

RESPONDING TO THE HIV/AIDS IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR



The fisheries sector is vulnerable to the spread of HIV/AIDS due to the specific characteristics of capture fisheries with long periods away from home, risky- and hard work and the circumstances to which fisherfolk are frequently exposed such as drug abuse and unsafe sex. It is important to address the issue of HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector and to look for opportunities to prevent infection and assist those who are already living with HIV/AIDS. This leaflet provides guidance to fisheries sector extension workers on their role in preventing the further spread of HIV and in assisting HIV/AIDS affected individuals and their families improve their daily life.



HOW DOES HIV/AIDS AFFECT FISHERIES HOUSEHOLDS?

- Reduced labour availability because of chronic sickness and care for the sick
- Lower incomes as a result of lower capacity to earn a living; thus causing an increase in poverty
- High expenditure on medicines
- Social exclusion within their communities



HOW DO HIV/AIDS AFFECTED FISHERIES HOUSEHOLDS RESPOND TO THEIR SITUATION?

It is likely that they:

- Fish less frequently and closer to the shore, in areas that are generally already exploited to their limits; catching less fish and often of lower values.
- Have less capacity to repair fishing equipment and less money to purchase new equipment when needed, causing lower production.
- Spend less time fish farming (feeding and pond maintenance) which causes lower fish production.
- Cannot invest in new fingerlings for fish farming in future seasons.
- Change their consumption patterns, fishing for household consumption rather than for sale, thereby reducing household income
- Sell assets such as, tools, equipment, household goods and land that are considered less important in their struggle for survival.
- Reduce credit repayments and have less access to new credit
- Rely more on other people to help them in their activities

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF HIV IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR?

Whenever there is an opportunity to raise the issue:

- Provide information on what is HIV/AIDS, how do you get infected, and what can be done to prevent infection.
- Make people aware of the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on their daily lives, in particular impacts on household income, food security and their children
- Discourage unsafe-sex and the use of illegal drugs by fisherfolk and fish farmers. Create awareness of the need to use condoms and sterilised or new needles.
- Reduce migration and family separation
- Encourage people to talk to health workers whenever they suspect they have a HIV/AIDS related problem.
- Build awareness about how HIV/AIDS is spread (e.g. HIV/AIDS is not transferred through shaking hands, coughing, hugging or using the same latrine)

FISHERIES AND FISH FARMING CAN

IMPROVE THE DAILY LIFE OF HIV/AIDS AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS

Fish is an important source of nutrition for HIV/AIDS affected persons. An adequately balanced diet should include all essential nutritional components. Fish is one of the most nutritious foods and can help HIV/AIDS affected persons to maintain healthy.

Fish (including freshwater and seafood products) is easy to digest, contains large quantities of high quality proteins and fats, is easy to prepare and is tasty.



FISHERIES EXTENSION WORKERS CAN

ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS BY:

- conducting participatory analysis of the time, labour and financial constraints of households affected by HIV/AIDS.
- providing information on simple, low-input, low-labour, low-risk fisheries and fish farming practices.
- supporting fisherfolk in their change from off-shore to near-shore fisheries (when appropriate) with knowledge and training in relevant techniques.
- providing information on how to achieve a stable income from small fish ponds or a few fish cages.
- supporting diversification in species cultured to reduce production risks.
- promoting collaboration in fishing communities to jointly carry out some tasks (such as production/purchase of feeds and fingerlings, harvest and marketing of products) and organize themselves in mutual help groups to establish social safety nets.
- helping people to increase their access to land and water for fish farming and fisheries at village and higher levels, as in many cases regulation, tradition and/or culture limit access.

YOU CAN FURTHER HELP HIV/AIDS

AFFECTED PERSONS BY:

- cooperating with other sectors (such as health, education, agriculture) in dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS
- providing advice on the integration of fish farming with other activities, for instance vegetable gardening, small livestock raising (pigs, ducks) and agriculture (rice-fish culture). These might provide opportunities to decrease production risks, guarantee some income, and increase household food security.
- promoting gender awareness and empowerment to enable women to play a greater role in the sector and share in the benefits
- recording and sharing local knowledge on fisheries and fish farming for future generations



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