



Mainstreaming HIV in the Fisheries Sector

Since 2003, it is a policy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that all German Development Cooperation (GDC) programmes and projects in sub-Saharan Africa mainstream HIV, at least in countries with generalized epidemics¹ and especially in countries where HIV prevalence is five percent or more. Any mainstreaming HIV interventions must be planned and conducted jointly with GDC's partner organisations and be aligned with the partner country's sectoral strategies and national HIV strategy, thus adhering to the "Three Ones" principles. These require development partners to work through one national HIV strategy, one national HIV coordinating body and one national HIV Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

This guidance note discusses the *intersection of HIV and the fisheries sector* and suggests ways in which programmes and projects in this sector can mainstream HIV.

What is the impact of the HIV epidemic on the sector?

Fishing communities are very vulnerable to HIV infection and its effects: Fisherfolk are more likely to have HIV than the general population (Figure 1). Many people involved in fishing and associated activities are mobile and less constrained by family and community at home. Around fishing communities, sexual networks increase their vulnerability to HIV. Fishermen and fish traders are often engaged in multiple sexual relations with commercial sex workers and women of the community (Seeley and Allison, 2005). During "bad fishing" seasons, when fish are scarce, boat-owners who sell fish may favour certain female customers over others in exchange for sex. During "good fishing" seasons,



fishermen have access to daily cash income and can afford to buy sex. Alcohol consumption is high among fishermen and this makes them more likely to engage in high risk sexual behaviours.

Fishing communities often have limited access to health services: Despite the fact that fisherfolk are especially vulnerable to HIV, they tend to have limited access to health services, including voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), condoms, antiretroviral treatment and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This may be due to a country's generally weak health services infrastructure but may also be due to lack of knowledge and high mobility that can make fishermen difficult to reach with health services. Poor roads, poor telecommunications and lack of electricity, as well as lack of access to clean water and low levels of education can cause difficulties in prevention, diagnosis and treatment (Gordon, 2005).

¹In a generalized epidemic, HIV is firmly established in the general population. Although sub-populations at high risk may continue to contribute disproportionately to the spread of HIV, sexual networking in the general population is sufficient to sustain an epidemic.

HIV can threaten the productivity fishermen and their families:

HIV can erode household livelihoods by reducing the ability of people living with HIV (PLHIV) to work. Their family members (especially women and girls) may have to invest time in caring for sick family members, time they would otherwise invest in activities to ensure food security in their household (UNAIDS, 2008). Additionally, HIV-affected families may sell boats, nets and other fishing equipment to meet more immediate needs, thus reducing prospects for income. Fishermen who can no longer fish due to ill health may switch to female-dominated activities, such as fish processing, and displace women whose options for employment are limited, possibly pushing those women into commercial sex work.

HIV can undermine sustainable fisheries management:

Fish is an affordable food for poor people in low-income countries. However, limited income and food insecurity due to HIV may lead to unsustainable use of fish. For example, sick fishermen may prefer fishing in shallow waters, while unskilled youth with little knowledge about sustainable fishing may turn to fishing to secure food for their families and both practices may deplete fish populations.

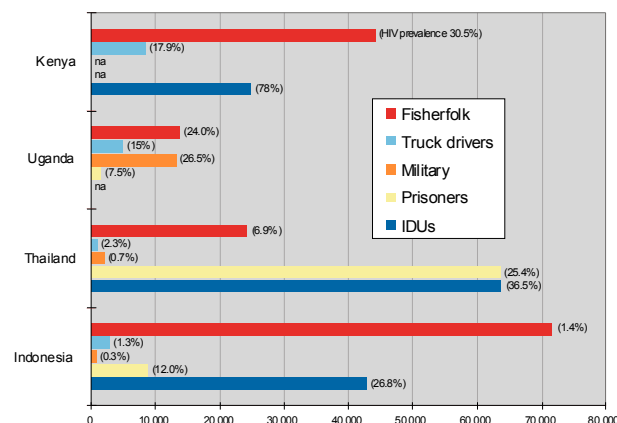
Africa's commercial fisheries and fish processing operations can be affected by HIV:

Commercial fisheries and fish processing can be important generators of foreign currency. However, their productivity and profitability may be curtailed by loss of skilled labour, high levels of absenteeism and increased health costs due to HIV. Loss of revenue in the fishing industry may have significant implications for national economies.

HIV in the fisheries sector can have wider impacts:

Mobile and part-time fishing populations, moving in and out of the sector, together with interactions through trade, permit HIV and its impacts to be spread from fishing populations into surrounding communities.

Figure 1: HIV Prevalence among fisherfolk and other vulnerable groups



Source: Kissling et al 2005. A cross country comparison

In what ways could the sector contribute to curbing the spread of the HIV epidemic or to mitigating its impacts in countries with generalized epidemics?

Mainstreaming HIV into programmes and projects targeting fishing communities:

Taking into consideration the threat that HIV poses on fishing communities, programmes and projects that deal with them should address this threat and integrate appropriate HIV interventions into their core businesses. Sectoral strategies and policies that address HIV in fishing communities can provide the framework for planning and implementation.

For example, Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has a strategy that aims to reduce the impact of HIV on fishing communities (2005). This strategy covers prevention, impact mitigation and a multi-sectoral response that includes microfinance and support for savings, health, education, water and sanitation, and road networks.

Advocating for the development and implementation of HIV workplace policies in the fishing industry:

Loss of human capacity in the fishing industry can be avoided through implementation of HIV workplace policies and these can provide for extension of HIV-related interventions into surrounding communities, targeting, for example, commercial sex workers. The policies can cover prevention, treatment and impact mitigation and the creation of working environments free from stigma and discrimination.

Increasing access to health services and preventive information, education and communications (IEC):

Fishing communities require access to VCT, treatment for STIs and condoms together with preventive IEC. HIV-related interventions should be planned and implemented in liaison with community-based organizations and PLHIV (Tanzarn and Bishop-Sambrook, 2003).

Facilitating sustainable fisheries management and supporting investments in alternative livelihoods:

Communities should be involved in finding ways of managing fisheries so they are sustainable, including ways of transferring relevant knowledge and skills from older generations to younger ones. In addition, they should be involved in developing habits of saving and finding ways to invest in alternative livelihoods so people are less dependent on fisheries (Tanzarn and Bishop-Sambrook, 2003).

GDC Examples

Policy Advice for Sustainable Fisheries

A GDC project in Uganda has been supporting implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and of related international conventions that provide the framework of Germany's commitment to promote and support sustainable fisheries management and the protection of biodiversity and food security. The target groups were artisanal fisherfolk, fishmongers and other users of aquatic resources. As part of its activities, the project conducted studies within the sector which – among other things – explored the links between fisheries and cross-cutting issues such as poverty reduction, good governance and HIV. In 2003, GDC supported a study to analyse the susceptibility and vulnerability to HIV of fishing communities and to make recommendations for improving the situation and possibly influencing policy (<http://www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-lesson7-fisheries-and-AIDS.pdf>).

References

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Further Reading

A selection of articles on mainstreaming HIV in the fisheries sector can be found at the GDC Mainstreaming HIV internet platform at <http://sites.google.com/a/ms-hiv-gdc.org/mainstreaming-hiv-in-german-development-cooperation/Home/sectors-priority-areas/fisheries-1>. To join the Group, visit <http://ms.hiv.aids.googlepages.com/home>.

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