

HIV prevalence much higher among fishermen

KAMPALA

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The HIV-prevalence among fishing communities in western Uganda is much higher than previously known, a new study has revealed.

The study, conducted on 890 randomly selected households, interviewing adults aged 15-69 by Epicentre Uganda, examined the HIV-prevalence rate among adults and children in 12 fishing communities around lake George and Edward.

According to the study, the HIV-prevalence rate was higher among women (20.9%) compared to men (13.5%).

In terms of occupation, farmers had the highest HIV-prevalence rate among women (27.6%) and fishermen among

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men (18.7%).

The findings were unveiled during the first Epicentre Scientific Day conference held at Kampala Serena International

Conference centre last week.

Epicentre is an association created in 1986 by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international humanitarian organisation, to provide epidemiological expertise.

Scientists at the conference sought to find ways of improving prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.

"More HIV preventive interventions are needed, particularly targeting women and fishermen," Juan Burgos-Soto, a researcher at Epicentre, stated.

Overall, 1,738 adults and 148 children took part in the study. The HIV-prevalence rate among adults was 17.5% and 6.1% among HIV-exposed children.

HIV prevalence in Uganda is currently estimated at 7.4%, an increase from 6.4% in 2004



African representative of Epicentre Dr Yap Boym, the general director of Epicentre -Paris, Emmanuel Baron and director of Epicentre Uganda Dr Juliet Mwanga during the Epicentre Scientific Day at Kampala Serena International Conference Centre on Wednesday. Photo by Tony Rujuta

and 7.3% in 2013, according to the 2014 HIV/AIDS country report by Uganda AIDS Commission.

The study recommends

strengthening antiretroviral treatment, especially among fishermen, who are often mobile because of the nature of their work. Apart from

fishing communities, people in the armed forces (Police, army, prisons and private security guards) are also among the high-risk populations.