

## The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Agricultural Production in Zambia

---

*Shuhei Shimada*

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 28.1 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are infected with HIV/AIDS. In southern Africa, more than 20 percent of the population, aged 15 - 49, are infected (WHO 2001, 16).

Many studies have been conducted to assess HIV/AIDS from a medical, nutritional, and economic point of view, but investigations of the indirect and longer-term effects of that disease are scarce (Barnett and Blaikie 1992). Barnett and Whiteside (2002, 161) suggest that impact of disease be seen as a continuum between an acute shock and slow, profound changes. This field note focuses on the latter end of their continuum; the effect of heightened mortality rates on agricultural production practices in Zambia. A mutual help system, which normally functions to mitigate the effects of labor or equipment shortages, has been jeopardized by unprecedented death rates.

This exploratory study was conducted in a small village located ninety kilometers north of the capital city of Lusaka, where the present author has conducted research since 1993 (Shimada 1995, 2001). Upon establishment of the village in the late 1960s the first head welcomed new people into the community, regardless of their ethnic origin. Several households immigrated from Zimbabwe, including one that introduced wetland cultivation (*dambo*). As wetland cultivation gained popularity in the 1980s, more settlers were attracted to the village (Kodamaya 1995a). The collapse of urban labor markets under Zambia's Structural Adjustment Program accelerated this movement. By 1998, the village consisted of 120 households, fourteen of whom are the focus later in this study. A growing vacuum of authority in the central government has encouraged villagers to migrate into the Forest Reserve adjacent to the village. Traditional chiefs, who reclaim their right over the land, are allowing people to settle in the Reserve (Hanzawa et al. 1994; Hanzawa 1998; Kodamaya 1995b; Shimada 2002).

Two types of farming take place in this region – *dambo* cultivation during the dry season followed by upland production during the rainy season (December to April). Although maize production in uplands provides the staple food, *dambo* crops such as tomatoes, watermelons, and rape are the primary source of cash income. Zambia's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) has encouraged cash crop production on *dambo* wetlands. The abolition of maize procurement in 1993 also weakened the confidence of farmers in maize. Gross output from *dambo* farming, as measured in terms of value, can exceed that of