

## Fisheries policies and management

Communities recognize the need to sustain fish stocks, but the way fisheries regulations, such as gear restrictions, are enforced affects how communities described BMUs. Some communities complain that formation of BMUs has increased catches for boat owners but reduced earnings for barias.

Other communities around Lakes George and Edward, and one by Lake Victoria described their BMUs positively because part of the money raised from taxes and legislation is being used to pay for orphan's education, replace gear and help the very sick to return to work. In these communities BMUs 'know the problems of the fishermen better compared to government officials' (Men's focus group, Lake Victoria).

## Summary

It is the cumulative impact of structural, economic and social factors that makes fishing communities unique and in need of focused support for prevention, care and impact mitigation of HIV/AIDS. The current lack of services and support, make people more susceptible to HIV, and quicker to face hardship as a result of AIDS. As one field-worker at Lake Albert wrote:

*"The communities see AIDS as an issue that revolves around other issues like poverty and low income, unavailability of services, sources of livelihood, to cite but a few, but those which the households and communities cannot handle single-handedly".*

Men and women in fishing communities have a lower quality of life than other livelihood groups. Living conditions do not encourage a settled and secure life where people do not need to take large risks. Evidence shows that HIV is more likely to spread in this kind of difficult environment.

## What has happened as a result of the study?

**Because no single organization can tackle the difficulties faced by fishing communities a National Strategy was produced which will involve a wide range of Government ministries.**

- Local NGOs and civil society organizations encouraged to work with women and men in fishing communities to help set up 'beach banks', and provide practical support and information to communities
- BMUs are being encouraged to spend some of the money they receive from taxes and licence fees on maintaining boreholes & building pit latrines
- On lakes George and Edward BMUs, Boat Owners Associations and Associations of Barias are already helping their communities. One group is supporting 57 orphans through school by giving up the price of one fish per boat per catch. Other groups are giving sick barias food and paying for health care.



**'A person falls sick until he dies if he or she does not have friends'. (Lake Albert)**

## Situation Analysis Summary

### The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Fishing Communities in Uganda



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Ministry of Agriculture,  
Animal Industry and  
Fishing

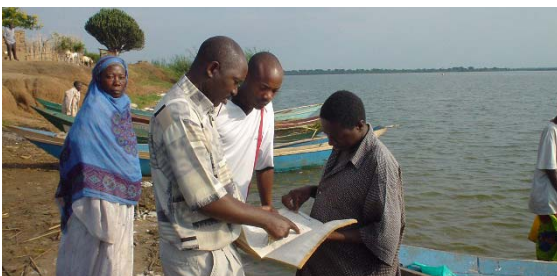


## Why do a situation analysis?

The Department of Fisheries Resources (DFR) is concerned that prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS in fishing communities are up to three times higher than in nearby agricultural areas. Despite this, fishing communities have not received specific attention to help prevent the spread of HIV, provide fishers and women in the communities with care and treatment when they are ill, or support with the impact of ill-health.

Fish are a major export commodity for Uganda, and earned \$105 million in 2004. The sector employs 700,000 people directly. Over 1.2 million households are totally or partially dependent on fishing and related services. Failing to address the problem of HIV/AIDS in fishing communities is likely to result in a decline in GDP and a failure to achieve goals of the PEAP.

In 2004 teams of field-workers worked with women and men in 21 fishing communities around lakes Victoria, Kyoga, Albert, George and Edward, and the Albert Nile to find out how HIV and AIDS were affecting their lives. The study helped DFR develop a national strategy to support fishing communities to cope with problems caused by HIV and AIDS, and help men and women protect themselves from becoming HIV positive.



## Vulnerability to HIV and AIDS

People in fishing communities face special difficulties which make it more difficult to avoid HIV and cope with the effects of AIDS:

- Most women and men are living away from their families.
- Fishers are paid after they land their catch. It is difficult to save
- Fishing is hard and dangerous work. A traditional 'reward' for men is to drink alcohol and have sex.
- Women have limited opportunities so many have to sell alcohol or sex
- Condoms are seldom available, and alcohol reduces 'safer sex'.
- Lack of clean water and health care make people prone to ill-health.
- Living away from families means there is little help if they become ill.

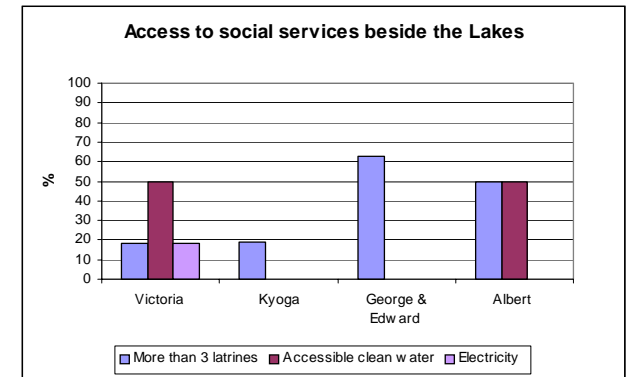
## Cash incomes and poverty

Many women and men earn money every day, but are still poor because they cannot save money and do not own gear or other possessions that can be sold to pay for medicines. In fishing communities people who can no longer work often have no one to look after them, and cannot pay for the help they need:

*'... so you can go home to seek treatment or die. Nobody has the time to look after you. If you can't be cured you die. If you are cured, you come back'* (Men's focus group discussion, Lake Kyoga)

## Hygiene and sanitation

None of the communities visited on lakes Kyoga, George and Edward had access to safe drinking water. Although 50% of communities on lakes Victoria and Albert could access safe water this is less than the national average of 55%. Only 20% of all the communities had access to improved sanitation compared to a national average of 79%. This is resulting in high levels of illness and frequent outbreaks of cholera and dysentery in many communities.



## Access to health care

Access to health care is poor. Only 18%-35% of the communities visited on lakes Kyoga, George and Edward had government health centres. These are under-staffed and often run out of drugs. Lack of access to health care make it difficult for people to have voluntary counselling and testing (VCT).

## High levels of AIDS related illness

Fifty-five percent of deaths in the communities over the last year were reported to be as a result of AIDS. 'Every home has an orphan. Some homes have between 5 and 10 orphans.' (Field report, Lake Edward)

## Inappropriate support services

Communities, except for those close to Kampala and Entebbe, seldom benefit from HIV/AIDS support services. When they are visited the information or help provided is not considered suitable for the special needs of fishing communities.

*'They (NGOs) come and lend money... But the time of grace is so short you cannot pay back the loan. So (the women) say 'give me back the deposit and just have your money''* (Women's focus group, Lake Albert).