

# STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING THE OCCURANCE OF HIV/AIDS AMONG WOMEN

Diwya\* and Raajeswari, PA\*\*.

## Introduction

The weak HIV / AIDS surveillance system in the India region indicates a low prevalence scenario, risk factors for the spread of the infection exist in the country. The four key interrelated risk factors present in most of the countries are (1) behavioral risks such as injecting drug use (IDD), commercial sex work (CSW), men who have sex with men (MSM), persons with multiple sex partners, unprotected sexual activities; (2) rising youth population who are particularly at high risk of infection; (3) sexually transmitted infections and low condom use, and (4) structural factors (such as poverty, unemployment of youth, labor migration, gender inequality, gender-based violence, discrimination, and so on), conflict, and refugees. While the epidemic in the country is currently limited to high-risk groups, these are not an isolated group and their interactions with the general populace put the whole region at risk. Interrupting the transmission of the infection to the general populace is crucial and needs to be done in a timely manner. As prevalence rates rise, the impact on human cost begins to shift from being limited to a personal-level issue of the pain and guilt surrounding intimate relationships to a state-level issue threatening economic, social and political securities.

## Objectives

The following four priority areas have been identified, which fit into the conceptual framework that integrates advocacy, information, and prevention interventions.

---

\* Research Scholar, II M.Sc., Family and Community Science, Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore

\*\* Lecturer, Department of Food Science and Nutrition, Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore

1. Engage political leaders, policy makers and key stakeholders to raise awareness and increase the priority given to HIV / AIDS programs within national and regional development agendas.
2. Support the upgrading of the surveillance systems and strengthen research and evaluation of epidemiological, economic and behavioral aspects of HIV / AIDS to enhance the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS policies and programs.
3. Support the development of national HIV/AIDS strategies and programs, based on the specific epidemiological, social, and economic conditions and context of each country.
4. Support capacity building and knowledge sharing for the comprehensive management of HIV / AIDS programs.

## **Framework of Strategic Interventions**

### **Advocacy, Information/Knowledge and Prevention**

For low HIV / AIDS prevalence, countries must be prepared to act primarily at three key levels of interventions: advocacy, information/knowledge, and prevention in order to keep prevalence rates low. These three interventions must be implemented concurrently to be effective in keeping prevalence rates low. An enabling environment within which these interventions can take place is essential. Advocacy to raise the awareness of leaders regarding the issues, and reduce the stigmas associated with the disease is key to achieving this. Within an enabling environment, people at risk can be empowered to take greater control of their own lives and safety as it concerns the infection. Empowering people will require governments to reduce barriers (such as policies, regulations, customs, and attitudes) at all levels that the populace face, which prevent them from adequately protecting themselves. Combining knowledge with reduced barriers and services will facilitate empowerment of individuals and communities in a way that enables them to alter risky practices and access needed services, leading to a reduction in transmission of HIV. Implementing effective prevention programs that incorporate these elements will require knowledge of the major factors that influence risk taking

among people whose lifestyles will likely expose themselves and others to HIV. The figure below shows the conceptual framework to keep prevalence rates low in the India region.

### **Conceptual Framework for Preventing HIV/AIDS in Low Prevalence settings\***

#### **Advocacy: To create the Enabling environment**

To raise awareness of political, business, and religious leaders, and the general populace, to reduce barriers of prevention, and to reduce stigma.

#### **Information/knowledge**

Data to be used for advocacy, informing decision makers, and planning responses. Includes surveillance, research and monitoring and evaluation data.

#### **Prevention**

Services that are primarily targeted and accessed by vulnerable and high - risk group.

The infection is still largely confined to vulnerable groups, countries with low prevalence epidemics must be ready to take advantage of the opportunity to create an enabling environment and improve their information /knowledge base to implement prevention efforts among these groups. This approach would be more effective and less costly than having to deal with a full -blown epidemic. Popular, political, business and a religious leaders must be solicited to help create the enabling environment within which effective prevention activities can be conducted. HIV I AIDS is a developmental issue that requires collaborative and multi sectoral efforts of many partners beyond the health sector. Coordinating these efforts will require political commitment at the highest levels. The challenge will be to implement HIV I AIDS programs in a more integrated approach rather than as vertical programs.

#### **Conclusion**

Implementing this strategy in the short to medium term will required resources to increase the knowledge base, incorporating HIV I AIDS programming and other

policy dialogue tools, retrofitting HIV I AIDS activities into projects . The need for innovative financing mechanisms is key, because the region is mainly composed of middle -income countries where financing through lending operation on HIV I AIDS will be less significant that in low -income countries, particularly if governments can access grants from other sources.