

Influence of HIV/AIDS on livelihood of women in Migori District, a case of Karungu Division, Kenya

Abstract:

Contextualizing the HIV/AIDS pandemic reveals that it has struck most severely on social and economic development, with women being the most hit in Kenya whereby the livelihoods of their families are affected. Therefore, the study aimed to assess the influence of HIV/AIDS on livelihoods of the HIV/AIDS positive women in Karungu division in Migori district. The study objectives were to establish the level at which HIV influences on women's income as a source of livelihoods, investigate to which extent HIV / AIDS influences the health of women, to examine levels at which the HIV/AIDS influences on the women participation in agricultural activities as a source of livelihoods and to determine strategies that can be used to improve livelihood of HIV positive women in Karungu division, Migori district. The study used descriptive survey design targeting a population of 300 women members of 15 support groups. Data were collected by questionnaires and then analyzed using descriptive statistics and findings presented in tables. The study found that women income levels and sources were negatively influenced by the HIV/AIDS condition. The household savings reduced while expenses increased significantly due to medical expenses from the HIV related illnesses. The household family was influenced since they could not afford health and education facilities. The study found that health of the women as source of livelihood was influenced by HIV/AIDS in contributing to poverty, accumulation of non-commercial assets, and lack of clean water, dependence on family member to carry out family chores, no diversification of family incomes and dependence on relatives for medical care. The level of women participation on agricultural activities was influenced by HIV/AIDS resulting to lower yield of outputs, in cultivation in small pieces of land with inappropriate inputs and reared animals for their family use only. The study established that civil society, community based organization in collaboration with the government's direct involvement in the provision of the required medical facilities and offering support to the HIV/AIDS positive women can improve their livelihoods. Also the women should develop and adopt health behaviours as one of the self motivating strategies to improve on their livelihoods. The study concluded that the livelihood of HIV positive women was influenced by the HIV/AIDS pandemics. Hence, the study recommends that civil society organizations should focus on sustainable programs, especially income generating activities targeting HIV positive women to improve on their livelihoods. Further the government should set up affordable health facilities with improved infrastructure to facilitate accessibility for the services. The study recommended further study on influence of HIV/AIDS on other family household members' incomes, investigation into the influences of HIV / AIDS on health of the other household family members both the affected and the infected, other types of livelihoods easily accessible to women living with the HIV/AIDS other than participation in agricultural activities. Other strategies that can improve the livelihoods of the women living with HIV/AIDS apart from four identified strategies: the government motivated strategies, civil society, community based organizations and self motivated strategies. The study was limited to

the Karungu division in Migori district. Future studies on the same topic could be extended to other parts of Kenya.