

## How UNFPA Takes Action on Preventing HIV/AIDS

The UN Population Fund's core objective is to help ensure universal access to high-quality reproductive health services to all couples and individuals by 2015. Pursuing that goal, the Fund has had more than 30 years' experience in negotiating with governments worldwide on sensitive issues of gender relations, sexuality, reproductive health and family planning. With its network of partnerships and country-level programmes, the UN Population Fund has long made the fight against HIV/AIDS an institutional priority and part of all its efforts.

Sexual and reproductive health programmes provide a natural entry point for information and services to prevent HIV/AIDS. The Fund cosponsors and works closely with UNAIDS, the programme set up with the support of seven UN agencies in 1996 to coordinate the UN system's overall response to AIDS, including prevention, treatment, care and support.

The UN Population Fund strengthens reproductive health programmes to provide information and services, empower women, and encourage behavioral change. Prevention works, and UNFPA is a leader in showing how and why.

### **Preventing the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS:**

The UN Population Fund supports reproductive health programmes in over 120 countries.

- Its offices have supported HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in 78 countries, preventive counseling in 56 countries, HIV-related advocacy in 79 countries, prevention for young people in 78 countries and training programmes in 83 countries.<sup>1</sup>
- The UN Population Fund has nine multidisciplinary Country Technical Services Teams that include more than 100 specialists, including dedicated HIV/AIDS advisors.

Peer educators, community-based organizations, teacher-parent groups, vocational training centers and youth clubs use formal and informal information, education and entertainment vehicles to get across HIV/AIDS prevention messages.

- Peer educators in Albania reached more than 1,500 young people ages 15-24 in a UNFPA project in 2000 that also sold 1.3 million condoms.
- From a boat on the Mekong River in Cambodia, an entertaining play attracted large audiences of young people, who received lessons about HIV/AIDS and free T-shirts and condoms.
- In Nigeria, UNFPA supported 52 episodes of a weekly TV programme, "I Need to Know," that dramatized the life-saving role of knowledge and openness about HIV/AIDS. The popular show is being renewed and adapted to radio.

## Condom availability and programming:

The procurement, transport and distribution of condoms and other reproductive health care commodities to meet current need, as well as the building of a country's long-term capacity to meet its own reproductive health care needs, are integral parts of UNFPA's family planning and HIV/AIDS programmes worldwide.

UNFPA is the world's largest international supplier of condoms to developing countries. It is a pioneer in promoting the use of female condoms and dual protection, from sexually transmitted infection and unintended pregnancy, especially for women and girls.

In 2000, the UN Population Fund and its partners created the Global Strategy for Reproductive Health Commodity Security, working to create a world system of supplies that are adequate, dependable and diverse. As part of the Global Initiative on Reproductive Health Commodity Management, set up in 1992, the Fund coordinates donor support for supply programmes, manages the logistics of procurement and distribution, brings down prices, and makes sure that the commodities reach the people who most need them at the time and place where they are needed.

- A high-quality condom, "Love Time," was marketed in more than 300 outlets in Beijing and Shanghai, China, in a UNFPA pilot project in 1998-2000. Vending machines in public toilets and on campuses and outlets in shops, clinics and news stands sold over 800,000 condoms.
- More than 1.5 million condoms were supplied to defence forces in Eritrea in a 1999-2001 project on HIV prevention. It also involved 222 peer educators, trainings, films and seminars.
- Using street theatre and rap performers, a UNFPA-backed condom campaign in Ghana in 2000 triggered an 80 percent rise in condom use in just six months.

## Preventing HIV infection:

- UNFPA supports programmes to prevent HIV infection in pregnant women and halt mother-to-child transmission, the most significant cause of HIV infection among children under 10. By the end of 2000, some 4.3 million children under 15 had died of AIDS since the epidemic began.
- UNFPA's work to reduce maternal mortality from complications of pregnancy, such as providing prenatal care and skilled obstetric care at delivery, also keeps newborns and infants healthy. Other important measures UNFPA supports include keeping the blood supply safe and providing anti-retroviral drugs to nursing mothers.
- Working with UN Children's Fund and other UN AIDS partners, UNFPA supports 11 pilot projects to prevent transmission of HIV to pregnant women and their children and partners.

## Demonstrating leadership and partnership:

Silence about HIV and the stigma of carrying the infection are potent allies of the pandemic. The UN Population Fund works with the leaders of countries and communities to improve citizens' understanding. Knowledge is the best weapon against HIV/AIDS. UNFPA's management is results-based, ensuring verifiable progress toward well-defined goals.

Partnerships with UN and other international agencies and with non-governmental organisations help to provide a coordinated response that best uses the available resources. The number of requests from governments for support in preventing HIV is high and growing higher, but the Fund's activities are under severe restraint because of a four-year decline in donor contributions. Success in halting AIDS will depend on adequate financial and other resources at every level.

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