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The HIV and AIDS Household Vulnerability Index

A Household Vulnerability Index (HVI) has been developed as a tool to quantify household vulnerability. This index is able to categorize affected households into “coping”, “acute” and “emergency” levels and thus allows for specified interventions per category.

What is “vulnerability”?

The HIV & AIDS pandemic is steadily increasing the overall vulnerability of households, which in turn is significantly increasing the overall food insecurity of households and the region. However, the use of “vulnerability” as an absolute status – for example by simply describing chronically ill or female-headed households or orphans as vulnerable groups – should be avoided. Vulnerability should, especially, not be used synonymously with need. Vulnerability should reflect the overall outcome arising out of the total impact on the livelihoods of the group in the future. There is therefore a need to quantify better the overall vulnerability of households introduced by the pandemic so that targeting of interventions in the sector can be improved, especially publicly funded interventions.

A national index

The HVI was developed during a two-year FANRPAN-led study of 17 dimensions of household livelihood assets funded by the EU through the SADC regional secretariat HIV and AIDS programme. Experts agree that the index should be further studied and developed into a national index to measure the impact of the pandemic on the agricultural sector.

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