

**Socio-economic Impacts of HIV and AIDS  
on Rural Agricultural Producers in  
Three Regions of Northern Namibia:**

*A Preliminary Report*

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## **Introduction**

This project came about from a request by the Food and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) to investigate the impacts of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on rural agricultural producers. The intended aim of the study was to conduct a national level survey. A study of this scope presents a number of challenges. Foremost is the issue of representation. Here it is necessary to first ensure that enough households that are affected by the pandemic are interviewed so as to ensure a reasonable sample. A second factor is to ensure that enough households from the general population are interviewed so as to ensure a sound basis for comparison. In Namibia, with its diverse, small and population scattered over a large area, meeting these challenges is costly. A second challenge is the identification of people who are HIV positive or ill with AIDS. Namibia has legal and social barriers to easily obtaining this information.

At the time of the request by FANRPAN, the Namibian government was engaged in the 2003/2004 National Household and Income Survey (NHIES 03/04). This survey provides national benchmarks in areas such as income and expenditure, poverty measures, income distribution, consumption patterns and the like. Permissions was obtained to use the basic survey instrument from the NHIES 03/04 for this survey.<sup>1</sup> Doing so allowed for a more robust comparison of the results against national and regional samples.

With one problem solved came the next issue of identifying households that were affected by HIV and AIDS. To address this issue, HIV and AIDS support groups were approached and their cooperation sought in obtaining access to their clients. Using established mechanisms was seen as crucial to the the efficient identification of HIV and AIDS affected households as well as a means of establishing trust with affected families

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<sup>1</sup>Modifications were made to the questionnaire to protect the privacy of interviewees.

and thus a means of increasing the sample size.

Unfortunately, resources provided by FANRPAN were insufficient, even after the above issues were resolved. The decision was made to seek co-funding. Futures Group expressed interest in, and ultimately provided additional monies for the project. Still, in the absence of sufficient funding, a true National level survey is not possible.

### ***This study***

The research carried out here focused on three of Namibia's political regions, the Kavango, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions. These are characterized by high rates of HIV infection, large numbers of people involved in agricultural production, and together with the Ohangwena and Omusati Regions, are home to almost 70% of Namibia's population.

It was hoped that the data presented here could be compared with the NHIES 03/04. Thus, providing a complete picture of the economic situation of households in our sample. That document while originally due in late 2004, is not yet completed, and may only be available later in the year. Hence, for this effort, data from the survey is presented, with the caveat that once the NHIES is published this report will be updated. Where possible, data from other sources, notably the 2001 Population and Housing Census, are used for comparative purposes.

### ***Organization***

Due to the preliminarily nature of this effort, the paper follows a rudimentary organization. The bulk of what follows is a basic listing of results. Very little in the way of analysis is contained in this document. The authors wait for an indication of how the new survey will use its data so ours can be presented in a similar manner.

## Results

### *Basic Demographics*

A target of 50 questionnaires for each of the Kavango, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions was set. Of the total of 150 expected, 144 questionnaires were processed. On a regional basis, 43 households were interviewed in the Kavango, 51 in Oshana and 50 in Oshikoto. The sample includes 1,117 individuals with a gender breakdown of 649 female (58.1%) and 468 male (41.9%). When household residents were asked if either biological parent is alive, 11% (63 out of 605 responses) of those under 17 stated that their mother was dead, while 29% (155 out of 539 responses) of those under 17 stated that their father was dead. Effectively these children are orphans, though their presence in an extended family setting may ameliorate the loss. No reason is given for the almost tripling of the rate at which fathers have died. At this stage children who lost both parents cannot be identified.

The composition of the 144 households is as follows:

Head	144
Spouse	68
Child	608
Parent	23

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Head	144
Other relative	255
Non-relative	12
Missing	7

In the households surveyed, wood is the main source of fuel for cooking. It was also one of the main sources of lighting, though candles were the most popular of paraffin, wood and candles. Almost three quarters (74%) of households used some form of piped water for their main source of water.<sup>2</sup>

### **Age**

In percentages different age categories as compared with 2001 Census<sup>3</sup> results for the three Regions are shown on the next page:

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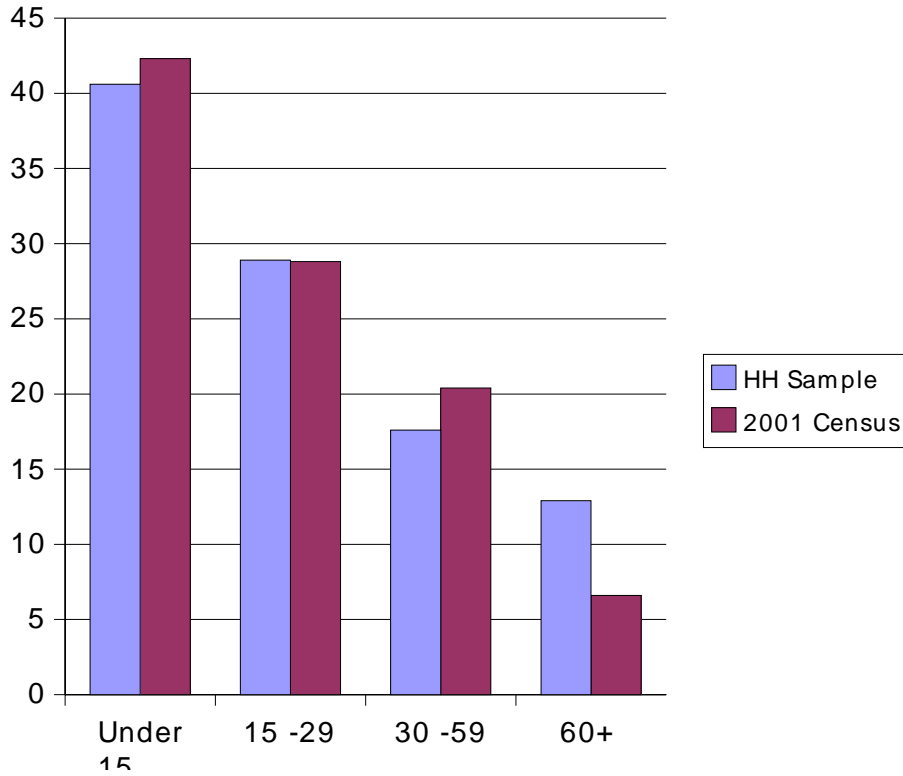
<sup>2</sup>This includes piped water in the dwelling, piped water in the compound, neighbor's tap, public tap.

<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all results from the 2001 Census are data extracted from the three Regions under consideration (Kavango, Oshana and Oshikoto).



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Illustration 1 Age Breakdown of Sample versus 2001 Census in Per Cent



The main differences between the Sample and the Census is a slight drop in the number household members between the ages of 30 to 59, and a doubling of the number of household members over 60. The drop in members between 30 and 59 could have added significance due to the fact that employment figures for those under 30 are substantially higher than from those over 30.<sup>4</sup> Households in the sample are held together by the elderly. This fact will be more apparent in light of the discussion on page 7 below where household incomes are discussed.

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<sup>4</sup>Both the 2000 Labor Force Survey and the 2001 Informal Economy Survey show a similar pattern of low levels of employment between the ages of 19 to 29.

## **Education**

Just over 83% of the individuals aged above six stated that they were able to read and write. More than half the sample was still in school, 43% were either at or had completed primary school, while 23% were either at or had completed secondary school. Only one person in the sample had education beyond secondary school.

## ***Income***

Sources of income show a heavy reliance on government transfers by households in the Sample. Of the 144 households, 59 stated that old age pensions were the main source of household income which are N\$ 300 per month. Each of these households receives US \$ 49 per month,<sup>5</sup> with an average household size of 7.75. This means that each household member receives US \$ 6.32 per month. This is roughly 20% of the World Bank poverty definition of \$1 US Dollar per day. At least 40% of the sample, therefore, falls well below one standard poverty definition. In addition, another 27 households also stated that drought relief is the main source of income. Just under half of the Sample, therefore, relies on government assistance. Those relying on drought relief are in a particularly tenuous position because this form of assistance is not guaranteed over the long term. Lastly, seven (5%) of the households in the Sample reported no form of income. How these households manage to survive is not known.

In the illustration below, the Sample is compared against the 2001 Census. The low results for categories such as farming and employment, indicate the dire economic

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<sup>5</sup>Calculated at an exchange rate of N\$ 6.1 = \$1 US.

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situation of these households.

Illustration 2 Main Source of Household Income Per Cent



A closer look at the statistics emphasizes the point. Only 3 people reported owning a business. All were informal (selling home made beer, home baking, home-made clothing, and sweets). A total of 14 people in the sample earned a wage or salary. Together they brought home N\$ 18,300 per month, or an average of just over N\$ 1,300 per month. One person received sick benefits, a few received clothing, food and cash as gifts, most of these gifts totaled around N\$ 1,000 per year.

In the Sample, 61 residents received pensions. Most appear to be government pensions

with at least one getting a pension from another source. Together these total N\$ 18,600 per month, or just over N\$ 300 per person. One resident had a private pension that was just over N\$ 300 per month. One resident received a disability pension.

### **Livestock**

Reasonable percentages, though not a majority, of Sample households have access to animals. Roughly one third of the households have an array of farm animals common to Namibia – cattle, small stock and chickens. (Though whether or not all stock owning households have all three is not readily available from the data.) Donkeys are important because they often serve as draft animals for plowing and other parts of the horticultural production cycle. With 75% of households not having access to these assets, they must either till by hand, or use other resources to till their fields. Another worrying pattern of ownership is the high numbers of respondents who have very few livestock. A very small minority have large numbers of cattle, pigs and goats, but most have numbers that are not sustainable for regular off-take. Table 1 below provides a summary of ownership.

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*Table 1: Livestock and Poultry Ownership among Sample Households.*

<i>Livestock/ Poultry</i>	<i>No. Households/ (% of Sample)</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Note</i>
Cattle	51 (35%)	1 -- 100	76% own 20 or fewer cattle
Goats	71 (49%)	2 -- 70	75 % own 24 or fewer goats
Pigs	51 (35%)	1 -- 110	78% own 2 or fewer pigs
Donkeys/Mule	36 (25%)	1 -- 23	75 % own 5 or fewer donkeys
Sheep	6 (4%)	1 – 10	67% own three or fewer sheep
Poultry	116 (81%)	1 -- 250	75 % own 20 or fewer chicken

Very few households sold livestock or poultry. Many of these transactions appeared to be informal and within the community. The values received were not high, and most hovered around a few hundred dollars. Table 2 shows information about stock sales.

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*Table 2: Annual Value of Livestock Sold by Sample Households.*

<i>Crop</i>	<i>No. Households/ (% of Sample)</i>	<i>Range in Namibian Dollars</i>	<i>Note</i>
Cattle	11 (8%)	1,000 – 9,000	67% sold for N\$ 2,730 or less
Goats	14 (10%)	120 – 2,100	79% sold for N\$ 650 or less
Pigs	27 (19%)	30 -- 600	74% sold for N\$ 450 or less
Donkeys/Mule	2 (1.4%)	900	One sold for N\$ 900 the other did not recall
Sheep	1 (.7 %)	900	One sold for N\$ 900 the other did not recall
Poultry	40 (28%)	20 -- 700	50% sold for N\$ 200 or less, 20 respondents could not recall the value

## **Crops**

Mahangu (Pearl Millet) is the staple crop in this area. Most households produced some mahangu, though the question is whether or not this was/is enough for food security.

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Three quarters produced less than 700 kg per year. With an average household size of 7.75, a household would have to produce perhaps as much as 875 kg for 100 kg per person per year.<sup>6</sup> Just over half the Sample also produced sorghum, another common crop in the area. As with livestock the levels of production are not high. (Probably not high enough to sustain basic levels of food security.) Table 3 provides information on crop production.

*Table 3: Crop Production among Sample Households.*

<i>Crop</i>	<i>No. Households/ (% of Sample)</i>	<i>Range in Kilograms</i>	<i>Note</i>
Mahangu (Pearl Millet)	133 (92%)	10 – 5,000	75% produced less than 700 kg of mahangu
Sorghum	83 (58%)	5 -- 500	72% produced less than 150 kg of sorghum
Fruit	6 (4%)	18 – 250	67% produced less than 100 kg of fruit
Other food (Vegetables, etc.)	54 (38%)	4 – 300	78% produced less than 100 kg of other food

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<sup>6</sup>Many farmers retain seed for the coming year, hence an extra 100 kg is added for this and perhaps other uses such as brewing beer. No nutritional level on the amount of mahangu required for human sustenance is known.

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Most households keep and consume their crops. A few sell their produce, but not in large amounts. If one considers that pensions at N\$ 300 per month are the main source of income, then the value of crops sold, even by the higher producing households does equal more than a month or two of additional funds. The following table summarizes crop sales.



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*Table 4: Annual Value of Crops Sold by Sample Households.*

<i>Crop</i>	<i>No. Households/ (% of Sample)</i>	<i>Range in Namibain Dollars</i>	<i>Note</i>
Mahangu (Pearl Millet)	8 (6%)	30 -- 510	75% sold for N\$ 350 or less
Sorghum	19 (13%)	40 – 1,259	79% sold for N\$ 400 or less
Fruit	1 (.75)	30	
Other food Vegetables, etc.)	17 (12%)	40 – 400	82% sold for N\$ 200 or less

### ***Assets***

Access to agricultural assets are widespread for the Sample. Most households had access to land for grazing and crop production. Most, however, did not lay claim to “ownership” of grazing land. These people probably used communal grazing areas, and, as seen above, did not have large enough herds to warrant establishing exclusivity over grazing. Close to 88% of the sample had access to crop lands, while 12.5% did not. Three quarters of the households owned a radio. Ownership or presence of other

consumer items was rare. Just under 10% had either a telephone or a cell phone, a similar percentage had donkey carts. Ownership of items used in agricultural production, such as ploughs wheel barrows made up less than 6% of the Sample.

One household owned a car, and had it in working order during the previous year. Another household purchased a computer during the year. One individual had a funeral policy, two individuals had medical insurance, and one had legal insurance.

### ***Expenses***

Education is a common expense with 74% of households spending on average N\$ 240 per year for public school fees. The range is between N\$ 90 to N\$ 2,000, with a median of N\$ 120. Three quarters of those who pay school fees pay N\$ 350 or less, probably meaning that they pay the fees of one or more learners. One household reported paying N\$ 12,000 a year for a student at UNAM, while another paid N\$ 5,400 for technical training for one student.

Medical expenses were a frequent occurrence. Twelve households had medical insurance for some or all of their members. The average expenditure for costs not covered was N\$ 32 with a median of N\$ 75 and a range of N\$ 5 to N\$ 2,100. Ninety-two households reported medical expenses for people not covered by a medical scheme. Here the average expense was higher, N\$ 328 per year. The median expense was N\$ 160 with a range from N\$ 30 to N\$ 2,247.

Just under one fifth (19%) of the Sample had funeral expenses in the previous year. The

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average expense was N\$ 280. Considering that funerals can be very costly (well over N\$ 10,000) this amount is very small, reflecting the low levels of income in the Sample. The range was broad going from a low of N\$ 15 to a high of N\$ 2,000. In addition, 17 households (12%) purchased tombstones for graves. This is an important cultural tradition which usually takes place some months after the burial. The average cost of a gravestone was N\$ 640, with a range from N10 to N\$ 2,400. The median cost of a gravestone was N\$ 180. Any family in the Sample that experienced death during the year could expect to pay on average N\$ 920.

Just over half of households in the Sample had clothing expenses during the year. Average expenditure was N\$ 558 with a median of N\$ 350. Footwear was another major expense category. Just over half the Sample purchased footwear in the previous year. The average expense was N\$ 337, with a median of N\$ 237.

Use of telephones was minimal. People preferred to use public or flexicall cards for phone use. Similar situation was found with regard to transportation. Taxis were the most common form of transport with one in five households using them. Altogether 29% of households used some form of transport. The average cost was N\$ 375 with a median at N\$ 275. A few households bought furniture. Most (12) purchased kitchen furniture, while half that purchased bedding. Other purchases of household goods such as televisions, stereos, tape players and the like were minimal.

## Conclusions

Clearly the households surveyed in this study are poor. Just how poor is not yet available. The reader is cautioned to draw too much from the statistics presented here. Aside from the already stated reasons, one must bear in mind that the Sample discussed here was obtained via access from HIV and AIDS support groups. This in itself has the potential to introduce bias, as the support groups might be dealing with a non-representative segment of the population. This and other issues will have to be clarified once the full data set is available. In the meantime, readers are urged to provide comments to the document and its final result.<sup>7</sup> Hopefully, by the end of August a more complete report will be available.

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<sup>7</sup>Our e-mail addresses are: [benf@nepru.org.na](mailto:benf@nepru.org.na), [ben@fuller.na](mailto:ben@fuller.na) and [deonz@nepru.org.na](mailto:deonz@nepru.org.na)

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