

# Responding to HIV and AIDS in the Fishery Sector: Approaches, Lessons and Plan for Action

International Workshop, Lusaka, Zambia  
21-22 February 2006

## Background

In the last decade, it has become evident that fishermen in many developing countries are among the populations most at risk to HIV, with prevalence often five to ten times higher than those in the general population. Prevalence among the many women working in fishing communities is not known but is likely to be even higher, due to the subordinate economic and social position they occupy increasing their exposure to HIV. The elevated HIV prevalence and the alarming morbidity and mortality due to AIDS place fisherfolk and their communities among those meriting close attention in policy and support programmes in response to the disease.

A number of initiatives around the world have targeted fisherfolk with various forms of interventions that aim to prevent infection, provide medical treatment to those living with AIDS, or support AIDS-affected individuals and households with broader livelihoods options, including training in occupations that provide alternatives to the physical rigours of fishing. There has been little opportunity, however, for lesson learning from across these programmes, and the efficacy of different approaches under different circumstances has not been reviewed. As a result, the response to HIV and AIDS in fishing communities has been piecemeal and ad-hoc, applying approaches developed in farming or urban communities that have sometimes proven to be inappropriate and ineffective in fishing communities. The location of these programmes seems to depend on chance encounters of health projects and fishing communities, rather than a strategic approach that would target those communities most at risk and/or most in need of treatment and mitigation measures, or those fisheries that contribute most to national and regional economies and where the economic losses associated with HIV and AIDS will have the greatest impact on poverty alleviation efforts.

Working in the fishery sector has posed particular challenges to service providers working on HIV and AIDS for a number of reasons. These include the mobility and remoteness of many fisherfolk, their transient community structures and lack of involvement with other social services. Nevertheless, around the world, governments and civil society groups have started to respond to HIV and AIDS in fishing communities and the fishery sector more generally. This has included health service provisioning, education campaigns, integrated rural planning, and policy development processes. **There is urgent demand to review these efforts, assess what approaches have worked under what conditions, and identify the investments and mechanisms needed to scale up successful examples.**

Addressing this urgent demand, the International Workshop will enable service providers working with fishing communities in response to HIV and AIDS in Africa to share experiences, appraise the efficacy of their approaches and identify actions in research and development that will further improve their impact.

## Objectives of the workshop

The International Workshop will

- Review and compare approaches applied in response to HIV and AIDS in fishing communities and the wider fishery sector.
- Identify good practice examples for wider application.

- Identify investments needed in development and research to scale up these examples, adapt them to changing circumstances and monitor their impact.
- Establish a network of practitioners in Africa for capacity building, scaling-up and further development of approaches.

### **Format of workshop**

The WorldFish Center, FAO, SIDA and IOM will organise a two-day international workshop for agencies involved in planning, support delivery, research and monitoring of HIV and AIDS in fishing communities. Participants will primarily come from Africa; they will present their technical and organisational approaches and discuss successes and challenges. In addition, key technical papers will highlight trends and innovations in the region in response to HIV and AIDS. The workshop will then identify key lessons and priorities for action to scale up best practice experiences. In support of this, a network of practitioners involving health service and fishery development agencies will be initiated. The workshop will be held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 21-22 February 2006.

### **Participants**

The workshop expects about 70 participants from civil society and government involved in HIV and AIDS support to fishing communities in Africa. In addition, technical experts from regional and international research and development organisations will attend.

### **Expected workshop outputs**

The workshop is expected to deliver the following three outputs:

- A Draft Guide to Good Practice in responding to HIV and AIDS in fishing communities in Africa;
- A Work Programme and Funding Plan for further adaptation and scaling-up of successful approaches and for monitoring their impact in fishing communities and the wider fishery sector;
- An Africa-wide Network of Practitioners in communities, service providers, and professional organisations as a long-term mechanism for responding to HIV and AIDS in the fishery sector.

### **Take-up of workshop outputs**

Workshop participants from Africa will be able to incorporate lessons developed through the workshop into their on-going work with fishing communities. They will also be able to link more effectively with international and regional expertise in the health and fisheries sectors.

Recommendations from the workshop will be integrated into NEPAD's Fish Sector Development Program, currently being developed with support from the WorldFish Center, FAO and regional partners. In particular, the *NEPAD Action Plan for the Development of African Fisheries and Aquaculture*, adopted at the NEPAD-Fish for All Summit in Abuja, Nigeria in August 2005, recognises investment needs in support of civil society and government agencies working with fishing communities to improve their health and social welfare. Workshop outputs will provide important guidance on how this support can be extended.

Global and regional programmes by the WorldFish Center, FAO, SIDA and IOM aimed at improving livelihoods in small-scale fisheries will take up workshop outputs and will seek to support their implementation through existing projects and by prioritising them in the design of new activities.