

Establishment of a state-of-the-art, no-sex-for-fish center; women and youths empowerment strategy in western Kenya

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Abstract

Sex-for-fish is a strategy to ensure continuous access to fish and its products. Women trading sex for fish is a common cultural practice in fishing communities where prevalence of HIV is usually high. Vulnerable women exchange sex for fish with fisher folks for acquisition of basic needs and in order to get money for their businesses. Fisher folks stay away from their families for a long time and they interact sexually with women; a risky behaviour that exposes both groups to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, due to low or no condom use. This calls for sustainable approaches that can empower women to fend for themselves, live decent lives and stop the culture of sex-for-fish. Innovative approaches such as coming up with a mobile application and a center for selling and buying fish can help stop spread of sexually transmitted diseases, especial HIV. Women can also be provided with fish cages and fingerlings at affordable prices for fish farming. These may result in promotion of sustainable economic development in women and may stop the sex-for-fish culture. The innovation can lead to promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Keywords: Sex-for-fish, vulnerable, HIV, sustainable, Empowerment, center and Fish-Cages.

1. Introduction

Transactional sex or Fish-For-Sex (FFS) is the exchange of money or goods for sex and it is not similar to commercial sex (Deane & Wamoyi, 2015). The relationship occurs in rural and urban settings (Stoebenau, Heise, Wamoyi, & Bobrova, 2016) and especially in areas around the lake (Camlin, Kwena, & Dworkin, 2013; Fiorella, et al., 2015; MacPherson, et al., 2012). Female fishmongers in the fishing communities form sexual relationships with fishermen.

Access to basic needs by vulnerable women is determined by availability of resources, income and dynamics around gender, that mediate their access to the resources. The needs may be acquired through FFS exchanges (Fiorella, et al., 2015). Such relationships mainly aim for access to basic needs of such women, and not just getting an income. Decrease in availability of such needs for vulnerable women is thought to increase engagement in FFS (Fiorella, Desai, Miller, Okeyo, & Young, 2019). Transactional sex is also caused by changes in the environment (Maxwell, Fuller, Brooks, & Watson, 2016) altered resource availability and migration of people (Fiorella, Desai, Miller, Okeyo, & Young, 2019).

In sub-Saharan Africa, FFS put men and women at an equal increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV (Chatterji, Murray, London, & Anglewicz, 2005; Merten & Haller, 2007; Smolak, 2014), pregnancy and early child-bearing in young because women find it difficult to negotiate for safe sex (MacPherson, et al., 2012). With such risks, there is need to empower women so that they can feed their family members and run their businesses independent of fishermen. Establishing a central selling and buying center for fish is ideal to fishermen and female fish vendors, respectively.

This can be done through development of a mobile application that can alert the women of the availability of fish for purchase. Provision of fish cages and fingerlings for the vulnerable women at an affordable price can enable them do independent fish farming. All these are sustainable in fishing communities.

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