

The impacts of HIV/AIDS on the Work Force in Western Uganda

Year: 2013

Place of Fieldwork: Republic of Uganda

Name: Mei Nakazawa

Key Words: Africa, village, agriculture, women only households, male and female roles

Agriculture in the Republic of Uganda accounts for nearly 45% of the gross domestic product. There are two primary kinds of crops grown in Uganda. One type consists of cash crops such as tea, coffee, and cotton. The other type consists of food crops such as corn, bananas, and potatoes. In villages, there is a clear differentiation of work expectations for men and women. Women, for instance, tend to perform heavy labor because they have to cultivate their own land, prepare meals, and take care of the children.

I conducted field research for this project in the Republic of Uganda between September 1 and November 1, 2013. Before deciding on the setting for my fieldwork, I spent one month performing a broad search for a research location. In the second month, I stayed in a village located in the Lwengo District in western Uganda where I performed my research with local person A's cooperation. This village is five kilometers from the nearest town. As there is no transport between the village and the town, local people can only reach the town by walking.

The research area is made up of hilly terrain; local people build their houses on the hillside and use the hilltops, which are covered in grass, as places of pasture for livestock such as cows, chickens, and goats. People cultivate corn on the sides of the hill and plantain bananas on the lower sections of hill. The houses dot the hillsides and are surrounded by plantain banana fields.

My research focused on household structures and aimed to investigate how households are engaged in agriculture. Most families I studied had a nuclear family structure, consisting of a husband, wife, and children. In addition to nuclear households, I found many other patterns of households such as single parent households, where the woman or man sometimes lived alone with the children, and households that consisted of an elderly husband and wife living alone. There were also a few cases where there was no husband or wife present: I was not able to collect data on the reasons for the loss or divorce, but I felt that there was some correlation between household types and farming strategies, especially as they relate to agricultural products that were being produced.

While staying in the village, I attempted to conduct interviews on the topic of agricultural products in each of the 37 households. In general, households consisting of elderly couples and woman-only households did not produce as many types of farm products as the other households. For example, household A consisted of a husband, wife, and children; this family produced 10 types of farm products. In contrast, household B consisted of an elderly woman and produced only two types of farm products. As the workforce in the household declines, the types of farm products produced also tend to dwindle.

