

FOREWORD

Arguably, the most critical challenge facing Southern Africa today is how to arrest poverty and food insecurity. There is widespread agreement that agricultural growth is the main strategy for tackling poverty and food insecurity in southern Africa. Yet, agricultural growth requires the development of a more diversified and commercialised structure for income generation among smallholder and subsistence farmers. However, agricultural growth and food security in the region are directly affected by the impact of the HIV epidemic. Any successful agricultural growth and diversification programmes have to adopt comprehensive and holistic approaches that integrate initiatives to address the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Globally, Southern Africa is the region most affected by HIV. The epidemic has significantly affected the health status of the region's population. A wide-ranging debate among scholars and policy makers continues with respect to the nature, extent and magnitude of the epidemic's impact on agriculture and food security systems in the region. Various aspects of this debate have sought to answer such crucial questions as: What are the main circumstances through which the epidemic affects household agriculture and food security systems? How does the epidemic affect household demographics and related agricultural labour supply? How does the

epidemic impact on overall household productivity, consumption and exchange patterns? What is the overall livelihood outcome for affected households? How best can this be quantified to inform effective responses? Are all households affected in the same way? How have governments in the region intervened – specifically in the food and agricultural sector? What about country disparities – why do some countries seem to cope better than others? What new policies can be put in place at both national and regional level to deal with the problem?

The book “Silent Hunger” sheds light for academics, development practitioners and policy makers, on these key questions. It is an outcome of a study commissioned by the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), on the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in the seven most affected counties in the region - Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The book examines the status of the epidemic in these countries and its related impact on agricultural and food security systems. It discusses “increased vulnerability” at household level and explores the effects of chronic illness, death and orphan support on livelihoods. The book uses the “livelihoods approach” as the basis for examining the impact of the epidemic on agriculture

and food security. It examines the aggregated impact of the epidemic on household agricultural labour supply, economics, food availability, access and utilisation, dependency ratios, overall productivity and consumption patterns, effects on the asset-base, and overall gender dynamics and their implications.

The title “Silent Hunger” was inspired by the overall conclusion of the book that, though invisible in comparison to the impact of traditional droughts and famines, the emerging impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security is leading to a potential new catastrophe. Hunger and HIV are reinforcing each other. Other scholars have described this as “the new variant famine” – an HIV induced famine – that is radically different from traditional famines. The paradox is that while the traditional drought-related famines kill dependents first (children and the elderly), the HIV related “silent hunger” affects the most “productive” family members first. “Silent Hunger” recognises that while governments react with traditional emergency-type responses to the visible impacts of drought-related famines, their response to this “invisible famine” has been slow and inadequate.

In recognition of the huge challenge facing scholars, to make the impact of the epidemic on agricultural and food systems visible, the book proposes a new statistical tool, the “Household Vulnerability Index” (HVI). The index aims to support regional vulnerability assessments and early warning systems with a yardstick for determining the current levels of vulnerability introduced by the epidemic, as well as projecting future levels. This tool aims to make the “invisible” visible – and allows policy makers to develop more strategic policy responses, which address various degrees of vulnerability.

The proposed index will remove generalisations on vulnerability such as simply describing ‘chronically ill people’ or ‘female-headed households’ or ‘orphans’ as vulnerable groups. Vulnerability should not be used synonymously with need. While the definition of ‘vulnerability’ varies in the literature, it is often described as having two components: ‘external vulnerability’, which refers to exposure to shocks or hazards; and ‘internal vulnerability’, which refers to the capacity to cope with or withstand those shocks. “Silent Hunger” highlights the concept of ‘resilience’, which is increasingly being used in reference to ‘internal vulnerability’, and is determined by the combination of the five types of assets available to the household: human, financial, social, physical and natural capital.

The improved understanding of the impact of the HIV epidemic on agriculture and food security presents a ‘new reality’ to the region. Using the new statistical tool, it is possible to explore the levels of vulnerability introduced into households by the HIV epidemic. The book challenges policy makers in the region to develop more effective policies and strategies for social assistance and insurance, to address the unacceptable levels of deprivation that have been introduced by the HIV epidemic. Vulnerable yet Viable – the final chapter of this book – is a special call to policy makers to design new social protection regimes that will rebuild the resilience of affected households to new levels. It is the careful assessment of these “varying degrees of resilience” that constitutes the missing link in the current design of development programmes.

In the book, social protection has been discussed as having three key elements – vulnerability, unacceptable levels of deprivation, and public action. Social protection

has been defined as the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation, which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society. In the book, policy makers are challenged to take a broader view of “social protection” as opposed to the traditional safety net programmes. New concepts of ‘social protection’ are encouraged alongside with renewed state involvement, which emphasises longer-term development.

The book recognises that governments in the region face serious challenges when attempting to deliver even

minimal levels of publicly-funded social protection. Yet the HIV epidemic presents a strong argument for giving higher priority to social protection. We hope that this book, “Silent Hunger” will empower development practitioners, academics and policy makers to develop programmes more effectively and make “vulnerable” households more “viable”.

Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Fred Kalibwani,
and Tendayi Kureya
FANRPAN



Lesley Lawson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was compiled from the research findings of a seven-country study commissioned by FANRPAN (Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network) with support from SADC and the European Union. It presents results and recommendations based on research that explored the impact of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in the southern African region. The studies developed a method of quantifying household vulnerability.

The book was compiled by Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda and Fred Kalibwani (FANRPAN Regional Secretariat), and Tendayi Kureya (Zimbabwe FANRPAN Node - Development Data). It was edited by Sara Page of SAfAIDS and designed by Victor Mabenge (SAfAIDS). Photography by Victor Mabenge, Fungai Machirori and Sara Page. The studies were conducted in seven FANRPAN Nodes by the following researchers:

- Botswana:** Professor I. N. Mazonde; Dr. K S. M. Gobotswang; Dr. P. Malope; Dr P. Ntseane and L. Gabaitiri of the University of Botswana
- Lesotho:** Ms Thope A. Matobo; Ms Makhala B. Khoeli and Ms Regina M.Mpemi of University of Lesotho
- Namibia:** Dr. Ben Fuller and Deon van Zyl of Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit
- South Africa:** Ms Petronella Chaminuka; Professor Francis Anim; Dr. Legessa Kassa Debusho of Limpopo University and Dr Simphiwe Nqangweni of University of Pretoria
- Swaziland:** Dr. M. B. Masuku; Dr. M. M. Sithole and Dr. P. M. Dlamini of University of Swaziland
- Zambia:** C. Hamusimbi, M. Mataa and G. Jere of School of Agricultural Sciences, University of Zambia
- Zimbabwe:** Mr Reneth Mano; Dr Innocent Matshe; U. Chipfupa, O. Pimhidzai and P. Marimo of University of Zimbabwe

FANRPAN is grateful to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the European Union which provided funding through the project, “Regional Support for an Expanded Multisectoral Response to HIV/AIDS in the SADC Region.”