

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR'S RESPONSE TO AIDS

A TRAINING MANUAL FOR AGRICULTURE SECTOR WORKERS

5

MODULE

AIDS and the Fisheries Sub-Sector



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AIMS

The aims of this module are the following:

1. To understand the implications of the fact that fisherfolk have some of the highest rates of HIV, yet have limited (if any) access to prevention and treatment services.
2. To understand that HIV in the fisheries sub-sector may challenge sustained production of a major source animal protein for many households and therefore household food security.
3. To identify how scarcity of fish can lead to risky behaviour and exposure to exploitative practices such as transactional sex and bribery, which can increases vulnerability to HIV.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completing the module, the learner should be able to:

1. Assess the need for fishery sector policy frameworks to respond to AIDS in the sub-sector, as well as to food security of people dependent on fish for animal protein.
2. Describe how transactional sex and extortion are linked to scarcity of fish and the lack of an institutional framework for managing fisheries.
3. Propose strategies to bring both general health and HIV-related services to fishing communities.
4. Develop programme strategies in the area of credit and alternative income-earning opportunities for fisherfolk.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think about the situation of fishing in the country where you work:
 - What is the approximate value of fish sales from catches in the inland and coastal waters in the country?
 - What changes can be observed in the size or timing of catches over the past five years?
 - How many people work as fishers, fish mongers or fish processors in the country?
 - What is the economic status of people working in fishing and how has it changed in the past five years?
2. What is the perception of HIV among senior staff in the fisheries sector of the country where you work?
 - If HIV is not perceived as an issue in the sector, why is this the case?
 - If the epidemic is perceived as an issue in the sector, what policy or programming measures have been taken to respond to it?
 - What governmental, international or NGO partners are working on HIV issues in the fisheries sub-sector of the country where you work? Can you cite any lessons learned from their experiences?
3. What is HIV prevalence among fisherfolk and fishing communities in the country where you work, in particular in comparison with the general population? Is there

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evidence of this impacting on the operations of fishing fleets or fish processing? What AIDS-related impacts can you describe on:

- Commercial fishing?
 - Artisanal fishing?
 - Ocean versus inland fishing?
4. Briefly describe the different gender roles in fishing, fish mongering and fish processing in the country where you work.
- What is the role of transactional sex in the catching, processing or marketing of fish?
 - What measures do you think could eliminate or at least mitigate this practice?

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Some of the earliest recorded AIDS cases were in fishing communities on Lake Victoria in 1982. Nevertheless, the development community has been slow to recognize that fishing communities in low and middle-income countries worldwide constitute one of the most vulnerable populations to HIV. The following are a few examples of HIV prevalence and incidence in some fishing populations and communities around the world¹:

- 24 percent of fisherfolk on Lake Albert, Uganda were HIV-positive in 1992, compared to 4 percent in nearby agricultural villages; many of the fishermen were migrants.
- 13-20 percent of marine fishing boat crews in Thailand tested HIV-positive in the late 1990s, while the general prevalence was 1.5 percent.
- 8 percent of adults in ‘Garifuna’ coastal fishing communities² in Honduras are HIV positive, four times the national average.
- 12 percent of AIDS patients in the city of New Bedford, USA during 1990-1995 were fishers, while seroprevalence was less than 0.01 percent in the general population. Fishers made up less than 1 percent of the population.
- Fishers are five time more likely to die of AIDS-related illness than farmers in the Lake Victoria region, where seroprevalence in lakeshore towns and villages in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are thought to have reached levels as high as 30-70 percent during the late 1990s.

Few AIDS programmes have specifically targeted fishing communities. The issue has received scant policy attention and much needed research on the topic is still limited. Consequently, our understanding of vulnerability and resilience within the sector is still very limited. Because rural people face declining income from traditional sources, the increasing price of fish is attracting growing interest as a source of livelihood for migrant fishers and traders. However, HIV undermines the long-term perspective needed for successful co-management in fisheries, whilst deepening poverty may drive fisherfolk towards increasingly short-sighted and unsustainable practices, such as using dynamite to catch fish. Furthermore, the premature death of adult fisherfolk threatens the inter-generational transfer of indigenous

¹ FAO. 2007a. *The impact of HIV/AIDS on fishing communities – policies to support livelihoods, rural development and public health*. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. Rome. ([ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/ai022e/ai022e01.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/ai022e/ai022e01.pdf))

² The Garifunas are an Afro-Caribbean ethnic group concentrated on the Caribbean coasts of Belize, Guatemala, Barbados and Honduras.

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knowledge about resource management. Some important factors should be noted in terms of the linkages between HIV and fisheries sub-sector:

- Migration is an important factor favoring HIV transmission and this is one of the causes of high HIV prevalence in fishing communities.
- The practice of “fish for sex” is used by many women to secure fish supplies in an increasingly competitive market.
- Poverty is a key driver of behaviour that leads to increased vulnerability to HIV. Improved incomes are thus important in addressing this.

HIV in fisheries has much wider impacts also beyond the sub-sector. Mobile and part-time fishing populations moving in and out of the sector, along with interactions through trade and markets, permit HIV and its impacts to be spread outside the sector. The multiplier effects of the loss of productive labour and declining productivity may affect rural incomes more broadly. Moreover, the epidemic threatens the ability of the fisheries sub-sector to supply fish and fish products to low-income groups, for whom it represents an important and affordable source of animal protein and micronutrients.

Some fisheries generate important foreign exchange and the loss of those revenues has wider economic effects. The diversion of household and government resources to tackle the epidemic reduces the funds available for other services and investment in productive activity. Responses to the epidemic in the fisheries sub-sector must deal with the following basic issues:

1. Sustainable management of fishing, as fish stocks are being rapidly depleted due to over-fishing and environmental and climate change.
2. Development of sustainable livelihood options in fishing communities to overcome deepening poverty, which increases migration in fishing communities and leads to commercial and transactional sex.
3. HIV prevention, voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) for those who are infected. Peer education and mobile services appear to be promising measures adapted to the culture and practices of fisherfolk.

READINGS: AN OVERVIEW OF HIV ISSUES IN THE FISHERIES SUB-SECTOR

1. Why is HIV an important issue in the fisheries sub-sector?

1.1 The central role of fishing and aquaculture in food security

The 2006 FAO report for the Committee on Fisheries states that:

“Millions of people around the world depend on fisheries and aquaculture, directly or indirectly, for their livelihoods. During the past three decades, the number of fishers and aquaculturists has grown faster than the world's population, and employment in the fisheries sector has grown faster than employment in traditional agriculture. In 2004, an estimated 41 million people worked (part time or full time) as fishers and fish farmers, accounting for 3.1 percent of the 1.36 billion people economically active in agriculture worldwide and representing a growth rate of 35 percent from the corresponding figure of 2.3 percent in 1990. The great majority of fishers and fish farmers are in developing countries, principally in Asia. Significant increases over recent decades, in particular in Asia, reflect the strong expansion of aquaculture activities. In 2004, the number of fish farmers accounted for one-quarter of the total number of fish workers. This figure is indicative, as some countries do not collect employment data separately for the two sectors and some other countries' national systems do not yet account for fish farming.”³

The importance of fisheries in food security and rural livelihoods is critical. Well over 120 million people are dependant on fishing and fish processing for their livelihood and over 40 million people work in the fisheries sub-sector as fishers and fish farmers (see Table 1). While data for women in this sub-sector is limited, it is known that women play an important role at every stage, particularly in post-harvesting activities such as including drying, smoking and marketing fish.

Table 1. World fishers and fish farmers by continent in 2004 (in thousands)

Region	Total	Of which fish farmers
Africa	2 852	117
North and Central America	864	64
South America	700	194
Asia	36 281	10 837
Europe	656	73
Oceania	54	4
World total	41 408	11 289

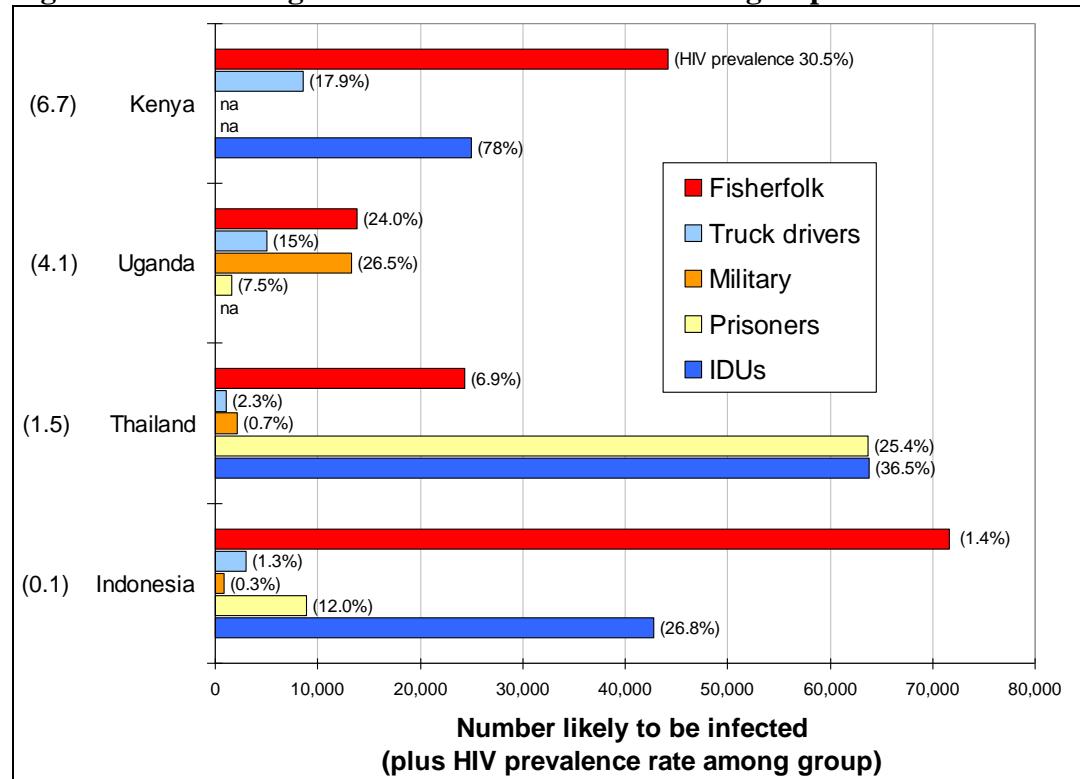
(Source: FAO, 2007)

³ FAO. 2007. The state of world fisheries and aquaculture 2006. Rome.
(<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/A0699e/A0699e00.htm>).

1.2 Fisherfolk as a key population at high risk of HIV exposure

AIDS policies and strategies tend to focus on key populations at higher risk of HIV infection, for example sex workers, injecting drug users (IDU) and men who have sex with men (MSM). A lot of attention is also given to the vulnerabilities to HIV of truck drivers and the military. However, when one examines Figure 1, it is clear that fisherfolk are also a key population vulnerable to HIV exposure.

Figure 1. HIV among fisherfolk and other vulnerable groups



(Source: Kissling et al., 2005)

It is clear from the graph that HIV prevalence is often higher in the fisheries sub-sector than in other key populations at high risk of HIV exposure. This is due to a combination of factors. Some of the major factors include:

- The numbers of fisherfolk can be considerable and fish landing sites can be major hotspots of HIV dissemination.
- Fisherfolk are very mobile, nationally and internationally, and are therefore in contact with many other groups.
- “Fish for sex”⁴ is often institutionalized and generalized.

In the forestry sub-sector, the major impacts of HIV and AIDS are on resources (e.g. forests and forest resource), but in the case of fisheries the main impact is on the people (e.g. fisherfolk), who are also ‘drivers’ of the epidemic. However, an important common factor

⁴ “The practice in which female fish traders engage in sexual relationships with male fishers to secure their supply of fish.” (Béné and Merten, 2008).

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with forestry is the dependence on, and shrinking of, natural resources, on which the populations rely for food and livelihood security.

Fish is an extremely important source of animal protein and of micro nutrients in many developing countries. “FAO data indicate that while in most developed countries nearly 80 percent of the population obtain less than 20 percent of their animal protein supplies from fish, around 60 percent of those in many developing countries depend on fish for over 30 percent of their animal protein supplies.”⁵ Thus, any factor (e.g. HIV) that may threaten this source should be of great concern.

2. HIV vulnerabilities in the sub-sector

2.1 Vulnerability to HIV

Two different (yet complementary) issues need to be highlighted:

- Factors in fisheries that lead to a risk of infection (listed in Table 2)
- Fishing communities as “hot spots” for the spread of HIV

The list of factors in Table 2 is not exhaustive, but the factors most specific to fisheries have been selected in order to highlight the issues. The factors are classified into three categories: (1) individual, (2) community and (3) fish resource.

Table 2. Factors of vulnerability to the risk of HIV infection in fisheries

Background factors	Proximate determinants of HIV vulnerability
<p>a) <u>Individual factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Poverty– Marginalization of fishermen and women in fishing activities combined with male-female power relations– Insecurity– Internal and international mobility <p>b) <u>Community factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Unstable communities with rapid turnover– Weak institutions: lack of control over fishing practices– Except for some farm-fishing, generally little livelihood diversification outside of fishing <p>c) <u>Fish resource factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Decline in fishing stocks leads to intense competition along the fishing chain: marketing, processing, transport and trade	<p>d) <u>Individual factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Quick money, large sums of cash– Long periods away from home– Coping with danger/loneliness by using alcohol, sex, etc.– Invisibility of HIV&AIDS impact: the sick return to home village to die <p>e) <u>Community factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Complex camp and port networks of men and women: competing and overlapping in fish related activities, including protection– Large markets with large numbers of men and women mixing many professions– Institutionalized transactional sex– Lack of health and other services <p>f) <u>Fish resource factor</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Seasonality and unpredictability in catches and dwindling fish stocks can encourage transaction sex

*Synthesis of findings from literature

⁵ FAO. 2002. Impact of international fish trade on food security. Committee on Fisheries, Sub- Committee on Fish Trade. Rome. (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/004/y3016E.htm>)

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Fishing communities may appear stable to the outside observer, but they are often different from farming communities whose inhabitants have been in the same location for generations. In the case of fishing communities, the physical location of the community can be ancient, but the inhabitants are often migrants, poor farmers or even urban dwellers who have lost their jobs or livelihood. These communities may be characterized by the following:

- Urban dweller or poor farmers that have migrated as a last option, even if they are unprepared and have little knowledge of boating or fishing.
- Migrants can come from far away and speak different languages, which can create local communication problems.
- They frequently do not have documents and may be exploited.
- They often move to other communities and have little commitment to preserve the resource.
- Women who arrive are often divorcees or widows looking for activities that require little knowledge and capital. Still, they generally find themselves in unequal gender relations.
- Men are involved in fishing, whereas women may be involved in all the related activities – e.g. buying, processing and trading. Women, however, are generally employees or petty traders. (a)⁶

In view of the population characteristics, the community institutions are weak and cannot be enforced. Furthermore, because fishing communities are generally neglected by governments, the communities receive no backing as such, which weakens them further. Fishing communities generally offer no activities generating income outside of fishing except for entertainment. They thus attract bars, brothels and sex workers. (b)

As has been noted previously, the fishing population is increasing, whereas fish stocks are declining. This leads to intense pressure on stocks, as well as tension between people to access resources. This also means that the value and quantity of fish catches can fluctuate highly as people scramble to get a share.

The risk factors for female wholesale fishmongers and fish processors stems from the difficulty they have in getting fish during “bad fishing season”, as well as their desire to earn as much as possible by paying for part of the fish “in kind”. To have preferential access to fish, female wholesale fishmongers tend to have at least one partner among the boat-owners. Some also manage to become “fisher-madams” by pre-financing fishing expeditions, which gives them special rights over the total catch, including the boat owner’s share. (c)

Fishing is one of the most dangerous and stressful professions, which can have consequences on human behaviour. Due to the dangerous nature of the work, fishers may engage in risky behaviour in their free time, involving alcohol abuse and unsafe sex. These are easily available and accessible on shore since fishers are paid on their return from fishing excursions and are often young and single. Fishers can earn relatively high wages and tend to spend them all at once because their daily risks on the water discourage future planning. Due to high turnover, neglect and difficulties, fisherfolk tend to lack HIV knowledge and may not be willing to practice safer sex. For an analysis of the various types of sex workers found in fishing communities see Annex 1. What emerges is that the complexity of networking and partnering enable adaptation to every situation of both men and women and serve multiple

⁶ The letters refer to the categories in the previous table.

purposes, not just entertainment or income. For example, many fishermen do not stay on shore long enough to find and keep regular partners. They find sex workers without difficulty and consider them cheaper in the long run. In other cases when they stay on land for a longer time, a temporary wife who provides a kind of home may be better suited to the situation. (d)

Fisherfolk who fall sick often do not have savings or family to look after them. They have limited access to health facilities and tend to return to their place of origin to be cared for. The result is that communities with high HIV prevalence often experience few HIV-related illnesses, which minimizes awareness of the epidemic among people. It is also possible that the inflow of often healthy migrants and the outflow of people with advanced stages of HIV dilute the estimates of HIV prevalence reported in fishing communities. (d)

Because of weak institutions, men and women in fishing communities often form networks in order to facilitate access to jobs, fish and services. These networks are formed in response to the scarcity and irregularity of fish resources. Communities are thus composed of competing networks. In order to buy fish that is unloaded from a boat, women generally have to compete with one another. In order to guarantee access to the fish, some women may offer sex in exchange for priority over catches. Transactional sex serves the needs of the men and helps women maximize their gains⁷. “Fish for sex” (or transactional sex) has become institutionalized in the fisheries sub-sector and needs to be addressed in HIV policies and programmes.⁸ It should be noted that this practice can be found all along the chain of marketing right down to the deals between women traders and truckers or to ensure their protection by military or police when, for example, taking the train to sell in towns or along the railway line. It is important note that the number of people involved in these transactions, and thus exposed to HIV risk, can be considerable. (e)

2.2 HIV vulnerabilities beyond the sub-sector

Many fishing populations are highly mobile. Men move between landing sites and local markets on a daily and seasonal basis. Fish processors, traders and transporters – both men and women – move between landing sites, regional and national markets and fish processing factories. Other service providers – including sex workers – move with them. These movements and networks are likely to play a part in transmission of infection between high-prevalence areas and those at lower risk, and hence drive the spread of the epidemic beyond the sub-sector.

Lack of access to services and traditional social support networks in fishing villages means that people living with HIV who are too ill to work will return to their ‘home’ communities to be cared for. This has implications for the spread of HIV and increases the number of people experiencing the impact of AIDS.

2.3 Vulnerabilities in large-scale fisheries

Although there is little research on large scale fisheries specifically, there is enough to suggest that some additional risks may be presented by the tendency toward higher degrees of mobility, in addition to onboard crew practices.

⁷ On the subject of transactional sex, see: Merten, S. and Haller, T. 2006. Fish for sex exchange in the Kafue Flats: risky opportunities of rural women. Cairo, WorldFish Center.

⁸ See Annex 2 for further discussion on gender and transactional sex in fisheries.

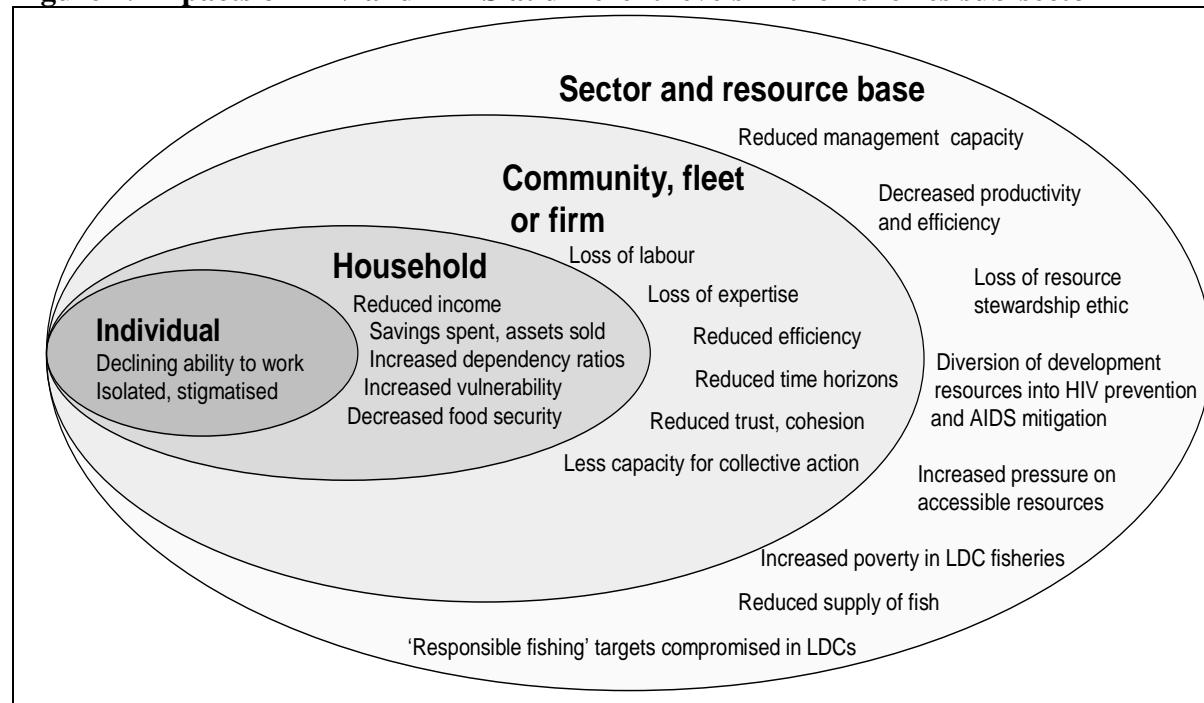
A study of trawler crew in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea⁹ found that in addition to the known behaviours that increase exposure to HIV (e.g. alcohol and drug use, high numbers of visits to commercial sex workers, etc.) the higher degree of mobility among crew members was associated with a higher risk of infection. Of the 818 crew members included in the study, 15.5 percent were found to be positive for HIV-1 and 16 per cent had engaged in commercial sex outside of Thailand. HIV prevalence among crew members, which was specifically selected to exclude less mobile and smaller-scale fishermen, was surpassed only by prevalence among commercial sex workers and male injecting drug users.

The same study identified certain onboard practices such as tattooing and penile manipulation involving scarring and cutting as potential risk factors associated with transmission. Several other onboard behaviours that increase exposure to HIV have been identified in studies, including commercial sex with sex workers who arrive with supply ships, as well as same-sex intercourse (the dynamics of which have been compared to those in prison populations).

3. Impacts of HIV and AIDS on the fisheries sub-sector

Current knowledge on the impacts of HIV and AIDS on the fisheries sub-sector has been summed up by Allison and Seeley in the diagram in Figure 2. Many of the impacts are common to those described already in farming.

Figure 2. Impacts of HIV and AIDS at different levels in the fisheries sub-sector



(Source: Allison and Seeley, 2004)

⁹ Entz, A.T., Ruffolo, V.P., Chinveschakitvanich, V., Soskolne, V. and van Griensven, G.J.P. 2000. HIV-1 prevalence, HIV-1 subtypes and risk factors among fishermen in the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. *AIDS*, 14(8): 1027-1034.

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The epidemic affects the different actors in the fisheries sector in various ways:¹⁰

Individual level:

- People working in the sub-sector (e.g. fishers, processors, fish workers, etc.) face reduced labour ability, in particular physically demanding labour, due to HIV-related illnesses and in caring for those who are ill. This may lead to job loss and/or reduced income.
- Workers with HIV in the sub-sector may face stigmatization and isolation.
- Men who are ill and lack energy and strength to go out fishing may displace women in collecting sea shells or processing fish. Displaced women might then have to turn to sex work due to a lack of other available options.

Household and community level:

- Households may experience reduced income as a result of HIV-related illness and mortality, while at the same time facing increased medical expenses.
- In order to cope with food and livelihood insecurity, households may sell their productive assets (such as fishing equipment and boats) and may withdraw their children from school because of the direct and indirect costs of education. This is a coping mechanism of households to meet immediate expenses, but has knock-on-effects in terms of diminished future livelihood and food security.
- Many fishing households (particularly in inland fishing) are also involved in farming. One then finds a gender division of labour, with men generally involved in fishing activities and women in farming. The two activities are complementary for farm-fish households, as income from the fishing season can supplement the farming off-season. A drop in fishing income due to HIV therefore has repercussions on household income.
- Lack of HIV services in fishing communities means that when people become ill, they may return to rural homes to be cared for. This places an additional burden on rural households.
- HIV can have disruptive impacts on communities, leading to reduced trust and social cohesion and therefore affecting the capacity for collective action.

Institutional level:

- Fishing fleets and enterprises experience loss of labour and expertise stemming from HIV-related illness and death. This can lead to declines in efficiency and productivity in fishing and related activities.
- In addition to reduced productivity, fisheries departments and businesses may face costs related to provision of health services and treatment, particularly when staff are ill for long periods.
- High occurrence of HIV-related illness and death in a community can have the effect of reducing individuals' future perspective and planning. This can resultantly undermine commitment to collective, long-term goals, such as community fishery management and development projects in fishing communities.

¹⁰ See: Gordon, A. 2005. HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector in Africa. Cairo, WorldFish Center.

(<http://www.aidsportal.org/repos/WorldFish%20Policy%20Brief%20-%20HIV%20AIDS%20in%20the%20Fisheries%20Sector%20in%20Africa.pdf>); FAO. 2007. The state of world fisheries and aquaculture 2006. Rome. (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/A0699e/A0699e00.htm>).

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- Fish caught by small fishers represent a major source of animal protein for households and communities. Reduced catches stemming from HIV impacts can therefore jeopardize this food source and food security.

Sectoral level:

- High prevalence of HIV among fishers, fishery managers, as well as community leaders, may reduce management capacity in the sub-sector.
- Decreased productivity and efficiency as a result of HIV-related illness and death can lead to increased pressure on inshore resources that are more accessible. This can lead to the unsustainable use of resources and thus responsible fishing targets may be negatively affected.
- Fishery development resources may need to be diverted towards HIV prevention and mitigation efforts. This may in turn lead to increased vulnerability in small-scale fisheries and may undermine the sustainable use of resources.
- Mobility of fisherfolk also has repercussions in terms of HIV spread both within and beyond the sub-sector.
- As households face the costs of illness and death, income that would have otherwise been spent on
- Rural economies and the fisheries sector may face reduced revenue and investment as a result of decreased spending in fishing communities. This is a result of reduced household income from fisheries-related activities and increased expenses stemming from illness and death.

4. An agenda for AIDS in the fisheries sub-sector

There needs to be a committed response from the different actors in the fisheries sub-sector to the challenges posed by the AIDS epidemic. Relevant stakeholders each have a unique role to play in responding to the epidemic. Areas of action from different actors in the sector are outlined in the following section.¹¹

Ministry of Fisheries:¹²

- Develop an HIV policy or strategy for the sector¹³, taking into consideration both the root causes of the epidemic and priority intervention areas for addressing them.
- Sensitize staff about HIV issues in the sub-sector and in the workplace (e.g. through workshops, dissemination of policy documents, etc.).
- Assign an AIDS focal point within the Ministry or department, with the role of initiating policy and strategy development and facilitating awareness raising among staff.
- Collaborate with the health sector and other stakeholders to develop sub-sector responses in the areas of prevention, care and mitigation.

¹¹ The following section has been adapted from: FAO. 2005. *The impact of HIV/AIDS on fishing communities – policies to support livelihoods, rural development and public health*. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. Rome. ([ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/ai022e/ai022e01.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/ai022e/ai022e01.pdf))

¹² Or the Ministry in charge of Fisheries in the country.

¹³ For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries in Uganda has developed a strategy for reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS on fishing communities:

http://www.mrag.co.uk/Documents/ug0672/ug0672_9.pdf

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- Train and support local-level fisheries staff HIV issues in their communities, and liaise with them to ensure national-level planning takes into account local knowledge and context.
- Ensure that management of fisheries and other interventions in the sector do not create or increase vulnerabilities of fisherfolk or people living in fishing communities.

Health Ministry:

- Improve access to health services, and in particular HIV-related services, in fishing communities – including enhanced access to voluntary counselling and testing services, as well as better provision of health care (e.g. ART, treatment of STIs and opportunistic infections, etc.). Mobile or floating clinics could be considered in some situations.
- Enhance nutrition-based interventions for people living with HIV in fishing communities.

Local government:

- Determine the extent to which HIV is an issue in fishing communities in their jurisdiction and the dynamics of the epidemic.
- Liaise and lobby with Ministries and donors to ensure adequate budget allocations to address HIV prevention and impact mitigation for the fisheries sector in the district.
- Make provisions for safety nets for HIV-affected people in fishing communities, through poverty reduction strategy funds and other sources.

Non-governmental, Civil society and Community-based organizations:

- Liaise and lobby with government and donors to ensure adequate funding to address HIV issues in the fisheries sub-sector.
- Support community-based interventions focused on HIV prevention and mitigation. This should be done in close collaboration with the communities themselves.
- Support livelihood strategies of fishing communities, including alternative income generating activities.
- Enhance awareness among communities about HIV, including prevention, treatment and care. This can be achieved by creating dialogue about HIV issues in the sub-sector, information dissemination, awareness raising campaigns, etc.
- Ensure psychological and social support to people living with HIV (e.g. nutrition and food support, promotion of ‘positive living’ groups, etc.).

5. HIV interventions in fishing communities

Fishing communities face a range of vulnerabilities to HIV and its impacts. These stem from neglect of these communities in HIV prevention and mitigation strategies, in addition to socio-economic vulnerabilities and the fact that communities are often marginalized. Considering the high HIV prevalence in these areas, it is clear that responses of the sub-sector must address the specific contexts and vulnerabilities in fisheries (e.g. lack of safety nets and alternative income-generating opportunities, etc.).

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The AIDS response in the fisheries sub-sector tends to lack a comprehensive strategy and approach. A range of interventions, however, exist target various HIV issues in fisheries. Some examples of specific activities are listed in the following sections¹⁴.

HIV prevention and behaviour change:

- HIV education and awareness raising campaigns in fishing communities.
- Voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) in fishing communities, including mobile services.
- Promotion of community “champions” to disseminate prevention messages and change perceptions.
- Mobilization of peer educators from within local communities.
- Radio programmes to raise awareness about HIV issues – reaching marginalized people in fishing communities.
- Creation of community discussion forums to discuss HIV issues (e.g. vulnerabilities, impact mitigation) in the community and identify possible responses.

Care and treatment:

- Treatment support for HIV-affected households, including home-based care.
- Establishment and promotion of positive living support groups for people living with HIV.
- Increased availability and access to health service (with particular attention to mobile and marginalized groups), and in particular antiretroviral treatment, for fisherfolk and people living with HIV in fishing communities.
- Promotion of prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).
- Nutrition support for HIV-affected households and other households in fishing communities that are food or nutrition insecure.
- Community initiatives to support orphans and other vulnerable people (e.g. financial and subsistence support).

Livelihoods support:

- Promotion of alternative income-generating activities and occupations to diversify livelihoods, including training and other support.
- Savings and credit schemes for vulnerable people (in particular vulnerable women and girls) in fishing communities.
- Awareness and promotion of labour saving tools and technologies for low-input, low-labour and low-risk fisheries and fish farming practice.
- Promotion of small-scale aquaculture for people living with HIV.
- Training and skill enhancement for orphans and vulnerable children in fishing communities (e.g. Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools – JFFLS).

¹⁴ These examples have been taken from: (a) Gordon, A. 2005. HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector in Africa. Cairo, WorldFish Center. (<http://www.aidsportal.org/repos/WorldFish%20Policy%20Brief%20-%20HIV%20AIDS%20in%20the%20Fisheries%20Sector%20in%20Africa.pdf>); (b) FAO. 2005. *The impact of HIV/AIDS on fishing communities – policies to support livelihoods, rural development and public health*. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. Rome. (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/al022e/al022e01.pdf>); (c) FAO. Responding to HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector. Rome. (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/ae502e/ae502e06.pdf>)

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- Provision of advice on combining fishing with other farming activities, such as vegetable gardening, livestock raising, etc.

Workplace programmes:

- Programmes for employees in commercial fishing enterprises aimed at increasing HIV awareness, prevention and provision of VCT and ART.
- Development of workplace strategies and policies on HIV.

LEARNING REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Incorporating HIV issues into projects in the fisheries sub-sector

Examine some recent activities or projects in the fisheries sector (either commercial or artisanal) of the country where you work:

1. How has HIV affected fishers, fish mongers and fish processors?
2. How has it affected the quantity and value of the fish that is sold?
3. Do fisheries development projects have an HIV component? If so, please describe.
4. If not, how could they have been designed differently to be HIV-sensitive?
5. Would these activities or projects be more sustainable or effective if they took into consideration HIV issues? Explain.

Write down your answers on paper. If in a group, prepare a flip-chart page to present your observations to the group.

Activity 2: Assessing gender roles and transactional sex in the fisheries sub-sector

Read the text “Gender roles and transactional sex in fishing” in Annex 2. It describes how transactional sex is used by women to obtain fish from male boat owners or fishermen. The text notes that some women may end up financing fishing expeditions when boat owners lack resources. Transactional sex also plays a role in gaining access to markets away from the port or fish landing areas.

1. Describe how fishing is organized in the country where you work. Make reference to the following factors:
 - a) Who owns the fishing boats? Do the owners also work on the boats? Are there any women who own boats?
 - b) Who finances the fishing expeditions? Are they supported by loans?
 - c) How are the fish sold or distributed when the catch is landed? Describe the roles of men and women in this process? Is transactional sex involved?
 - d) What forms of processing are used to preserve the fish (e.g. smoking, salting, drying, pickling)? Who handles this work?
 - e) How is the fish marketed? Is transactional sex involved?
2. What differences are there between ocean and inland fisheries in terms of gender and transactional sex?

Write down your answers on paper. If in a group, prepare a flip-chart page to present your observations to the group.

An alternative exercise is to prepare a role play to illustrate gender roles and risky behaviours in the fisheries sub-sector that increase exposure to HIV.

Activity 3: Organizing HIV prevention and treatment services for fishing communities

Planning the project:

1. Identify partners to be involved from the health sector and the fisheries sector. What NGOs could collaborate?
2. How would HIV prevalence in the fishing communities be assessed? How would you use data from a Demographic and Health Survey¹⁵ or from other sources?
3. Prevention activities on shore:
 - In training peer educators, whom would you choose to become peer educators for fishers or others involved in fisheries and ports, including the uniformed services?
 - Mention the most important concepts and messages you would like the peer educators to communicate in order to reduce or eliminate behaviour among men that increases exposure to HIV. Discuss:
 - a) Preventing and treating STIs,
 - b) VCT and access to ART,
 - c) Systematic use of condoms, especially with sex workers,
 - d) HIV testing and treatment issues,
 - e) Gender roles and sensitivity.
 - Mention the most important concepts and messages you would like the peer educators to communicate in order to reduce or eliminate risky behaviour among women.
 - a) Be sure to discuss VCT, PMTCT, negotiating sex, treating STIs.
 - b) Discuss how sex workers can organize so as to refuse sex without condoms.
 - c) Discuss HIV testing and ART treatment issues,
 - d) Analysis of gender roles in fisheries; exploration of alternatives.
 - Develop a condom availability and promotion strategy. Mention the main highlights of this strategy.
4. Treatment activities on shore and at sea.
 - Discuss options for providing ART on fishing boats, assuming CD4 and viral loads can be assessed on shore.
 - Discuss how shore-based healthcare facilities can provide a certain level of service at night or at times when fisherfolk, including shore-based women need them.

Managing the project:

1. How could the project be funded? Discuss different funding options (e.g. PEPFAR, Global Fund, donors, etc.).

¹⁵ You may wish to refer to the Measure DHS (Demographic and Health Surveys) site to access over 240 surveys conducted in over 85 countries: <http://www.measuredhs.com/>.

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2. Identify an appropriate NGO or other partners that could manage financial resources and logistics.
3. Briefly describe how project beneficiaries will be monitored and results assessed.

Write down your answers on paper. If in a group, prepare a flip-chart page to present your observations to the group.

If time is available, prepare a role play illustrating a peer education session for men and another for women. You could experiment in having men and women switch roles in the role play. Afterwards, discuss how the participants felt during the exercise.

Activity 4: Mapping HIV “hot spots” in fisheries

Read the description of fisheries in Benin in Annex 3:

1. Identify the patterns of fishing activities in the country where you work:
 - Sketch the “corridors” of migration movements, including those over water. Identify any international boundaries that are crossed.
 - Locate the major fishing areas (inland and coastal) and identify when their productive and slow seasons occur. Which populations engage in fishing in which season? Are they local or migratory?
 - Locate towns or rural markets where fish are bought and sold. What is the HIV prevalence in these areas?
2. What are the risk factors associated with HIV infection, such as the presence of a transportation hub, migrant labour, presence of sex workers in the market towns or in areas where fisherfolk gather?
3. What risky behaviours occur among fisherfolk in the HIV “hot spots” that could contribute to the spread of the virus more widely?

Write down your answers on paper. If in a group, prepare a flip-chart page to highlight your scenarios and present it to the group for discussion.

Activity 5: Developing alternative sources of income and food for fishing households affected by HIV

Think of an HIV-affected community you know well where fishing households have lost fishing equipment and boats as a result of HIV-related expenses and loss of household labour.

1. Make a list of small stock that could be raised that would require less labour or specialised skills than fishing.
2. What aquaculture possibilities are there in the area? What kinds of fish could be raised?

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3. What symbiosis is possible between the animals, crops and the fish ponds (e.g. manure or crop residue for the fish and cultivation on the pond site after draining it)?
4. What other activities could households in the community engage in (e.g. repairing fishing gear and nets for active fishermen)?
5. What options are there for tourism services (e.g. a restaurant or a beverage stand)?

Write down your answers on paper. If in a group, prepare a flip-chart page to present your observations to the group.

SUMMARY REMARKS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The fisheries sub-sector faces a number of HIV vulnerability factors:

- Fish are an important component of the diets of many people in developing countries. However, fish stocks are dwindling due to over-fishing, climate change and environmental factors. This situation leads to increased demand for fish and often unsustainable fishing methods.
- People working in fisheries (e.g. fishers, fish processors, marketers) are highly mobile and often migrate on a seasonal basis.
- The dangers of fishing, coupled with high disposable income among fishers, contributes to behaviours that lead to higher risk of HIV exposure (e.g. alcohol abuse, commercial sex, unprotected sex) and the dismissal of the dangers of such behaviours. Fisherfolk have HIV prevalence equal to or higher than other key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure (e.g. truck drivers, IDUs and MSM).
- Fishers living with HIV may be forced to sell their equipment and boats to pay for medical treatment. This impoverishes households and undermines future livelihood security.
- Female fish mongers and processors may resort to transactional sex with boat owners to obtain supplies of fish, particularly when resources are scarce. This leads to increased vulnerability to HIV.
- Poverty and the difficulties of fishing drive many youths from fishing communities to find wage work or petty trading far from home either as a replacement for or complement to fishing. Some of these youth face increased vulnerability to HIV.

Issues in HIV and fisheries include:

- High rates of HIV among fisherfolk and a lack of access to prevention and treatment services means that the epidemic is a threat to food and livelihood security in countries where fish is an important economic activity and part of the basic diet. As a result, there is diminished food security at the household and community levels.
- Fishing communities are “hot spots” of high HIV prevalence. Due to the vulnerability and mobility of fisherfolk, there is increased risk of HIV spread also beyond fishing communities and the sub-sector.
- Although fisherfolk can earn high incomes during good fishing seasons, they often lose money for lack of planning and a focus on the present. Many fishing households live in poverty because of the irregularity of catches.
- Reaching fisherfolk with prevention and care services is difficult because of their mobility and a frame of mind that dismisses the dangers of behaviours that increase risk of HIV exposure (e.g. transactional sex and sex without a condom). Condom use is generally low and fisherfolk often do not use VCT services.

Lessons learned

1. Lack of awareness of HIV is a problem in the fisheries sub-sector and needs to be addressed through appropriate policy development and measures addressing HIV prevention (including behaviour change), as well as access to testing and treatment.

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2. HIV services for fisherfolk and fishing communities must be adapted to their context (e.g. high mobility). In some cases, floating or mobile clinics may be needed to provide VCT and ART. Peer education appears to be a promising measure in raising awareness.
3. Poverty-reduction and income-earning strategies are needed to give young women an alternative to transactional sex in the fishing sector. Alternative income sources are also needed for fishers living with HIV and who can no longer fish.
4. A lack of organizational structure for financing fishing expeditions and marketing catch is a major factor driving “fish for sex” practices. This puts fisherfolk at risk of contracting and spreading HIV.
5. Donors need to work with the health sector, the fisheries sector and NGOs to develop sustainable responses to the challenges of HIV in the fisheries sub-sector. Research has already yielded some useful findings and guidelines for policy and programme development.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
ARV	Antiretroviral [medicines]
CSO	Civil society organization
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDU	Injecting drug user
JFFLS	Junior farmer field and life schools
LDC	Least developed country
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PEPFAR	The President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
VCT	Voluntary counselling and testing

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ANNEX 1 – Complexity in the typologies of sex workers and their clients in fishing communities and how this can drive the spread of HIV

Typology of sex workers in Base Agip, Congo:

Type	Characteristics
Professional sex worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 40 years old • Live in Base Agip and receive customers at home • Business increases during good fishing season • Tend to use condoms
“Free” young women nicknamed “brothels”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 30 years old • Offer services for survival, generally to several regular partners • Do not pick up customers at bars or night clubs • Do not use condoms and do not perceive themselves as sex workers
Young women of Base Agip “living like white people”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most expensive sex workers • Pick up customers visiting from outside Base Agip in night clubs and bars • Tend to use condoms
Mobile sex workers from outside Base Agip, but working there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very heterogeneous group • Some use condoms, others do not

(Source: Adapted from Mboussou, 2004)

Walvis Bay, Namibia – HIV hotspot for foreign and local fishermen and truck drivers:

Type of customer	Characteristics
European fishermen	<p>In town for short periods of shore leave, stay 3-6 months to fish in Namibian waters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to bars and nightclubs – high-end sex workers • Some rent lodging for live-in girlfriends • Tend not to use condoms
Asian fishermen	<p>Same as above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer one-time encounters with low-end sex workers • Tend not to use condoms
Local Namibian fishermen	<p>Permanent residents of the Bay and spend lengthy periods on shore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to local bars (shabeens) not frequented by foreign fishermen • Frequent low-end sex workers and engage in transaction sex • Do not use condoms • Have a positive view of sex workers – seen as helping out because fishermen’s conditions make it difficult to have regular girlfriends
Truck drivers	<p>Stop in Walvis Bay for 1-2 days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick up sex workers in clubs and shabeens • Have a positive view of sex workers – often described as ‘wife assistant’ • Some use condoms

NB. Sex workers can serve different types of client.

(Source: Adapted from IOM and PHAMSA, 2006)

ANNEX 2 – Gender roles and transactional sex in fishing

Transactional sex is an intimate part of many fisheries. In the Pointe Noire area of the Congo, for example, focus group discussions and individual interviews with fishermen, boat owners and female fish mongers and processors revealed that transactional sex is used extensively to obtain preferential access to fish.

Box 1. Transactional sex in Pointe Noire, Congo¹⁶

“Boat-owners’ are the proprietors of their fishing boats, materials and gears. They have direct access to the fish they sell to their customers who are mainly women (fish mongers and processors).”

“During the ‘bad fishing’ seasons, fish becomes very scarce and demand becomes higher than supply. During such periods, the boat-owners favour some special customers over others in the supply of fish. These are either their wives or their mistresses. Boat-owners’ vulnerability results from their privileged access to the resource. This makes them the prey of women who want to have preferential access to fish, or even those who want fish without having to pay for it.”

“... I am in charge of collecting money for my master. Sometimes, when I get to a woman who has bought fish, she may say that she has already paid my master. What that means is that, you know... If you try to get too many details about the transaction, your master may threaten to sack you ...” (O., 36 year old fisherman).

“There is a tendency for boat-owners to “end up between the thighs of women who come to buy fish”. “...I want to collect fish from you ... Come and know my house just in case! When I get to her house, she allows me to do what I want, and afterwards, she tells me the fish sale was bad and that she doesn’t have any money to pay for it ...” (L., 52 year old boat-owner-fisherman).”

In a good fishing season, the share of fishing income favours the boat-owner by far. “...At times we earn as much as one million francs after a fishing expedition. We then deduct what the master might have spent to organize the outing: about 150,000 francs. The remaining amount is divided into two parts, one for the boat-owner fisherman and the other for the rest of the crew ...” (A., 32 year old fisherman).”

“In this way, boat-owners seem to have little choice but to maintain relationships with women who want preferential access to fish almost on a regular basis. Their insistence on “getting value for fish” that practically obliges them to maintain regular sexual relationship with multiple partners blinds them to the risks of being infected by HIV.”

“The result is that some boat-owners are so tied up financially with managing these multiple sexual relationships, (the objective of which, for their women partners, is to maximize their business profit), that they can no longer meet the cost of sending out their boats to sea on fishing expeditions (especially where fuel costs are concerned). This then leaves room for one of their many partners to step in to “take stock” as they put it in local parlance. This involves the pre-financing of a fishing expedition by a female wholesale fishmonger, who thus becomes the owner of the catch.”

“In contrast to the boat-owners, fishermen come under greater risk during “good fishing seasons”: “... When we share out our money after a fishing expedition, I sometimes make 30,000 francs in one day. I give my family 10,000 francs and I pocket the rest of the money for enjoying myself. After drinking, I check out one or two “brothels” before going back home...” (L., 28 year old fisherman).”

“Fishermen estimate their monthly income at nothing less than 150,000 FCFA; this can go as high as 400,000 FCFA per month during “good fishing periods”. However, most fishermen live one day at a time and have no vision whatsoever for the future.”

¹⁶ Extracted from: Mboussou, F.F. 2004. *Congo: Prostitution in the fishing community of Base-Agip*. SFLP Liaison Bulletin, September/December 2004, N.17 & 18. Cotonou.
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"They claim to be under too much pressure at the beach. "...*When the fish come out, the women hang around the beach. They just walk around for no good reason. They are the ones who chase after us ... Mister, I love you, can you buy me some juice?*'...that's how it starts and before you know what ..." (A., 32 year old fisherman)."

"The women who come to buy fish approach the fishermen in another way. "...*Mister, I want to buy fish but I have no money ... if you like, we can meet later ... are you married? Often after the meeting, in addition to the getting free fish worth 10,000 or 20,000 francs, they also ask for money to take taxi home*" (R., 38 year old fisherman)."

""*If a woman has no money, we negotiate; I give her fish and we meet later ...*" (A., 32 year old fisherman)."

"The fishermen are very much aware of the fact that these women meet several of them, but very few protect themselves. "...*We have noticed that these women do it with many fishermen. Sometimes, after meeting at the hotel, when you go to the other side of the district, you see the woman with another fisherman ...*" (L., 26 year old)."

ANNEX 3 – Mobility and migration: factors in the spread of HIV in Beninese fishing communities¹⁷

Local mobility and risk:

“Coastal fishers are very mobile: when the catch is particularly good, they often go to the Cotonou port where fish sell at higher prices. Their stay in Cotonou may last a whole week, and even sometimes extend to two or three weeks. During this time, alliances and friendships are established here and there between fishermen and fish sellers. These liaisons of mutual interest make it possible for the women mongers to enjoy the loyalty of fishermen so that they can have a monopoly of the fish they have for sale. The geographic mobility that is part and parcel of the life of coastal fishermen in Benin is definitely an important factor in the propagation of STD/HIV/AIDS.”

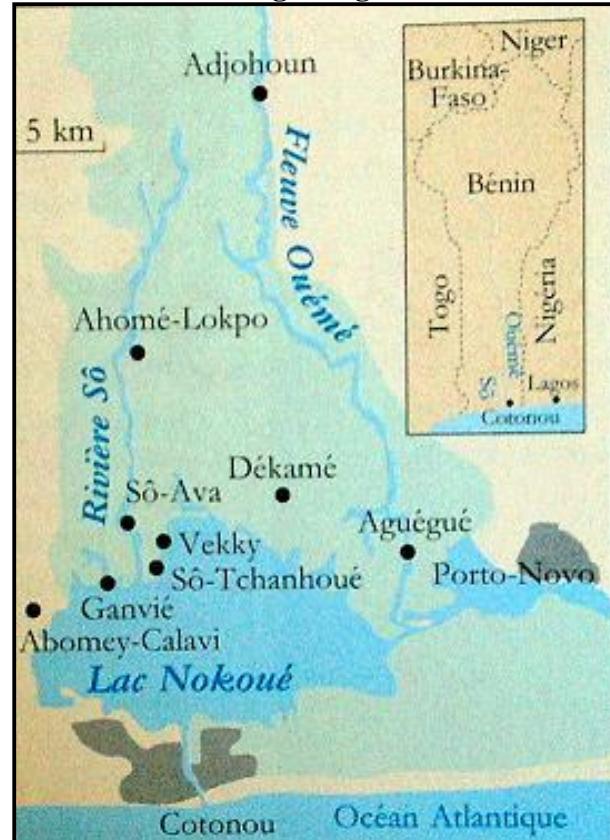
Migration – high risk factor:

“Located at the deep end of the Gulf of Guinea, Beninese coastal regions have less fish than the coastal regions of Ghana, Gabon, Cameroon or Congo. As a result, Beninese fishermen searching for better catches and improved income, emigrate towards these countries. This is typical of coastal fishing communities like Ayiguinou and Hio, part of whose youth population is abroad. The impact is that when the fish catch is meagre, the economy of coastal fishing communities slows down and some foreign fishermen seize this opportunity to return to their countries. But during good fishing seasons, the whole local community is so mobilized that boat owners sometimes have to call on foreign labourers, mainly Ghanaians, who come with their families.”

“Where inland fishing is concerned, especially as it relates to villages like So-Zounko and Kétonou, which are located in the Lake Nokoué basin, there are other STD/HIV/AIDS high risk factors linked to migration.”

“Kétonou, and in particular, So-Zounko are lacustrine villages that send many migrants to Nigeria and Gabon, searching for work. The main reason for this, according to some of the migrants, is that fishing no longer makes it possible for the people, and most especially the youths, to live well. The young people are moving massively to Nigeria and/or Gabon in search of work. According to them, they go abroad to work and/or trade and traffic in some merchandise.”

Figure 3. Map of Lake Nokoué, Benin and its lacustrine fishing villages



¹⁷ Extracted from: Atahouet, G.N. 2004. *Benin: STD/HIV/AIDS in fishing communities*. SFLP Liaison Bulletin, September/December 2004, No. 17 & 18. Cotonou.
(<http://www.aidsportal.org/repos/HIVFisheriesWestAfrica.pdf>)

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“...Almost all the cases of HIV/AIDS that have been made public in both Kétonou and in So-Zounkó were migrants who came back home to die in their village.” The proximity of the villages to the Lagos-Abidjan migration corridor is an additional risk factor.”