

HIV/AIDS and Artisanal Fisheries: A Case Study of Lake Victoria Kenya

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Introduction: Since the emergence of HIV/AIDS on the shores of Lake Victoria, Kenya in 1985, HIV/AIDS related illness and mortality has remained highest among fishing communities in this region compared to the rest of the population. The primary purpose of this research was to understand the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Lake Victoria region on artisanal fishery practices and management. This was achieved by considering the impact of HIV/AIDS on the artisanal fishery, and the coping strategies being adopted

Study Methodology: This research used a qualitative approach, implementing a case study strategy. A total of 50 respondents from Kaswanga and Kolunga fishing communities in Lake Victoria Kenya participated in the study.

Study Findings: The type of fishery played a role in increasing the fishing communities' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Emerging issues such as; conservational and management regulations/policies, climate variability, social and political marginalization, sex-for-fish, sex-for-customer, and a perceived tilapia-aphrodisiac phenomenon, contributed to fishing communities' susceptibility and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and changing management of the artisanal fishery. Both communities used coping mechanisms in response to HIV/AIDS, some which mitigated the impact of HIV/AIDS while others aggravated the situation. The coping mechanisms were learnt in a variety of ways, such as individual, peer to peer (social), and community (social learning).

Conclusions: The fishing communities of Kaswanga and Kolunga have been significantly impacted by HIV/AIDS; this is well reflected in the state of their fishery and their resulting livelihood security. As there is very little empirical evidence showing the linkage between HIV/AIDS and artisanal fishery sector, this study has provided data showing this linkage. The findings help us to understand the most significant long-term consequences of HIV/AIDS and provide the basis for new improved responses to positively deal with HIV/AIDS in the artisanal fishery sector.