Research on the livelihoods of older farmers and households affected by HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe

1. Background

The labour force survey of 2008 shows that 13.7% of the rural workforce is above 60 years old. Given the large scale but undocumented outmigration of younger people to the neighbouring countries since 2007, this percentage may even be higher. The Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey, 2010-11 shows 14.6% of the rural population aged 15-49 is living with HIV which points to a large proportion of households being HIV affected. Older people too are living with HIV in significant numbers: 15.2 % of all older people (50+) in Zimbabwe are HIV positive and they make up 17.2% of all people living with HIV & Aids in Zimbabwe.

Older farmers as well as farming households affected by HIV tend to be viewed as less productive and less able to adapt to new technologies and practices such as climate smart agriculture. As a result, these population groups tend to be excluded from agricultural support programmes and services. This holds true especially for programmes that promote innovative practices or market based approaches.

In 2012, HelpAge international and partners in Zimbabwe, The Zimbabwe Age Network conducted a study to understand the situation of older famers in the country. This was both a qualitative and quantitative research that examined the situation in 12 districts covering all the ethnic regions as well as agro- ecological regions of the country. The study unearthed a number of socio-economic hardships that the elderly have to endure. These range from health care duties often with little to no information about the diseases they expose themselves to, care duties for HIV/Aids orphans and this is often without financial support to abuses such as dispossession of land and belongings. Despite this, global HIV/AIDS intervention initiatives of the past decade have focussed on the age group 15 to 49 years seeing a significant reduction in prevalence rates within this age group. There is a general assumption that the elderly are out of danger of the HIV/AIDS virus yet we are beginning to see an increase in prevalence rates in the age groups 55 years and above. There is currently only anecdotal information as to the cause of the rise in prevalence rates.

The study also revealed that older people remain economically active on their farms contrary to popularly held but unsubstantiated view that older persons are charity cases. Their contribution to food security and general societal well-being is largely unknown and ignored. They are as a result left out of important development initiatives and support programmes. There has also been wide
promotion of climate smart technologies in support of global climate change mitigation calls as well as addressing declining agricultural output which is threatening livelihoods. However informal feedback indicates that some of the technologies exclude the elderly due to their labour intensity.

Against this background, this research aims at gaining a better understanding of, and if so, how old age and/or being affected by HIV&AIDS impacts on farmers’ ability to reach food security. The research will also provide information on the ability of the elderly to widen their livelihood options. The findings may be different for the impact of old age vs. the impact of HIV and the study will be sensitive to the differences as well as the overlaps.

2. Objective of the study

The broad objective of the study is: To investigate the impact of aging on agricultural production (crops and livestock) in the context of HIV and AIDS.

The research aims to test the following hypotheses,

1. Appropriate technologies can positively influence the food and nutrition security of the households with an elderly person.
2. HIV and AIDS increase the burden on the elderly thereby reducing agricultural productivity.
3. The absence of reliable source of income at old age for those who have always been in agriculture as part of the informal sector risks reduced agricultural production.
4. Chronic illness at old age in the absence of appropriate medicines/treatment and access to appropriate health services can contribute to reduced food and nutrition security.

3. Proposed Research questions

1. What is the relationship between household age structure and production?
2. Investigate the contribution of available technologies on agricultural production with focus on households with elderly persons
3. What agricultural technologies are currently being used by households with elderly persons in agriculture?
4. What are the gaps in the available technology in terms of appropriateness, inclusiveness and effectiveness with regards to elderly persons?
5. Establish nature and level of burden of HIV and AIDS on the elderly in relation to agriculture
6. Categorize the burden of OVC on the elderly
7. What is the elderly burden of care for the sick?
8. What is the burden of HIV/AIDS on financial resources of elderly headed households?
9 Investigate the agricultural contribution of older farmers into the economy
10 What sources of income options do older persons at advanced age particularly those who always have been in agriculture as part of the informal sector have apart from persevering in agriculture?
11 Investigate levels of chronic illnesses among older farmers and its impact on agricultural production?
12 What is the availability of appropriate medicines to chronic illnesses and accessibility of health services for older farmers?

4. Coverage

Identify districts with higher populations of older farmers/the aged, high prevalence of malnutrition, HIV and AIDS prevalence rate.

5. Methodology

This research and its analysis will be carried out by livelihood zone.\textsuperscript{1} FAO, in partnership with HelpAge International and the Zimbabwe Age Network (ZAN) will choose one or several livelihood zones as research sites. FAO will also choose 2-3 communities that are deemed to be typical for this livelihood zone. A mixed method approach, including both, quantitative and qualitative methods should be applied. The tools will be developed in close collaboration with FAO and HelpAge in Zimbabwe and build on existing FAO assessment tools where relevant and appropriate. The research should select methods that will result in both statistical and qualitative relevance/validity.

The research will be carried out in two phases. The first phase will explore the various research topics listed on page 1 by using qualitative methods (focus group discussions, observations, household interviews, key informant interviews) and the review of existing documents and records (e.g. eligibility criteria of government and NGO programmes) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the livelihoods of older people and households affected by HIV & Aids, their opportunities, constraints and strategies. This phase will also help the ‘pathways’ of how old age or living with HIV shape one’s livelihood choices.

Building on this, the second phase will apply quantitative questionnaires and crop and livestock assessment tools to quantify some of the findings of phase one. The questionnaires and crop and livestock monitoring would for example assess the yield levels of HIV & Aids affected farmers or the percentage of these farmers who have adopted climate smart agricultural techniques and test these against a chosen control sample where possible.

The consultant is expected to come up with detailed methodology, budget and inception report of how the study will be carried out.
6. Deliverables and Schedule of activities

At the end of the exercise the consultant is expected to:
   a) Produce a detailed report of findings
   b) Provide clear recommendations on how to include the elderly that are affected by HIV and AIDS in agricultural programmes

7. Minimum Requirements

- A minimum of 5 years progressive experience in research in the area of HIV, gender and the elderly
- Advanced University degree in Social Sciences with an understanding of HIV and AIDS
- Demonstrated understanding and experience of the agricultural sector
- Proven writing skills which may also include the development of policy and strategy documents
- Individuals or teams will be considered.

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 14th March 2014. Applications received after the closing date will be disregarded.

FAO is a member of the United Nations and does not charge any fees in the recruitment process. FAO is an equal opportunity employer. Qualified women are encouraged to apply

Applications, CVs and certified copies of certificates clearly marked “Research on the livelihoods of older farmers and households affected by HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe”

And should be submitted to:

The FAO Recruitment Office
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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