



Mainstreaming HIV in the Rural Development and Agricultural Sector

Since 2003, it is a policy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that all German Development Cooperation (GDC) programmes and projects in sub-Saharan Africa mainstream HIV, at least in countries with generalized epidemics¹ and especially in countries where HIV prevalence is five percent or more. Any mainstreaming HIV interventions must be planned and conducted jointly with GDC's partner organisations and be aligned with the partner country's sectoral strategies and national HIV strategy, thus adhering to the "Three Ones" principle. These require development partners to work through one national HIV strategy, one national HIV coordinating body and one national HIV Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

This guidance note discusses the *intersection of HIV and the rural development and agricultural sector* and suggests ways in which programmes and projects in this sector can mainstream HIV.

What is the impact of the HIV epidemic on the sector? Some facts...

The role of women in agriculture and the burden of HIV:

Women contribute substantially to agricultural production and related household income. At the same time, they bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic. They have to take care of HIV infected members of their families while often being infected themselves. Diversion of the labour to care-taking and their own ill health present major obstacles to their capacity to provide income and food for their families and to prepare the food. When they become household heads, they face additional challenges in accessing control over land and natural resources, credit facilities and support and training on the use of new agricultural technologies (Mehra and Rojas, 2008).



HIV can lead to loss of property for women and children:

In many countries, women and their children are by law and/or custom denied the right to own land and other property. Moreover, they have little access to legal recourse when these things are taken from them. After the male heads of their households die, they are often evicted by relatives and this often means loss of livelihood and destitution (Izumi, 2007).

Further possibilities to consider in countries with very high HIV prevalence²

HIV can reduce productivity and impoverish HIV-affected families in rural areas:

HIV can induce poverty and food insecurity in rural families. Death, sickness and absenteeism can reduce family members' productivity (ILO, 2004). Caring for the sick can divert the labour of women and girls away from agriculture and tending livestock. Families may be forced to sell livestock to cover medical and funeral expenses.

¹In a generalized epidemic, HIV is firmly established in the general population. Although subpopulations at high risk may continue to contribute disproportionately to the spread of HIV, sexual networking in the general population is sufficient to sustain an epidemic.

²HIV prevalence is considered „very high“ in countries where it exceeds 10 percent in the sexually active age group (15-49 years) of the general population.

As families' main bread winners die, the young and the elderly may be left behind and may have to try to make do with few or no resources at all (Hammarskjöld, 2003).

HIV can undermine the entire economy of a country:

Loss of labour to death and sickness and the shift from labour-intensive commercial crops to less labour-intensive subsistence crops can reduce the incomes of families and the cumulative impact can be to reduce the income of the whole country by, for example, reducing the availability of agricultural products and livestock for export.

The transfer of traditional knowledge may be interrupted as adults die of HIV: When the transfer of knowledge from grandparents to parents to children breaks down, new generations may find it increasingly difficult to manage farms and livestock and make use of natural resources in an efficient manner. This can be a major problem in areas where there are rapidly growing numbers of AIDS orphans (Hunter, 2007).

HIV can result in the loss of human capital by ministries of agriculture and other institutions in the sector: The human capacity and institutional memory needed to provide agricultural advisory services may be threatened by HIV (ILO, 2004). This can mean that advisory services are less able to help families address the problems they face as they lose the labour and knowledge manage to their farms, livestock and natural resources in sustainable ways (Hunter, 2007).

In what way could the sector contribute to curbing the spread of the HIV epidemic or to mitigating its impacts in countries with very high prevalence?

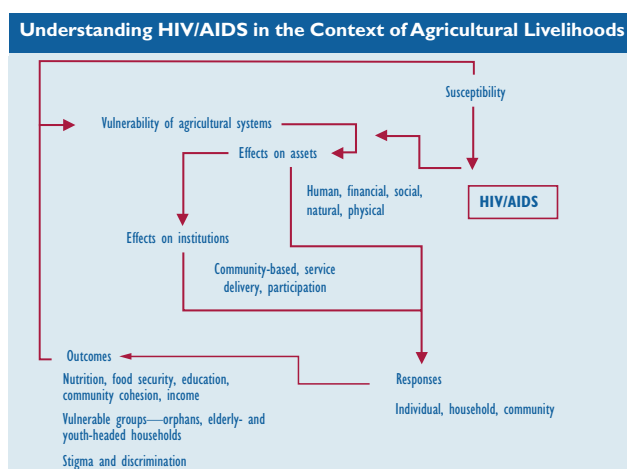
Addressing gender inequalities and the special needs of widows and orphans in the area of property ownership: Programmes in this sector can support governments in meeting their obligations to promote and protect the rights of all vulnerable people, including widows and orphans. They can support widows and orphans in the retention of access to land, livestock and other property after their husbands and fathers die. They can also support the development of national strategies and mechanisms that ensure a human rights based approach to HIV.

Promoting HIV prevention and awareness in rural communities: Agricultural information and advisory services can serve as entry points for HIV-prevention information, advice on gender issues and positive living, and messages against stigma and discrimination and property grabbing. In order to do this, they may require support for staff training and supervision.

Advising partner institutions on the development and implementation of their HIV workplace policies: The loss of staff working in the agricultural sector can be avoided through implementation of HIV workplace policies. Such policies can cover prevention, treatment and impact mitigation and can require a working environment free from stigma and discrimination.

Creating an enabling environment for addressing HIV within the agricultural sector: Advocating for the development and operationalization of sectoral policies – e.g., land policies, environmental policies – that address HIV can lead to appropriate HIV interventions within the sector's core business.

Taking advantage of the potential of agricultural activities to prevent the spread of HIV and mitigate its impacts: Agricultural programmes and projects can help ensure that the most vulnerable have access to appropriate technologies. The best approach is to build on existing community-based programmes and projects and to involve community members in identifying effective and sustainable solutions (Memfih, 2005). There should also be focus on the needs of women farmers, since they bear the greatest burden when there is HIV in their families and since they are



Source: Gillespie (2006). Understanding the links between agriculture and health

responsible for the provision of most of their families' food and stand to benefit the most from agricultural innovation (Verheijen and Minde, 2007).

Supporting research into agricultural diversification, agro-biodiversity and labour saving technologies:

Agricultural diversification plays a critical role in providing and enhancing nutrition for poor rural families. Agro-biodiversity and associated indigenous knowledge have enormous potential for enhancing food and livelihood security. Research into labour-saving technologies can lead to important mitigation strategies for households that must spend more time caring for the sick or that may be headed by widows, children or grandparents (Jayne, 2005).

GDC Examples

Land reform in Namibia

GDC's support for land reform in Namibia has included support for the development of training materials and for training courses that provide members of Land Boards with competence in mediation and conflict resolution. The training materials and courses placed special emphasis on the rights of widows and how they are linked to the impacts HIV can have on women and children.

Promotion of Private Sector Agricultural Development in Kenya

GDC's support for private sector agricultural development in Kenya includes support for training peer educators and counsellors who sensitize communities to the issues surrounding HIV. It also includes support for an HIV component in the Training of Trainers in agricultural sustainability and the production and distribution of a "Vitality and Wellness" magazine, which covers issues surrounding HIV including prevention and treatment.

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Further Reading

A selection of articles on mainstreaming HIV in the rural development and agricultural sector can be found on the GDC Mainstreaming HIV internet platform at <http://sites.google.com/a/ms-hiv-gdc.org/mainstreaming-hiv-in-german-development-cooperation/Home/sectors-priority-areas/rural-development>. To join the Group, visit <http://ms.hiv.aids.googlepages.com/home>.

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