

## Kenya: Young girls the new bait for fishermen

Dunga Beach, along the shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya's western city of Kisumu, erupts into activity when the boats bring in their catch.

KISUMU, 12 September 2008 (PlusNews) - Female fishmongers scramble along the beach to buy fish, shouting themselves hoarse to get the attention of the fishermen and middlemen, who control whether or not the women will have anything to sell that day.

Mingling with the jostling fishmongers is 19-year-old Lillian Onoka; stylishly dressed and with neatly plaited hair, she is easily noticed. "I do not sell fish but my aunt does, and she brings me along with her. I just help her get the fish without her having to scramble," Onoka told IRIN/PlusNews.

Her aunt brings her as an inducement to the fishermen to hand over the best of their catch. Onoka says she is not tied to one fisherman, but will sleep with whoever offers the best deal on any given day.

This trend is a new take on an old system, known as 'jaboya' (a customer who is also a lover, in the local Luo language), in which female fishmongers develop sexual relationships with fishermen and middlemen in exchange for fish.

Fishing is the economic mainstay of this community, and jaboya the only way for fish traders to make a living. Stiff competition for a catch that is often less than plentiful means offering their own bodies is no longer enough, so desperate traders have now resorted to making available their younger, more nubile relatives - many of them under 18 years of age - to ensure they have an edge.

"Most of them [fishmongers] give us money and we are able to dress well and take care of ourselves," Onoka said. She was orphaned when both her parents died from HIV-related illnesses, dropped out of school and left her village to live with her aunt in Kisumu, capital of Nyanza Province.

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