

Title: Effects of HIV/AIDS on household food security: a study conducted in Mukuyu Division, Murang'a South District, Kenya

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Abstract:

In Kenya, the high level of food insecurity is related to poverty and a reduction in agricultural production. HIV/AIDS reduces a household's ability to produce and purchase food. Adults with HIV/AIDS are less able to work on their land or earn income from other livelihood activities. Increased healthcare costs decrease household food purchasing power and the coping mechanisms reduce household resilience. Kenya National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2005/6- 2009/10 has recommended for impacts studies of HIV/AIDS on the society as a basis of addressing them. This study was aimed at contributing to this purpose. In Makuyu division perennial food insecurity has led to reliance on relief food for many years with average food production falling below the expected rates by 33%. HIV/AIDS prevalence in this area is 6.9% hence the need to establish the relationship between HIV/AIDS and food insecurity. The main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of HIV/AIDS burden on household food security in Makuyu Division. This was a cross-sectional comparative study covering the entire Makuyu Division. A sample size of 383 households, both affected and non-affected was randomly selected from the three location of Makuyu Division. Research tools used included structured interview guides administered to the households, 20 key informants interviews done to community leaders, and 7 focused group discussions conducted among 40 Community Health Workers. A combination of these enabled the collection of information on the households' HIV/AIDS status, food security and nutrition security. Data entry and analysis was done using SPSS Version 11.50. Households that were directly affected by HIV/AIDS formed 32.1% of 383 while those not affected formed 67.9%. Only 13.3% of the households that were directly affected by HIV/AIDS were food secure as opposed to 76.4% of the unaffected households. A higher proportion (86.7%) of the households affected directly by HIV/AIDS was found to be food insecure as compared to the 23.6% of those that were not affected. A significant relationship was established between household HIV/AIDS status and food security ($\chi^2 = 129.33$, d. f = 1, P value = 0.000), AIDS – related chronic illness and food security ($\chi^2 = 67.31$, d. f = 1, p value = 0.000), AIDS related death of a household member and food security ($\chi^2 = 69.26$, d. f = 1, p value = 0.000), as well as fostering AIDS orphans and food security ($\chi^2 = 34.87$, d. f = 1, p value = 0.000). This study concludes that HIV/AIDS affected food security due to reduced labour and asset base erosion among others. The study makes the following recommendations; expansion of ART to include nutrient supplementation and provision of assistance to the households affected by HIV/AIDS in kind, to improve their food and nutrition security. These recommendations can be useful to NACC, Ministry of Special Programs and the Ministry of Public Health, as well as other community-oriented Development Agencies. The community would greatly benefit from this study should the suggested recommendations in the study be fully implemented.