

INTRODUCTION

The health and mortality of those living with HIV and AIDS and the demographic effects of AIDS mortality are the focus of much research attention, but the wider implications of the epidemic are less well explored. HIV/AIDS will have long-term effects on families, communities, enterprises, agriculture and the well-being and economic future of society as a whole. Where the disease gained an early foothold and has had the time and opportunity to spread, the consequences are already apparent. As more countries experience outbreaks of the disease, the effects in today's high-prevalence countries are likely to be played out in settings all over the world.

Since 1981, when the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed, AIDS-related mortality has reached orders of magnitude comparable to those associated with visitations of pestilence in earlier centuries. The Black Death of 1347-1351 killed more than 20 million people in Europe; by the end of 2002, 22 million people had lost their lives to AIDS, and more than 42 million were living with HIV/AIDS. The future course of the disease and its real magnitude remain unknown. Thus, it is of paramount importance to understand the impact of the pandemic, to present the current state of knowledge of its impact and to identify areas where research is vitally needed.

In many developing countries, the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, combined with the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s, have erased decades of demographic and economic progress and have seriously compromised the living conditions of future generations (Nicoll and others, 1994). The disease has such a staggering impact because it weakens and kills many people in their young adulthood, the most productive years for income-generation and family caregiving. It collapses and breaks up families by eliminating the generation that is important to the survival of society's youngest and oldest members.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects every aspect of human life. It has imposed heavy burdens on individuals, families, communities and nations. The present publication documents the wide-ranging impacts of HIV/AIDS on families and households; agricultural sustainability; business; the health sector; education; and economic growth. The study also shows that the AIDS epidemic will continue to have devastating consequences for decades to come for virtually every sector of society. In many countries, the epidemic is undermining the achievement of the goals outlined in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly in 2000. Accordingly, immediate action and investments in policies and programmes will be able to save millions of lives and mitigate the destructive consequences of an unchecked epidemic.

The Impact of AIDS is organized into ten chapters. The first chapter considers the data, sources and methods for studying the impact of the AIDS epidemic. The second chapter looks at the current and projected future demographic impact of the epidemic, particularly for the 53 most affected countries. The third chapter deals with the impact of HIV/AIDS on families and households, the units of society that are most directly affected when a member contracts the disease. The next two chapters address production sectors of the economy, namely, firms and agriculture. The loss of large numbers of workers owing to illness or death disrupts the supply of food and manufactured goods and has ramifications for the functioning of the whole economy.

Chapters VI and VII discuss the education and health sectors, both areas of human capital investment important to a nation's future economic development. Education has already been adversely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Not only have many teachers and school administrators been stricken with the disease, but

children have been forced to drop out of school to help care for family members who are ill or to replace the labour of those who can no longer work. The loss of schooling for future generations may be the most long-lasting and crippling legacy of the disease. The health sector is most directly involved in dealing with the victims of HIV/AIDS, especially in caring for those infected but also in helping to prevent further transmission

of the virus. Chapter VIII focuses on the impact of the AIDS epidemic on national economic growth, including the macroeconomic models that have been constructed to predict future economic growth in the age of HIV/AIDS. A summary and conclusions to the study are given in chapter IX. Chapter X provides descriptions and findings of selected studies used in preparing the present report.

PART ONE