

Property Rights Violations as a Structural Driver of Women's HIV Risks: A Qualitative Study in Nyanza and Western Provinces, Kenya

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Date: 2012

Abstract:

While access to and control over assets can minimize women's HIV risk, little is known about the processes through which property rights violations increase the sexual transmission of HIV. The current study focused on two rural areas in Nyanza and Western Province, Kenya where HIV prevalence was high (23.8-33 %) and property rights violations were common. The current work drew on in-depth interview data collected from 50 individuals involved in the development and implementation of a community-led land and property rights program. The program was designed to respond to property rights violations, prevent disinheritance and asset stripping, and reduce HIV risk among women. In our findings, we detailed the social and economic mechanisms through which a loss of property rights was perceived to influence primary and secondary prevention of HIV. These included: loss of income, loss of livelihood and shelter, and migration to slums, markets, or beaches where the exchange of sex for food, money, shelter, clothing, or other goods was common. We also examined the perceived influence of cultural practices, such as wife inheritance, on HIV risk. In the conclusions, we made recommendations for future research in the science-base focused on the development of property ownership as a structural HIV prevention and treatment intervention.