



## **Impact of HIV and AIDS on Agriculture and Food Security in LESOTHO**

*About 70% of SADC citizens derive their household food security from crops and livestock. The adverse effects of HIV and AIDS in the region have resulted in labour deficits and the sale of agricultural produce to meet costs incurred as a result of the pandemic.*



# OVERVIEW OF SCOPE OF THE REGIONAL STUDY

The escalating scourge of HIV and AIDS in Lesotho and worldwide, warrants that strongest measures be effected to curb its spread. UNAIDS (2001) indicated that Lesotho has a prevalence rate of 31 percent and is ranked fourth in HIV prevalence after Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland. Agriculture still remains the mainstay for many households in Lesotho with 79 percent of the population residing in the rural areas. It is against this background that FANRPAN commissioned a study on the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security.

## *The objectives of the regional study:-*

- ◆ Investigate how the farming communities have been affected by HIV and AIDS and their coping strategies
- ◆ Assess the impact of HIV and AIDS on the farming community with respect to access to farm resources
- ◆ Investigate the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on the farming community's ability to receive support facilities
- ◆ Predict the anticipated future performance scenario of agriculture

# OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study in Lesotho were to:

- ◆ Determine how HIV and AIDS have affected agricultural production in selected households
- ◆ Determine impact of HIV and AIDS on livestock and crop production
- ◆ Determine impact of HIV and AIDS on food accessibility and storage
- ◆ Assess ways in which HIV and AIDS have affected the family structure and production capabilities
- ◆ Determine labour saving strategies that can be employed in order to improve agriculture.

# STUDY AREA

The study areas comprised Roma, Quthing, Maluti and Mokhotlong representing four agro-ecological zones of Lesotho, namely the country, the mountains, foothills, lowlands and the Senqu River Valley. The multidisciplinary team of researchers represented National University of Lesotho, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, National University of Lesotho HIV/AIDS Coordinating Committee. A total of 210 households made the survey.

# EMERGING RESULTS

Based on the study in the four regions, there has been a negative impact on agriculture and food security due to HIV and AIDS. The following are highlights:

- ◆ Reduction in decisions made on production of food security crops such as maize, sorghum, vegetables at household level due to illness
- ◆ Production of maize declined due to illness of adult households but there was an increase in sorghum production despite illness

- ◆ There was a reduction of knowledge in terms of production, marketing and information from households who had lost adults due to HIV and AIDS.
- ◆ There was a major reduction in livestock such as sheep and cattle in affected families
- ◆ Poultry farmers seemed to have maintained their stock despite illness
- ◆ There was less investment by communities in agricultural implements and other assets
- ◆ Most household income was spent on patient care

## COPING STRATEGIES

- ◆ Family members from within the community or in the diaspora contribute significantly to care and food
- ◆ Neighbours contribute towards payment of bills and care for sick increasing more burdens on communities
- ◆ Increase in use of combination traditional and western medicines
- ◆ Increased membership in burial societies to minimize costs of burial and other rituals

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Promotion of less labour intensive crops such as sorghum;
- ◆ Government programs needed to promote less time consuming income generating projects for communities to cope with increased burdens;
- ◆ Formalised form of knowledge management to ensure knowledge is not lost as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic;
- ◆ Livestock promotion and development through government support programmes;
- ◆ Better understanding of the role of traditional medicines;
- ◆ Promotion of burial societies as social safety nets.

*For more information on this study in Lesotho please contact*

FANRPAN Node Coordinator  
 Department of Social Anthropology & Sociology  
 National University of Lesotho  
 P.O. Roma 180  
 Lesotho  
 e-mail: ta.matobo@nul.ls

# ABOUT FANRPAN

**T**he Food, Agriculture and Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need by SADC governments for comprehensive policies and strategies that were required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all SADC countries and currently has activities in 11 SADC countries namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

FANRPAN works through an inter-sectoral platform designated as country nodes. Each country node has members comprising stakeholders from government, farming unions, private sector, policy research institutes and non governmental organizations. The main objectives of FANRPAN are to promote appropriate agricultural policies in order to reduce poverty, increase food security and enhance sustainable agricultural development in the SADC region; improve policy analysis, research and formulation of priority SADC and national agricultural research themes; develop human and institutional capacity for co-ordinated dialogue among all stakeholders; improve policy decision making through the generation, exchange and use of policy related knowledge and information. FANRPAN achieves these objectives through commissioned policy research, networking, capacity building and generation of information for the benefit of all stakeholders in the SADC region.

FANRPAN Regional Office  
P.O Box CY2765  
Causeway, Harare  
Zimbabwe  
Phone:+263 11204265 / 263 9126441  
Fax:+263 4 332102  
Email: [policy@fanrpan.org](mailto:policy@fanrpan.org)  
[linds@ecoweb.co.zw](mailto:linds@ecoweb.co.zw)

For more information on FANRPAN visit our website on  
[www.fanrpan.org](http://www.fanrpan.org)

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