

Living with AIDS in Uganda: Impacts on Banana-Farming Households in Two Districts

By Monica Karuhanga Beraho, *African women leaders in agriculture and the environment (AWLAE)*
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The book is essentially a doctoral thesis and, as such, offers a very detailed study of the impact of AIDS on banana-farming households in two Ugandan districts. Being based on a thesis means that it should not be regarded as a general text on AIDS and livelihoods, but it does offer many insights into the reality of living with AIDS in these specific communities.

Monica Karuhanga Beraho comes from Western Uganda and has a degree in veterinary medicine, a Master's in agronomy and farming systems and, through this work, a PhD in HIV/AIDS impacts on food and livelihood security.

The book begins with an outline of the importance of AIDS and its potential to impact on agricultural policy. Chapter 2 explores the now somewhat dated sustainable livelihoods approach, but does not do this in an uncritical way, and encourages some debate around its strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 3 is a straightforward methods section, and describes both quantitative and qualitative approaches used in the study. Chapter 4 describes the demographics of the 543 households studied and assesses agricultural production in the study areas. Chapter 5 is entirely qualitative, comprising twenty case studies in which household livelihood strategies are explored and how these are affected by AIDS. These case studies provide an interesting insight into the lives of the people of this area, but the lack of any systematic analysis means that this section provides more of a story than systematic or thematic analysis. Chapter 6 moves away from the central AIDS theme and provides an in-depth analysis of the agricultural economics of the region. It is apparent that this is the area in which the author has a lot of experience, and one sometimes gets the impression that AIDS is less central to the study than the book's title might suggest. The author concludes

in this chapter that 'HIV/AIDS is not a significant determinant of livelihood strategy' and that 'HIV/AIDS is just one of the vulnerability-causing factors ... among households that are already vulnerable'. Chapter 7 returns to the AIDS theme and explores livelihood responses to HIV and AIDS. Here again, the author concludes that underlying socio-economic and social capital are strong modifiers of AIDS impact. Chapter 8 expands the analysis to explore community level responses. Chapter 9 consists of the conclusion and discussion.

The book is generally well written and provides substantial insights into the nature of the impacts of HIV/AIDS on agricultural society. There is some evidence of inadequate proofreading, with occasional missing words or incomplete phrases, but these do not seriously detract from a very readable piece of work. The author concludes that households' socio-economic status and demographic characteristics influence the magnitude of HIV/AIDS-related impacts. The overwhelming majority of households were adversely affected by AIDS yet, for some households, the effects were apparently manageable. Socio-economic status and household demographics were able to influence the HIV/AIDS impacts and the capacity to cope. The book also highlights specific social practices, policies and ideologies that entrench inequality and result in certain groups being marginalised while others are more privileged.

The book is recommended for those wishing to gain a deeper understanding of the realities of coping with HIV/AIDS in agricultural societies, including important gender dimensions.

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