

HIV and AIDS Impact on Agriculture and Food Security in Lesotho



By T. Matobo, M. Khoeli & R.
Mpemi



Family Size and Composition

- HIV & AIDS infection reduces family size
- Household structure changes leaving the young and the old looking after the household
- More dependant orphans still at primary and early secondary were left behind
- 20-29 and 30-39 age groups countrywide are more vulnerable with 62.4% married



Family Size & Composition cont.

- 55.2% of the respondents reported living with HIV;
- 38% had died of AIDS related diseases;
- Of the PLWA's, 48% were males, 52% females;
- 79% of the ill stayed at home during their illness which meant more caring which was provided by women;



HH Labour and HIV and AIDS

- Hh labour for agricultural production and food security gets adversely affected
- 26% of respondents used hired labour, 11% hired it for agricultural activities. 14.8% saw hired labour as eroding hh budget.
- Community expectations of reciprocity hinder exploitation of traditional work parties by affected hh.



HIV and AIDS Effects on Agric

- Reduction of productive labour adversely affects agricultural production;
- Hh farming decisions regarding agricultural production were also affected;
- Crop yields & livestock numbers declined during and after illness since they were sold to cover medical and hospitalisation costs. Some got lost to thieves.
- Hh assets got sold to meet the costs of caring and some got stolen



Safety nets and social capital

- Social safety nets were used by HIV affected hh.
- Informal safety nets were more exploitable than formal ones. But Formal ones tended to be more trusted for lack of stigmatisation.
- 51% of respondents reported to be non-members of the HIV & AIDS support groups though they were aware of their existence.



Affected HH responses to HIV & AIDS

- Caring negatively affects agricultural production and food security by taking away required resources;
- Hh provided for their own members at all times. During illness, they depended more on donations and gifts to supplement their own supplies.



HH Consumption and Expenditure

- Hh expenditure on agricultural inputs for crop and animal production generally decreased during illness of HIV-infected member especially in the case of breadwinners;
- Most hh that had no arable land had to purchase their food supplies and they spent money on basic foodstuffs which were not necessarily nutritious;
- 49% of the respondents spent money on informal burial associations.



HH Consumption & Expenditure cont.

- For most of hh more money was spent on medication and hospitalisation, than basic foodstuffs and other direct consumption.
- Spending on investment was minimal among those hh that could still afford. Others were poor and spent very little on education and none on savings and long-term investments.



HH Food and Nutrition Security

- Factors that contributed towards hh food insecurity included: low educational levels of members; high unemployment rate; illness and death of breadwinners; and low unsustainable agricultural production.
- Food security is a general problem in Lesotho and not only for hh that were studied. However HIV and AIDS worsened their situation;



HH Food & Nutrition Security cont.

- There was very little nutritious food variety taken, which left hh members vulnerable to infection by other diseases and those infected with less resistance;
- Females sacrificed food for other hh members especially the HIV-infected.



Conclusions

- HIV and AIDS affected agriculture production by:
 - diverting hh income into caring of the HIV infected members; removing active labour force; increasing the orphans and their old guardians;
- Food resources get depleted in the performance of burial rituals and rites of passage and hence increased food insecurity;



Conclusions cont.

- ❑ Follow-up of the studied hh and a survey with a larger sample.
- ❑ Lesotho Government has assisted school-going children through school feeding programme and Free Primary Education. Efforts should continue to ensure that the feeding is of quality nutrition.



Policy Implications

- Improvements and introduction of new agricultural technology
- Eradication of famine and poverty
- Empowering women and redressing gender inequality
- Supervision and education of communities by extension farm workers
- Strengthening household coping capacity
- Strengthening of outreach programmes