

Towards appropriate nutrition intervention in the HIV/AIDS era

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HIV/AIDS is a scourge that afflicts most of our countries in sub-Saharan Africa, eradicating previous inroads made in establishing sustainable food systems. The pandemic is a cross-cutting issue transcending from food security to prevention and control of diseases and care.

HIV/AIDS has particularly been detrimental to breastfeeding campaigns given that it has now been established that breastfeeding poses a risk for mother to child HIV transmission. This places a heavy burden on decision making for lactating mothers in the developing countries, where access to breastmilk substitutes and clean water is remote. UNICEF reports that at least 3million lives are saved through breastfeeding each year. Around 10-15% of all babies born to HIV positive mothers could become HIV positive through feeding from their mothers. It has also become evident that micronutrient malnutrition predisposes women to high transmission, with micronutrient deficient women being more likely to transmit the infection through breastfeeding than their well nourished counterparts.

There is also some evidence to suggest that micronutrient status has an important bearing on HIV infection, progression of HIV to AIDS and response of individuals to antiretroviral drug treatment.

Consequently prevention of malnutrition becomes an essential primary step in establishing a global strategy for HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Appropriate food systems will form part of this strategy.

The paper will explore appropriate strategies to ensure sustainable food systems for the control of HIV/AIDS and highlight gaps in present research strategies.