

**News/ Uganda****Stricken by AIDS**

*A study finds that in Uganda, as a result of HIV-AIDS, men's involvement in fishing declined by 14 per cent and that of women in fishing processing by 24 per cent*

**By Esther Nakkazi of *The East African***

The high prevalence of HIV-AIDS among Uganda's fishing communities has adversely affected the sector, leading to a sharp drop in production. Quoting a study released recently by the National Agricultural Advisory Services of Uganda (NAADS), the Minister of State for Agriculture, Kibirige Ssebunya, said that 26 per cent of the 3,879 people in the study's population were infected with HIV-AIDS and related illnesses, with 486 having died over the past five years. The study was carried out by the NAADS with support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme. The aim was to assess the non-health effects of HIV-AIDS on individuals, households and communities.

The study was based on a survey of smallholder agricultural rural households at six sites in the Lake Victoria Crescent agro-ecological zone, representing the fisheries and pastoral agriculture subsectors. Households were asked to provide comparative data for the five-year period between 1997 and 2002. Forty-three per cent of affected households reported a reduction in the annual catch, a figure higher than that for unaffected ones by 20 per cent.

The survey found that men's involvement in fishing declined by 14 per cent, while that of women in fish processing went down by 24 per cent. Households were spending six per cent less time on fishing and making up the shortfall with male hired labour.

As a result of HIV-AIDS, men had resorted to shallow-water fishing with reduced night-time fishing. Women fisherfolk, on the other hand, were producing a lower quality of smoked and salted fish or altogether abandoning these processes because they are labour-intensive and detrimental to health. Instead, they were shifting to sun drying. Sun-dried fish has a lower market price than the salted or smoked variety, leading to an overall lowering of income. Due to poor smoking, a significant proportion of the catch was rotting and being turned into animal feed, which fetched lower prices.

The study also revealed that, because of limited resources, HIV-AIDS-affected households could not invest in modern technology, fishing boats and gear.

*This piece is based on Esther Nakkazi's article in *The East African (Nairobi)*, 1 December 2003*