



Using Longitudinal Data to Understand the Effects of HIV and AIDS on Livelihoods

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There are few longitudinal studies looking at the effects of HIV and AIDS over time on individuals, households and communities. One exception to this is a study conducted in two locations in Zambia: the first study was carried out in 1993, the second in 2005. The 1993 study looked at the impacts of HIV and AIDS on livelihoods; the re-study aimed to understand what had happened in the intervening period—both in terms of impacts, as well as the adaptability and resilience of households and communities to HIV and AIDS. The study was also unique in its methodology, using the concept of ‘cluster’ as a unit through which to understand how individuals and households adapted or disintegrated as a result of ill health, and specifically AIDS.

AIDS in Zambia and the changes between 1993 – 2005

This study was conducted in Mpongwe, close to the Copperbelt towns and in Teta, a remote rural site. In the intervening 12 years changes both at national and district level had occurred including privatization of the mines, public sector restructuring, market liberalisation, removal of maize subsidies, rural to urban movements, decentralisation of the health system and introduction of health user fees. At local level, Mpongwe was made a district centre with improved road and communication access, increasing population; it also became the maize basket for the Province. Teta remained a remote rural area; some outward migration had occurred and the effects of the removal of maize subsidies and market liberalisation resulted in people returning to farming systems that were less reliant on maize.

Why ‘clusters’?

The household as a unit of analysis has been a focus of criticism for decades as it arguably provides only a partial understanding of resilience and vulnerability of individuals. The cluster concept is an attempt to move beyond this. A cluster is: *‘A group of producers between which there are multiple resource exchanges, usually based on the factors of kinship, labour and food exchange, and or common access to draught power’* (Drinkwater 1994). Cluster-based analyses generate some unexpected findings, and may significantly help policy makers and programmers target vulnerable households.

The identification of a cluster can be carried out by any adult member, but was usually done by the head of the most prominent household. This individual mapped out the people with whom he/she had close productive and reproductive relationships. These were usually kinship based. Through analysis of the relationships, individuals and households were categorized according to their livelihood earning possibilities in the cluster. The Primary Producer (PP) and their household is the highest producer in the cluster, the household most likely to own key assets, to be able to organise labour and is ultimately responsible for the food security of other households in the cluster. In the early stages of a cluster development cycle, the PP may be the head of the extended family; as the family head becomes older, one of the sons or daughters (not necessarily the eldest) may become the PP.

The 1993 study developed a typology of clusters according to relative resilience and vulnerability; the types ranged from commercial to resource poor. Clusters fell into these categories according to the size of their fields and yields, the types of crops they were growing, whether they had access to draught power, the extent to which they were food secure, and the extent to which they were engaged in off-farm activities. The aim of the

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2005 re-study was to trace the original clusters and see whether they had changed status within the cluster continuum, to understand what had caused the moves, and more specifically the role that AIDS had played in these shifts.

Both studies used large multidisciplinary teams, local government employees and members of the community were also included in the team. Ten days were spent collecting data through participatory approaches, community meetings, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Key findings

The cluster methodology was able to demonstrate that vulnerability, in terms of gender, age, social economic status and agro-ecological location, can only be understood in the context of multiple resource flows and relationships among households; targeting for programs working with the vulnerable should be of resource poor clusters rather than at household level. The validation of the cluster methodology in the restudy—by farmers and the research team alike—suggests there is much to be gained by exploring how it can be used in future research as well as programmatic interventions.

Regarding livelihoods, whilst national food security has focused on maize intensification, crop diversification remains important for household food and nutritional security – but requires emphasis on retention of local knowledge as well as appropriate policy support. Diversification within and outside agriculture contributes also to greater flexibility and resilience in its need for different types of labour at different times

(farming systems can be adjusted more easily depending on when resources are available). The flexibility of the matrilineal kinship system was able to absorb many of the potentially devastating consequences of HIV and AIDS, and further exploration is needed on how this can be built on

On health and AIDS, belief systems such as sexual cleansing and witchcraft, are deeply embedded in the culture and these are affecting health seeking behaviour and outcomes. Differentiating between HIV and AIDS is lacking; people understand the signs and symptoms of AIDS, but do not fully appreciate how it results from the HIV virus, and the silence of HIV is not adequately addressed in prevention campaigns. Appropriate messages need to be targeted at appropriate people, e.g. older women in rural Zambian societies are channels for transmitting cultural norms about sex and sexuality -- without their active involvement messages on HIV prevention will not succeed. In order to effectively target the vulnerable, a broad based multifaceted definition of vulnerability is needed that is not solely AIDS related.

In sum, this is the first longitudinal study of its nature looking at the impact of AIDS on livelihoods and using a cluster methodology to do so. Whilst the resilience of social networks was one of its main findings, it remains clear that even better off farmers and their extended family networks will continue to experience stresses and tensions arising from the AIDS epidemic, livestock disease and changes in the economic and policy environment. Over the next decade, people will continue to live uncertain lives.

About RENEWAL

RENEWAL is a growing regional "network-of-networks" in Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently active in five 'hub' countries (Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa, and Kenya), RENEWAL comprises national networks of food and nutrition-relevant organizations (public, private, and nongovernmental) together with partners in AIDS and public health. RENEWAL aims to enhance understanding of the worsening interactions between HIV/AIDS and food and nutrition security, and facilitate a comprehensive response to these interactions. Core objectives are (1) to reduce critical gaps in understanding how livelihoods, particularly those deriving from agriculture, (a) contribute to the further spread of HIV (susceptibility), and (b) are affected by HIV and AIDS (vulnerability); (2) to generate new policy-relevant knowledge on how households and communities may strengthen both their resistance to HIV transmission and their resilience to the impacts of AIDS, and (3) to enable relevant institutions (in particular, governments) to generate and to act upon realistic priorities for responding to the interactions of AIDS epidemics with food and nutrition insecurity.

RENEWAL is both a network and a process, with the process of network development being viewed as both a means and an end. The aim is to enhance and sustain impact through pro-actively establishing links between locally-prioritized research, capacity strengthening and policy communications.

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