



Impact Study on Effects of HIV and AIDS on Agriculture in NAMIBIA

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

In 2004, The Food Agriculture and Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) commissioned a two year study on the Impact of HIV and AIDS on Agriculture and food security. The study was funded by the European Union through the SADC Health Sector Coordinating Unit. This was part of a Regional support for an expanded multi-sectoral response to HIV and AIDS in the SADC region. Seven SADC states formed part of the research all selected based on the severity of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The countries are Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In view of the negative impact of HIV and AIDS on families and institutions in southern Africa, FANRPAN sought to carry out comprehensive policy research studies to assess the situation on the ground. This was in recognition of the fact that a large percentage of the population live and work in rural areas; and most economies in the region are centred on agriculture.

The overall objectives of the study were to:

- ◆ Assess the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in the SADC region and suggest mitigation strategies to minimize adverse effects of the disease;
- ◆ Assist SADC member states in their fight to mitigate the spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic;
- ◆ Assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the existing HIV and AIDS programmes, policies and regulations in the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) sector;
- ◆ Review, develop and harmonise policies and legislation aimed at preventing and controlling HIV and AIDS transmission;
- ◆ Standardise data surveillance as well as establishing national and regional databases on the impact of HIV and AIDS in the FANR sector.

BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM

In Namibia as with the rest of SADC states, the life expectancy of adults has dropped from over 60 to less than 45 years. Mortality rates among the economically active population of 15-45 years has also increased due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The number of orphans has increased due to HIV and AIDS. The agricultural sector has been most affected because the sector employs the majority of Namibians. The limited options in drought prone and desert environment present enormous challenges for Namibians to produce their own food. With a very small population of less than 1.5 million, the impact of HIV and AIDS has characteristically been intense.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE TO:

- ◆ 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

STUDY AREA

In Namibia, the study took on a multi disciplinary approach involving researchers from the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit, Lironga Eparu, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health. The study was carried out in three regions namely Kavango, Oshana and Oshikoto. These regions are characterised by high rates of HIV infection and have large numbers of households involved in agriculture. A total of 150 households were interviewed for this study.

EMERGING RESULTS

The main findings are that HIV and AIDS have had a negative impact on Agriculture in Namibia. The highlights of the study show that:

- ◆ HIV and AIDS are reshaping the social framework of lives in the rural areas as communities are failing to cope in their social responsibilities;
- ◆ There is an increase in malnutrition due to food shortages and poor nutrition mostly in HIV and AIDS affected households;
- ◆ Crop yields have declined due to smaller land area under production;
- ◆ There is poor livestock management due to illness and loss of labour;
- ◆ Lack of tenure security over assets by widows is leading to a situation of property grabbing, contributing to more poverty for HIV and AIDS affected households;
- ◆ Assets such as livestock and farming equipment are being sold to raise income for funerals and hospital-care;
- ◆ Wage income from agriculture has been reduced due to illness and death of adults and extension workers;
- ◆ Community safety nets are weak as charitable resources are channeled to orphan care;
- ◆ There is loss of indigenous knowledge such as art of rain forecasting and rotational cropping methods.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- ◆ A knowledge management system needs to be generated to ensure that indigenous knowledge is not lost due to HIV and AIDS;
- ◆ Promotion of improved nutrition among the affected and infected for better health management;
- ◆ Training of more village extension workers so as to ensure continuity of extension messages and assistance to rural communities;
- ◆ Government programmes to strengthen safety nets so that communities can cope with the increased burdens;
- ◆ Promotion of crops that require less effort and labour.

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ABOUT FANRPAN

The 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.

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