family members	Explains the importance of resources for different client groups and different purposes (food security, cash income, others).
Resource Matrix	Identifies Gender-based constraints to efficient management of resources (use, control and ownership) Explains Gender -based differences in knowledge about management of the different resources.	Analyses the likely impact on the use, control and ownership of different resources in the case of death of household head (or other adult).	Supports understanding of the possible roles of the extension services required to strengthen the efficient use of the different resources by different client groups, and to support local knowledge systems and transfer of knowledge between generations.
Wealth Ranking	Analyses wealth inequalities related to gender, i.e. the status of female, male and children- headed households.	Identifies the most vulnerable groups/ households in the village, and the relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS.	Promotes understanding of factors that enable people to move out of or fall into poverty, and the kind of extension services required to improve poor households.
Health Ranking	Identifies Health inequalities and priorities related to gender,. Analyses the present and potential impact of health on household labour (who takes care of the sick, and at the expense of what.	Indicates prevalence of chronic illnesses, HIV/ AIDS and related diseases (TB, malaria) and explains coping strategies for households with weak and weakest health.	Identifies and explains households affected by health-related problems in the community, and suggests preliminary ideas of what role extension can play in assisting these households. Provides information about other service providers to collaborate with in addressing the health problem in the community.
Activity Profile	Explains the division of work and responsibilities between women and men in different age groups, and free time throughout the day and year.	Analyses additional workloads in households affected by HIV/AIDS or with chronic illnesses (e.g. caring for orphans and the sick, taking on workloads of sick people, impact on productivity and HH etc).	Explains main activities for the different client groups, in order to identify the appropriate timing for extension activities.

Issues Tools	Gender	HIV/AIDS	Extension
Sources and use of money	<p>Identifies sources of income and explains patterns of expenditure for different households and household members.</p> <p>Explains priorities for use of money for women and men.</p>	<p>Explains expenditure patterns for affected and non-affected households.</p> <p>Identifies the most important sources of income for affected households.</p> <p>Shows variation in income sources and expenditure according to stage of HIV/AIDS, health category or other.</p>	<p>Identifies needs and priorities of the different households and individual household members and suggests preliminary ideas on how extension services can support different households to improve their livelihoods.</p>
Venn diagram and institutional profile	<p>Identifies organisations that can give information, advice or help on gender-related constraints to resource management.</p> <p>Identifies support groups for victims (children, youth, men, disabled, women) of violence, substance abuse, illnesses etc.</p>	<p>Identifies groups that provide information and support related to:</p> <p>HIV prevention and care</p> <p>Identifies support groups for particularly vulnerable groups such as orphans.</p>	<p>Gives an overview of groups and service providers that can assist men, women, young, old and different socio-economic groups to strengthen their livelihoods.</p> <p>Explains community's perceptions of the role of extension providers.</p> <p>Provides information about who the extension worker should link up with in order to provide better services.</p>
Pair wise Ranking	<p>Identifies priority problems of different community members (women, men, young, old, disabled, etc.)</p>	<p>Identifies problems specific to people living with HIV/AIDS.</p> <p>Identifies priority problems among HIV-affected households.</p>	<p>Identifies needs and priorities among different client groups and suggests information/ Ideas on the role extension in supporting people to address the problems.</p>
Problem Analysis chart	<p>Analyses problems and provides an overview of coping-mechanisms specific to different household categories or socio-economic groups.</p> <p>Identifies solutions for different households and groups, and the gender-implications of this.</p> <p>Identifies institutions that can assist the different groups.</p>	<p>Analyses problems and provides an overview of coping-mechanisms specific to households affected by chronic illnesses.</p> <p>Identifies solutions and their implications to people affected by chronic illnesses.</p> <p>Identifies support groups that can assist in finding and implementing solutions.</p>	<p>Provides understanding of causes and effects of problems and getting an overview of existing coping-mechanisms among various client groups.</p> <p>Defines the role of extension in assisting different client groups to find and implement solutions for improved livelihoods.</p> <p>Identifies linkages to and need for other service-providers.</p>
Community action plan	<p>Supports development of community plans that address the needs and priorities of women, men, youth and different socio-economic groups.</p>	<p>Supports development of community plans that address the needs and priority of different groups in the community, including people living with HIV/AIDS and households affected by the epidemic.</p>	<p>Supports development of community plans that address the needs and priorities of different client groups and outlines the roles of extension and other service providers in this work.</p>

Example of how some of the tools can be used

If, for example, an extension worker is seeking to understand (with the participation of the community) what resources are available for agricultural activities in the village(s) they are working with, including traditional systems and networks that previously and currently support vulnerable households, they might choose the following tools. These tools should help all involved to identify and understand in a gender sensitive way what households have been most impacted on with HIV/AIDS and what needs to be done to improve the present situation.

1. The **Resource Map**:

- (a) This should be drawn by members of the community (maybe by men and women separately to see who uses what resources) to see what is currently available in terms of natural resources and crops produced and preferred in the community;
- (b) A second historical resource map might be prepared separately by the elder members of the community (again men and women separately to see who used what resources in the past) that shows what the community was like maybe ten years ago and if their resources have been drastically reduced or changed. The information that can be obtained by using this tool can show the community members what resources they have at their disposal and can help the extensionist to understand what resources might be needed to ensure future food security, especially for the most vulnerable households and trends in resource availability.

2. A second tool that can be used to confirm the information given by the resource map is the **Resource Ranking** tool that can be used with men and women separately to see the importance of different resources for men, women, boys and girls and various socio-economic groups. In terms of HIV/AIDS, resource ranking can identify resources that are important for households with sick family members. It can also help to identify what resources are important to, but not easily accessed by households affected by HIV/AIDS.
3. A third tool might be the **Activity Profile** tool that will give the men and women involved an understanding of how tasks on the farm, home and community are divided among men, women and children and what responsibilities they hold. In terms of HIV/AIDS, this tool helps to understand additional workload in households affected by HIV/AIDS and who within the household is responsible for it.

The **SEAGA Field Level Handbook** gives a list of guiding questions with each of these tools that can be used to enrich the information being discussed by the men and women of the community during the use of the tool. The purpose of these tools is to give the extensionist(s) a clear picture of what kind of interventions they might suggest. Very importantly too, it allows the men and women of the community to discuss how they have been handling the situation so far and share with each other some possible sustainable solutions. This should increase their sense of ownership of information being generated on their community and build their capacity and commitment to design and implement community activities that will be self-reliant.

Information sharing and communication

Part of the support that can be offered to men, women and children affected by or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS is information and communication programmes that encourage sharing that is free of stigma. What we need to look at here is the role of the extension worker in making sure this supports and complements existing efforts to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, its impact on rural farming communities and what men, women and children in the communities can do themselves to reduce the problems associated with the epidemic. The following questions

will help you to understand what issues you may need to consider while planning to share information with rural men and women farmers.

How should we share and communicate information?

Questions to ask myself as the extension worker:

National level:

1. What message/campaign is being promoted by the government and through what media?
2. What is the message? Who is the audience? Is the message different according to audience (men, women, youth, elderly)
3. What form is the message delivered in? Is it accessible to all people in society?
4. Is it presented in a way that everyone can understand? Does it consider people's level of literacy, and resources?
5. Does it address the needs of the rural households or is it designed for urban households and lifestyles?

The reason the extension worker needs to understand this is to ensure that the information he or she shares with the community from such an information campaign is presented in a way that is sensitive to people's levels of understanding and their own socio-cultural settings.

Community level:

1. What methods are CBOs, NGOs, extension workers, civic leaders and individual men and women using to share information on HIV/AIDS?
2. Are there organisations in the community participating in identifying HIV/AIDS information needs, designing messages, selecting channels for sharing, monitoring and evaluating?
3. How is this information shared (through songs, drama, word of mouth etc.)?
4. Who is the information shared with?
5. Is there an effort to ensure that all sectors of the community are included in the sharing of this information (school children, civic leaders, men, women, disabled people, the elderly, the poor, the rich etc.)?
6. Are differences made between the message for men and for women (this is key when it comes to sharing information on prevention; for example when discussing the importance of using condoms it is not enough to tell men and women that they should use them, but it is important if possible to have them meet together, share the information in an accessible manner, this might allow women, young girls and boys to have a better chance of negotiating safe sex).
7. What efforts are being made to share a message that comes from collaboration with other institutions, NGOS, CBOs and health services, as well as others?
8. Is the message/are the messages backed-up with resources (for example if the message is to promote labour saving technologies for labour constrained households, are the resources needed available to support this intervention in the community)?
9. Are the suggested interventions easily adaptable by community members (women and men) to suit local needs and create a sense of ownership?

Part of the process of managing change in extension work is to take time to understand what it is that we are being asked to do and what we can realistically do. We need to give an active role to the men and women of vulnerable households in identifying and deciding on what is the best solution for them and we need to strengthen networks with other agencies working within the community to improve information sharing and other services for vulnerable households.

Spending a little time to think about the questions on the next page might help you to get more confident:

Questions that you, the extension worker, can ask yourself:

Before identifying vulnerability to HIV/AIDS:

1. Does the community know why I am coming to work with them?
2. Do I know what I am going to do there?
3. How do I approach the subject of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in a sensitive way?
4. How is HIV/AIDS seen and understood in the community?
5. Who else is present in the community that I can work with in terms of pooling resources (human, financial and technical) and bringing the various community groups together to learn more about HIV/AIDS? An example of this would be identifying NGOs, CBOs, other extension workers and civic leaders that you can approach to network with.

Once the work has begun:

1. Are the vulnerable sections of the communities represented in the focus groups we are working with (men, women, old and young)?¹
2. As you continue working with the community groups, are the vulnerable stakeholders still on board?
3. If not, why have they stopped participating? Is there any reason to readjust the community meetings in order to meet their needs (e.g. farming season, time of day that might be a problem for women/men etc., and other events happening in the community)?
4. Are the partners we are working with still working with us? If not, why not?

After the identification phase:

1. Who is involved in designing the interventions agreed with the main stakeholders identified above?
2. What roles have the men, women and children of vulnerable households established?
3. What role have our partners established?
4. How do the interventions identified fit in with and reinforce on-going community programmes?
5. How do we share the process and discussions with NGOs, AIDS care organizations, CBOs and local government agents, in order to improve key services to vulnerable households?

Bibliography:

SEAGA Materials (<http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga>)

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¹ Be careful of creating a situation where you only invite households affected by HIV/AIDS, as this could stigmatize them even further.