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Low uptake of HIV voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) in a population at high risk of HIV: highly mobile women in the fish trade in Nyanza Province, Kenya

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Background

In Kenya:

- *~ 400 beach villages along lake shore*
- *~ 19,000 men working in fishing industry*
- *Mobility of fishermen believed to contribute to enormous, sustained HIV epidemic in Nyanza*

- *~30,000 women **also** working in fishing industry in Kenya*
- *Their mobility: not studied*
- *Their role in spread of HIV: ?*



Background

“Jaboya” “sex-for-fish” economy:

- A phenomenon in inland fisheries settings in Africa (and some settings in Asia)
- Fishermen grant access to fish for female traders in exchange for sex : “She pays twice”
- For women, secures access to fish & reduces risks and transaction costs in unstable markets (Béné & Merten 2008)
- Linked to deteriorating lake ecology & gender inequality in sexual relations (Mojola 2010)



Aims

- Characterize forms and patterns of migration and mobility among women in the fish trade in Nyanza Province, Kenya
- Describe spatial and social features of beach villages
- Assess features of the “sex-for-fish” economy at beaches on Lake Victoria and implications for HIV
- Assess the HIV-VCT and prevention needs of women in the fish trade

Key findings

- *Independent female migrants more likely to participate in sex-for-fish economy*
- *Circumstances that drove migration (e.g. widowhood, GBV) may have placed women at risk at origin*
- *Female fish traders also often highly mobile*
- *Female fish traders who had never received HIV VCT, or who had tested once, long ago, were more likely to be older, widowed or currently married*

Conclusions

- *Older women in fish trade at high risk of HIV via participation in the sex-for-fish economy and/or husbands' extramarital relationships, yet not reached by HIV VCT and other services*
- *Accelerated access to HIV prevention, including VCT, with linkages to HIV care & treatment needed for both men and women in fishing communities*
- *Gender dialogue & micro-economic interventions needed to reduce dependence on 'jaboya' economy*



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