



FINAL EVALUATION

STRENGTHENING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF PREVENTION AND AWARENESS SERVICES FOR FISHERMEN AND FISH SELLERS AROUND LAKE TANGANYIKA (SAPEMA)

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EVALUATION DATES: MAY - OCTOBER 2023



COUNTRY:
BURUNDI



BUDGET :
€599 038



LEAD ORGANIZATIONS:
Essentiel

PARTNERS:
SWAA-Burundi,
COPEDECOBU



START DATE:
01/01/2020

END DATE:
01/06/2023

THE PROJECT

Background

In Burundi, fishing takes place along the entire shoreline of Lake Tanganyika and accounts for an estimated 40,000 direct and indirect workers. There are high levels of promiscuity and the demand for sexual favors among fishermen is a key factor in the transmission of infectious diseases. Populations in the beach and port areas come from both Burundi and neighboring countries (Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo).

When fishermen and fish sellers are sick, they often access care late due to the distance to health facilities and the long waiting times in these facilities. In Burundi, fishermen, female fish sellers, restaurateurs and children from this community are exposed to risks of HIV infection, STIs, unwanted pregnancies, tuberculosis and malaria. On the whole, community health interventions were reaching fishing communities at very low levels.

Project operating model

The project is managed in a consortium, composed of the project lead and their two implementing partners. ESSENTIEL (based in France) is the technical and financial partner for the project. SWAA-Burundi oversees operational monitoring of the project and provides expertise on sexual and reproductive health and gender issues. The COPEDECOBU cooperative represents fishermen. The cooperative provides expertise on the needs of fishermen and promotes their ownership of the project.

OBJECTIVES

Overall objective

Strengthening the accessibility of sexual and reproductive health, HIV, STI, hepatitis, tuberculosis and malaria prevention and awareness services for fishermen and fish sellers around Lake Tanganyika.

Specific objectives

- ▶ **SO1** : Strengthen access for fishermen, fish sellers and sex workers around Lake Tanganyika to testing for sexually transmitted diseases (HIV, STIs, hepatitis) and develop prevention and awareness services on sexual and reproductive health, malaria and tuberculosis.
- ▶ **SO2** : Support the formalization of COPEDECOBU and SWAA's approaches to increase access to health services for fishermen, to enable scale up.
- ▶ **SO3** : Support national advocacy to better take into account the specific needs of fishermen and port communities in national health policies and strategies.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Relevance

The project is strongly aligned with the context in Burundi and the constraints that were initially identified. In order to address them, the project set out to combine several transformative approaches to improving access to care for these population groups: peer education, community health outreach, partnerships with community health centers, and advocacy at the national level.

Effectiveness

The project has a good level of effectiveness. In terms of specific objective 1 (SO1), overall the results have been achieved: at the end of the project, 3 health posts are operational, and the number of awareness sessions and the total number of participants in these sessions were often higher than expected. This is testament to the passion of the peer educators (PEs), the interest of target communities in the project and effective supervision by the team. Tailored support (testing and referrals through outreach and partnerships with health centers) made it possible to significantly improve the quality of medical care for fishermen and fish seller communities. With regard to SO2, above all the project supported the development of the SWAA-Burundi gender strategy. Under SO3, results have been achieved in terms of greater visibility among the various stakeholders around the right to health of the community and taking into account their specific needs. Advocacy has led to the recognition of the specific needs of fishermen as a population at high risk of HIV and STIs in the National AIDS Council's national strategic plan.

Efficiency

The project is considered to have a good level of efficiency, despite external factors that impacted the smooth running of the project (floods, COVID-19). The project's organizational efficiency has been highlighted in particular: operational and budgetary reprogramming related to new COVID-19 activities, adapted number of peer educators (prioritizing retraining sessions for trained PEs rather than training more) and adapted number of awareness sessions (the projected resources at the start of the project were overestimated in relation to implementation opportunities).

Impact

Through awareness-raising, beneficiary communities have experienced improved knowledge of diseases and are aware of the need to seek treatment as soon as possible. Some of the PEs also raise awareness among their family and friends. Outreach helps to facilitate the work of partner health centers through enabling better targeting and referral of different categories of patients, such as sex workers or people living with HIV (including those lost to follow-up). There has also been an increase in the use of health centers by the fishing community.

Sustainability

Factors supporting sustainability: empowerment of partner organizations as a result of their active participation in the project, proximity of the Federation of Fishermen and COPEDECOBU, with their members contributing to the social ownership of the project, strengthening the skills of PEs, and embedding the specific needs of fishing communities in public health policies. Constraints: the operation of unsecured health posts after the project ends, status of PEs in the future, finance access challenges for target groups limiting access to care, and COPEDECOBU's lack of unrestricted funds.



Conclusions and recommendations

- ▶ The project has achieved a good level of results overall and two major changes can be highlighted: (1) improvements in health conditions among fishermen and fish seller communities in terms of prevention and access to care; (2) improved knowledge of the specific needs of the fishermen and fish sellers community to integrate them into national strategies as a key population that requires tailored approaches and interventions adapted to their needs. However, there are still significant challenges in terms of sustainability.
- ▶ The main recommendations to ESSENTIEL as project lead are the following: (1) continue to lead reflection sessions with the other members of the consortium on issues related to the sustainability of achievements under phase 1 and related to an exit strategy; (2) increase COPEDECOBU's responsibility in the management of the project, with a view to sustainability and empowerment of the main implementing partner.
- ▶ All consortium members should advocate to the Ministry of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS and to technical and financial partners around: (1) strengthening the capacity of TB diagnosis and treatment centers in terms of equipment and organizational capacity; (2) strengthening all partner health centers to develop outreach work with fishing communities; (3) the status of peer educators; (4) the sustainability of health posts.
- ▶ Finally, with a view to better addressing financial access problems among the target groups, it is recommended to support the creation of: (1) a community health mutual; (2) income-generating activities (within the Federation of Fishermen and Fish Sellers).

DECEMBER 2023