

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS IN FISHING COMMUNITIES?

The few countries where some action is being taken has been welcomed by the fishing communities, raised the interest of specialized agencies and triggered interventions. These isolated actions have addressed different aspects of the impact of the epidemic:

Prevention

- Workplace-based prevention measures in major seafood companies, **Namibia**
- Awareness-raising campaigns - e.g. South Pacific Commission, **New Caledonia**
- Behaviour change, e.g. through peer-to-peer education (SFLP and National Committee for AIDS Control, **Republic of Congo** and **Benin**, and YPEP/UNICEF Chorkor, **Ghana**)
- Toolkit for HIV prevention among fishermen in **Vietnam** (Asian Development Bank and UNDP)

Care

- Providing primary health services to mobile and migrant fishers, **Tanzania**, **Democratic Republic of Congo**
- Providing nutritional and positive living support for orphans and people living with HIV/AIDS (The AIDS Support Agency – TASO, **Uganda**, Lake Victoria)

Mitigation

- Saving schemes developed for vulnerable women and girls in fishing communities, **Republic of Congo** (National AIDS Committee and FAO/DFID SFLP)
- Training fishermen in alternative occupations to increase opportunities for livelihood diversification (Médecins Sans Frontières, **Zambia**)
- Development of small-scale aquaculture for people living with HIV and AIDS, **Malawi**
- Junior farmer field and life schools for orphans and vulnerable children in fishing/farming communities in western **Kenya** (FAO and World Food Programme)
- Community initiated safety nets – local fishing crew associations and Beach Management Units donating a proportion of their daily catch to support orphans' education (Lakes George and Edward, **Uganda**)

These initiatives are important, but they are very small-scale. Given the magnitude of the impacts of the epidemic, much remains to be done.

A few government ministries are beginning to develop impact-reduction strategies for their fisheries sector. These are still at a very early stage and support and commitment from a wide range of stakeholders is essential.



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TIME FOR ACTION! WHO CAN DO WHAT – AND HOW?

- **All stakeholders:** In some fishing communities, client-patron relationships are responsible for the frequency of ‘sex for fish’ deals and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. These risk behaviours need to be changed by addressing both their proximate factors – men’s behaviour – and their root causes – poverty, vulnerability and the ‘risk environment’. Inequalities in men and women’s access and ownership of assets, income-earning opportunities, power relations and negotiation of sexual relationships need to be addressed as a priority in fishing communities. Such efforts require novel partnerships between donors, fishery and health agencies, and within and between communities themselves.

- **Donors** can commit to assisting government and non-government interventions detailed below.

- **Ministries in charge of fisheries** can:

Sensitize their staff on HIV/AIDS related issues (e.g. by distributing this brief).

Have a senior member of staff act as an HIV and AIDS focal point. They need to be fully-trained and given the authority and scope to be able to initiate action-based change and policy development.

Work with health sector staff and other stakeholders, including civil society organizations and national development planning bodies to develop appropriate prevention, care and mitigation responses at local and national level.

Train and encourage local-level fisheries staff to learn more about the extent of the HIV and AIDS problem in their communities. Liaise with them to feed their local knowledge into planning and actions.

Ensure that fishery management and development interventions do not increase the vulnerability of fishery-dependent people.

- **Health ministries** can link with global funding to:

Make health services more easily accessible e.g. mobile or floating clinics.

Direct prevention-orientated interventions towards fishing communities, including improved access to treatment for sexually-transmitted infections, opportunistic infections and prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Improve access to testing, advice and care facilities by adapting them to the mobility and irregular working hours in fishing communities.

Make antiretroviral therapies accessible to fishing communities.

Emphasize nutritional benefits of fish for people living with HIV and AIDS.





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• **Local/Decentralized Government** can:

Assess whether HIV/AIDS is a significant concern in fishing communities in their district and if fishing contributions to their revenue and expenditure budgets are significant. If they are, then sector project proposals can be prepared with decentralized units of the national committee for HIV/AIDS control.

Allocate to AIDS-affected people in fishing villages a fair proportion of 'safety net' funds sourced through poverty reduction strategy plans and medium-term expenditure frameworks.

• **NGOs & other civil society groups** can:

Lobby government and donors for support.

Support communities with their own coping mechanisms. The women and men in these communities are best placed to define the social changes that will reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. But they cannot do this single-handedly and isolation and stigmatisation need to be avoided.

A COMMUNITY RESPONSE COULD INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

Prevention

- **Social communication** – group communication increases understanding of the reality of risky environments and introduces the work of peer educators.
- **Community discussion forum** – communities discuss concerns about HIV and identify ways to mitigate the impacts of AIDS.
- **Peer educators** – peer educators are community members who introduce reflection on risk practices that are specific for people of the same age, sex and social group. The groups then identify strategies for protection against transmission and impacts of HIV and AIDS.

Care and mitigation

- **Psychological assistance** to people living with HIV and AIDS – gives 'positive living' support and advice at household level.
- **Social support** to people living with HIV and AIDS – assistance with food security, nutrition advice and support to appropriate livelihoods diversification strategies.
- **Legal assistance** to people living with HIV and AIDS – family mediation, informing people on their rights and giving legal advice (mobility rights, access issues, property rights and access to resources for women).

RESOURCES

FAO publications on HIV/AIDS and Fisheries:

The susceptibility and vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities to HIV/AIDS in Uganda:
http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_pe3/pe3_040101_en.htm

Responding to HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector:
[ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/ae502e/ae502e06.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/ae502e/ae502e06.pdf)

Sectoral responses (fact sheets):
http://www.fao.org/hiv aids/publications/10_sectoral_responses.pdf

SFLP Liaison Bulletin N°17: Special Issue on HIV/AIDS and Fisheries in West Africa:
<http://www.sflp.org/eng/007/pub1/index.html>

Other FAO HIV/AIDS publications:

Incorporating HIV/AIDS consideration into food security and livelihood projects:
ftp://ftp.fao.org/es/esn/nutrition/hiv_aids.pdf

Living well with HIV/AIDS. A manual on nutritional care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS:
<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4168E/Y4168E00.HTM>

Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools. FAO and WFP:
<http://www.fao.org/hiv aids/publications/jffls.pdf>

More documents at:
http://www.fao.org/hiv aids/publications/index_en.htm

FAO Websites:

FAO HIV/AIDS and Food Security: <http://www.fao.org/hiv aids/>

FAO Fisheries Department: http://www.fao.org/fi/default_all.asp

FAO Integrated Programme: http://www.fao.org/sd/ip/index_en.htm

FAO Forestry and HIV/AIDS site: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/hiv-aids/en>

FAO Nutrition & HIV/AIDS: http://www.fao.org/es/ESN/nutrition/household_hiv aids_en.stm

Other sources of information:

UNAIDS: <http://www.unaids.org>

AIDS Brief for Sectoral Planners and Managers – Fisheries: <http://www.und.ac.za/und/heard>

World Fish Center – Press Release – 2002 Global Symposium on Women in Fisheries:
http://www.worldfishcenter.org/Pubs/Wif/wifglobal/wifg_appendix_press.pdf

ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS:
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/trav/aids/code/codemain.htm>

For more information, contact:

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