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AIDS Brief for Sectoral Planners and Managers: Community-Based Natural Resource Management

The global HIV/AIDS epidemic demands urgent attention and committed, sustained action by alliances of individuals, organizations, and sectors. The AIDS Brief series supports the conceptualization and implementation of critical sectoral responses. Natural resource professionals perform multidisciplinary planning and managerial tasks over a wide spectrum of inter-related activities, frequently at the community level. In fact, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) activities and programs offer one of the best development channels to work directly and positively with communities to address the HIV/AIDS issues affecting them. This is particularly true because HIV/AIDS is a societal and community emergency that requires community-wide responses. Joining HIV/AIDS activities to interventions aimed at community forestry or fisheries, civil society strengthening, local conservation efforts, or wild land management is an effective approach to reduce the impact of the epidemic on families, communities, and the environment. This Brief is designed for planners and managers working with communities in these kinds of natural resource programs.

BACKGROUND

Natural resource management (NRM) professionals focus on the conservation and sustainable use of resources to meet the needs of the present while respecting the needs of future generations. NRM programs interact directly with the families and communities dependent on those resources for their own livelihood and economic security. There is still considerable discussion as to what constitutes the range of activities to be included under the heading of CBNRM. CBNRM involves many disciplines. Because the stakeholders help develop the approaches and actions, there is considerable variation among communities. This Brief defines CBNRM as any community-led effort aimed at fostering the productive and sustainable use of the surrounding soil, water, forest, rangeland, wildlife, and fisheries resources.

Addressing HIV/AIDS within these social and ecological systems is critically important to protect the recent advances in conservation and resource management as well as for continued economic security and development. In many countries, productive natural resources and their rational use form the foundation of economic growth. Yet, there remains an acute gap in our understanding of how HIV/AIDS-affected populations impact the environment and how environmental management changes.

Studies in several African countries, including Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the Ivory Coast, show that food production and incomes decline significantly in HIV/AIDS-affected households. In Namibia, reductions in household labor and the sale of animals for immediate cash requirements have reduced livestock production. When families lose productive adult members to the epidemic, the transfer of land to the younger generation is disrupted. Furthermore, the loss of the more skilled producers and the pressure of caring for sick family members force surviving relatives to exploit the surrounding environment. Clearly, HIV/AIDS may force rural families to adapt and change their livelihood strategies. Both the direct impacts of HIV/AIDS and subsequent coping strategies need to be recognized and accounted for in any sound CBNRM program.

HIV/AIDS AND COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is threatening many parts of the world and having a catastrophic effect on parts of Africa. There are more than 40 million people worldwide affected by HIV/AIDS. More than 28 million of those are in Africa, where 15 countries have adult infection rates that surpass 10 percent. This translates into many more millions of families, survivors, parents, and children left to cope with the impact of HIV. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasing death rates, lowering life expectancies, decreasing family incomes, reducing productive enterprise, decreasing school attendance, increasing the number of orphans, and generally damaging normal community life.

The consequences for CBNRM efforts are considerable and tend to occur at two levels. First, as illness and death occur, families and communities develop coping responses to compensate for the loss of productive members and to meet the most urgent survival needs. Families sell their assets and switch to other sources of income. Within an AIDS-affected community, there are threats to the established and traditional resource management or land tenure systems and to the local governance structures themselves. Second, as families and communities focus on the crisis caused by HIV/AIDS, they usually place less emphasis on sustainable management or stewardship of resources and more on direct exploitation. This can apply to any harvesting—firewood, bushmeat, fish or forest products, and even herbs used as traditional medicines. Both responses are self-perpetuating.

Incorporating an HIV/AIDS perspective into CBNRM programs requires looking at six specific courses of action:

- > **Monitoring Impact**—CBNRM projects and professionals should collect information from rangers, wardens, officials, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to document how HIV/AIDS affects local natural resource and conservation programs.
- > **Reducing Risk**—CBNRM projects should avoid increasing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS—either by moving populations or separating married couples—and should implement activities to actually lower the risk. These are education programs and referral to local health care services.
- > **Mitigating Impact**—CBNRM activities should seek to protect existing land tenure patterns, inheritance systems, or resource management systems from the effects of HIV/AIDS.
- > **Empowering Surviving Family Members**—Proposed CBNRM programs should explicitly incorporate activities that protect children and empower women to raise incomes, retain family assets, and maintain inheritance systems and their roles in local institutions.
- > **Preserving Future Options**—Although HIV/AIDS can seriously disrupt livelihoods and local management systems, CBNRM programs should strive to conserve and protect resources for future generations.
- > **Providing HIV/AIDS Services**—CBNRM programs should encourage CBOs to help deliver HIV/AIDS education and services.

IMPACT CHECKLIST

Impact on the CBNRM Sector

- > Are NRM policies and regulations being neglected or abandoned (fishing or cutting permits, clearing practices, hunting rules) because of pressure from the epidemic?
- > What is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the cadres of the NRM profession(s)?
- > Are important NRM posts (wardens, control officers) being vacated because of HIV/AIDS-related illness and family needs?
- > Are there any NRM practices abandoned or jeopardized by the impact of HIV/AIDS?
- > Are unsustainable activities-poaching or land conversion-on the rise?
- > Do NRM training programs have HIV/AIDS prevention and control elements in their curricula?
- > Do NRM professionals regularly seek or exchange information with health services or organizations working in HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation?
- > Are there communities that neglect NRM-specific interventions because of HIV/AIDS?
- > Do NRM professionals understand the implications of the epidemic for their sector?
- > Do NRM professionals feel that HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation is within their mandate?

Impact on the Communities

- > What is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the community?
- > What is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS by age, gender, and household income?
- > What are the predominant livelihood strategies of the community?
- > Are there alternative livelihood strategies available?
- > Are the roles of women or children in the family significantly changing-more farming or care giving, no longer in school?
- > Are there any orphan-headed households?
- > Are families forced to sell their draught animals or livestock?
- > Are families relying more on uncultivated foods and bushmeat as agricultural production decreases?
- > What are the traditional land tenure patterns?
- > How are intergenerational property transfers (land, livestock, assets) conducted?
- > Are widows and orphans losing ownership of family land?
- > Are orphans still learning agricultural and NRM practices?
- > What are the seasonal labor migration patterns for men and women? Are these changing?
- > Are members of community NRM committees missing meetings or dropping out all together?
- > Is the local government structure or process threatened by HIV/AIDS? Are local representatives too sick to work?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIV/AIDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

HIV/AIDS Impacts on Households

Increased Prevalence of HIV/AIDS Leads to Increased Illness and Mortality

Potential Impacts on CBNRM

> Loss of Productive Labor and Income

–Reduced agricultural production

CBNRM Mitigation Measures

Innovative and HIV/AIDS-Sensitive Community-Based Approaches for Local NRM

- Reduced livestock production
- Reduced hunting/fishing

Changes in Labor Patterns

- Substitute labor (not as skilled)
- Increased labor of women
- Increased labor of children
- Pooling of labor within communities

Maximize Productivity

Tailor Opportunities to Labor Constraints

Changes in Livelihood Strategies

- Shift from stewardship to exploitation
- Abandonment of investments and assets
- Migration to other opportunities

Create Viable Livelihood Strategies

Changes in Customary Practices

- Adverse changes in land tenure systems
- Inheritance systems result in lost assets
- Neglect of community allocation/permit systems
- Disruption of community governance systems

Enhance Governance Practices in Communities

Decreased Family Nutritional and Economic Security



Increased Threat to Local Natural Resources—Land, Forest, Fisheries, Wildlife

Increased Nutritional and Economic Security and Reduced Threat to Local Natural Resources

SECTORAL RESPONSE

CBNRM programs can act directly to mitigate and prevent further damage to both the community and its surrounding natural resources. The affected communities can construct their own responses according to the livelihood strategies relating to natural resource management. Where indicated, projects should incorporate HIV/AIDS prevention programs into any community effort. Most importantly, CBNRM programs in HIV/AIDS-affected areas need to:

- > Protect the roles of women and children by accommodating the changes in labor availability into any intervention;
- > Discourage exploitation and promote sustainable NRM responses to HIV/AIDS;
- > Discourage the interchange of HIV-infected populations with the target communities, especially in programs related to tourism, migrant labor, and nomadic systems;
- > Enhance or promote change to existing local governance and land tenure systems to protect widows' and orphans' assets and use rights to local resources;
- > Link communities to the nearest health care facilities, home care and support programs, condom supplies, and nongovernmental organizations providing HIV/AIDS education, counseling, and service delivery.

ACTION CHECK LIST

Define the problem:

- > Document the impact of HIV/AIDS on the CBNRM sector.
- > Attend HIV/AIDS workshops and conferences.
- > Gather information on HIV/AIDS from other agencies and programs.
- > Conduct local situation analyses in the communities.
- > Contribute relevant findings from the CBNRM sector to HIV/AIDS colleagues.
- > Identify all HIV/AIDS resources in the community.

Design a strategic approach to address HIV/AIDS in any CBNRM program:

- > Share information with the community.
- > Enlist community support and participation; work together with community programs.
- > Involve health and HIV/AIDS professionals in the design of CBNRM projects.
- > Engage the public and private sectors in the HIV/AIDS-CBNRM components.
- > Understand the HIV/AIDS implications of any proposed CBNRM activity.

Incorporate specific HIV/AIDS activities into CBNRM programs:

- > Include HIV/AIDS questions in baseline studies or environmental impact assessments.
- > Coordinate with local health authorities.
- > Introduce HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs into the workplace and the community.
- > Identify and incorporate incentives for managers and communities to include HIV/AIDS in CBNRM activities.
- > Support activities that build the capacity of local organizations and institutions to address HIV/AIDS issues.
- > Recognize and "scale up" successful HIV/AIDS-CBNRM efforts.

SUMMARY

HIV is a long-standing and silent infection with a devastating impact on families and communities. It is imperative that people worldwide know about HIV, work to prevent transmission, and diminish its effects. Community natural resources support a range of household livelihood strategies—herding, farming, forestry, fishing, and hunting—that help ensure the economic and nutritional security of families and the viability of communities. NRM professionals and these same communities, with the help of local and international governments, have invested significantly in recent years for improved natural resource management. Protection of the environment and sustainable management of natural resources, however, work best in stable societies. Communities in crisis find it more difficult to look past their immediate economic and social needs.

HIV/AIDS has created such a crisis in some of the most vulnerable communities and environments. NRM professionals must work to understand the threats posed by this crisis. They must shape policy and introduce concrete measures into local programs to maintain natural resources and fight against HIV/AIDS.

REFERENCES AND USEFUL CONTACTS

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- > UNAIDS. *Measuring the Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Agricultural Sector in Africa*. Background Paper, December 2000.
- > World Bank. *Rural Workers' Contribution to the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: A Framework for District and Community Action*. Regional Program on Rural AIDS, Internal Note, August 2000.

Websites for Organizations, Networks, and Conferences

- > UNAIDS Website for information, news, and reports at: <http://www.unaids.org>
- > The Community-Based Natural Resource Management Portal Website for documents, reports, and information on all aspects of CBNRM at: <http://www.cbnrm.net/>
- > The Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group Workforce on the Implications of HIV/AIDS on Africa's Natural Resources and Conservation at: http://www.frameweb.org/Partnerpages_ABCG.html and <http://www.abcg.org>
- > FRAME-current information for environment and NRM professionals in Africa at: <http://www.frameweb.org>

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