

Starting community-based HIV projects

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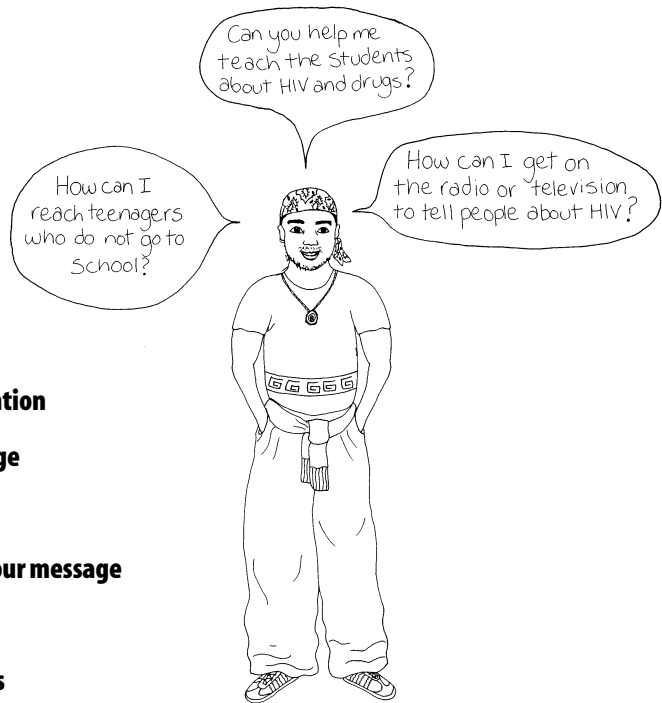
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Carlos's story

Carlos is eighteen years old. He left his high school in Houston, a city in Texas in the United States. Carlos often got into trouble at school. He used drugs and rarely went to class. His parents finally made him leave their house and Carlos moved into a friend's home. His friend had recently stopped using drugs and he encouraged Carlos to go to a drug treatment program for help. Carlos went to the program and stopped using drugs. Later he attended classes at night and finished high school.

Carlos went to get an HIV test because he was worried that he might have been infected when he shared needles two years before. A week later he learned that he had HIV. He went back to his friends from the drug treatment program and they helped him cope with the bad news. After a while, Carlos decided that he wanted to help teach other young people about HIV so that they would not get the virus like he did. He comes to you for advice: "Can you help me teach the students at my old high school about HIV and drugs? How can I reach teenagers who do not go to school? How can I get on the radio or television to tell people about HIV?"

People working together to address HIV

Many types of organizations are working to stop the spread of HIV and to care for people, families, and communities affected by HIV. Sometimes the government supports these programs. Other times community groups start prevention projects and organize their own efforts to care for those who are infected with HIV or to support families who are affected. Often the government and community groups work together.

To stop the spread of HIV and to provide care and treatment for everyone who needs it, people must take action now and in whatever ways they can. HIV isn't waiting for you to get ready. A community cannot wait for help from a government department, nor can a national government wait for help from the international community.

The rest of this chapter uses prevention programs as examples, but many of the strategies discussed work for care and treatment programs as well.

Does our community need a prevention project?

Here are some questions you can ask that will help you decide whether your area needs a prevention project and what kind of project it should be. You can probably think of other questions that fit your community even better.

Do people in the community discriminate against people with HIV or AIDS?

Are there children with HIV in your community? Have their parents died?

Are there places in your community where HIV is likely to be spread, such as bars, brothels, and clubs?

Do men or women in your community have more than one spouse or sexual partner at the same time?

Does your community have condoms? Can people afford to buy them? Are they easy to get? Are people using them?

If your community has newspapers, radio, or television stations, are they telling people about HIV? If so, are the messages accurate?

Are schoolchildren being taught about HIV?

Is blood being screened for HIV?

Do health care workers understand how to avoid HIV at work?

Do people know how drugs can spread HIV?

Are people asking whether AIDS is spread by insects?

Do people who do tattooing, scarification, acupuncture, and circumcision know how to avoid spreading HIV?

Do people understand that HIV can be passed from mothers to their babies?

Are counseling programs available for people who have questions about HIV?

Are clinics, hospitals, and healers able to care for people with AIDS?

Community outreach

Community outreach is a way of “reaching out” and teaching the people in a community about HIV and AIDS. Usually this is done in places where people live and work, by people who are members of the community. These people are called outreach workers. They talk with people about what they really want to know about HIV. Outreach workers can inspire and work with a community to start its own HIV project. They are often role models for other people interested in teaching about HIV.

Often, the best counselors are from the community. Their experiences and backgrounds are similar to those of other community members. People know and trust them. It can be a source of pride for a community to have its members actively help others and increase everyone's knowledge. Also, the more a community does for itself and the less it has to depend on outside help, the healthier and stronger the community will become.

There are many examples of successful community-based AIDS projects. Through outreach work, sex workers and former drug users have acted as role models in their communities. Gay communities in many cities of the world have organized strong networks to teach people about HIV.



Which projects work?

Thriving community health programs often have these features in common:

They begin small and grow slowly, as the needs and resources of the community grow and change.

They involve the community in each part of the work, from planning to evaluation.

They ask people from the community to take part in the work.

They use leaders whose main interest is serving the community, not advancing their careers or making money.

The people running the programs remain open to new ideas and adapt to the changing needs of those served by the project.

The people involved do not think about health just in terms of the prevention and treatment of disease; they think of each person's social, emotional, and physical situation.



One of the most effective ways to teach about HIV is to have someone who has HIV speak about her experiences to a group of people. When a person with HIV speaks directly to others, she can have a tremendous emotional impact. When she talks about how people can protect themselves from HIV, they will remember what she says. At the same time, she can show that a person with HIV, like anyone else, deserves respect. If the speaker is not a health worker, it may be helpful to have a health worker available to answer difficult questions or to help spark a discussion.

Places to talk to people about HIV

Many people are not comfortable in a clinic or hospital and will not come there to learn about HIV. You can use a clinic for teaching some people about HIV, but be sure to offer other places. This is especially important for people who cannot get to a clinic because of problems with transportation, time, or cost. No single place can be reached by everyone. It is important to bring HIV education to the people, not to make them come to you.

Good HIV outreach programs focus on places where people work, live, and play. Outreach workers have used barbershops, community centers, popular street corners, parks, schools, bars, and brothels. If you know the community, you can have a conversation about HIV with almost anyone almost anywhere. While talking with someone you can share pamphlets, condoms, and bleach kits.

East Palo Alto AIDS Project

East Palo Alto is a small city in California in the United States. It is a poor community surrounded by rich cities. Many families live in East Palo Alto but there are few schools for the children. Many people cannot find work. A number of people use drugs and more and more people are getting HIV.

Some years ago, a few people in East Palo Alto decided that they wanted to stop the spread of HIV. They did not have much money but they had a lot of pride. They decided to teach drug users about how HIV was spread and how they could protect themselves. They knew that they needed to bring the message to where people were: on the streets. The best person to do this was a man named Martin. Martin had used drugs but then stopped; at the time the project started, he had not used drugs for over a year. He felt strong enough to be around people using drugs and not start using them again himself. Martin was known in the community and had many friends. He had a strong desire to help his community and he knew the ways of the streets. Most important, he knew how to talk with people on the streets about HIV.

Martin set up an office in a trailer parked near a place where people used drugs. He got pamphlets about HIV from the state government, had condoms donated by a local clinic, and made "bleach kits" for cleaning needles. On each of the pocket-sized bottles filled with bleach, he and his partner Atieno pasted instructions on how to clean needles and a telephone number people could call for more information on HIV. They explained the project to the police in advance so that the police would not think they were selling drugs.

Martin put the materials in a backpack and went out onto the streets. He started talking to people about HIV and how it is spread. He gave bleach kits to anyone who would take one. Soon he became known as "the bleach man" and people would look for him on the street and call out his name. Before long most of the drug users in the community knew about cleaning needles and about using condoms during sex. Men and women who traded sex for money also learned from Martin. Soon Martin had so much work that he needed help. He went to a local medical school and asked students to help him teach people on the street. They set up a table in a parking lot and passed out condoms, pamphlets, and bleach kits to people passing by. They also tried to give out cookies and bananas so that people would feel comfortable coming by the table—sometimes it is easier to ask for a free cookie than it is to ask for information on HIV.

Martin and the students set up a regular schedule and people began to rely on them for AIDS information and supplies of condoms and bleach. Atieno answered phones at the office and coordinated the project. She talked with church leaders and got donations of supplies. With the help of a local clinic, Martin and Atieno set up a pre- and post-test counseling service for people who wanted to be tested for HIV. The project grew and Martin and Atieno were able to get small salaries from the government for their work. They found it was surprisingly easy to get support for the project once they proved it worked.

Make sure that you choose a place where you feel safe; it will be difficult for you to talk to people if you are afraid. You may not feel comfortable talking about HIV on the street at night in a dangerous part of town, even if this is where you might find the people most in need of information. On the other hand, you may feel safe near a police station, but it probably is not the best place to talk about HIV with sex workers or drug users.

Churches, mosques, schools, hospitals, and organizations like unions or professional associations often have regular meetings of their members. You can ask to give a talk during one of their meetings. You can even talk with sports teams about HIV prevention. Speaking at schools with children and young adults before they are at risk for HIV is especially important. You can work with all of these organizations to help them become involved in HIV prevention.



Do not forget to talk about HIV with health workers. Often physicians, nurses, midwives, traditional healers, and laboratory technicians do not know enough about AIDS. Discussions about HIV will help clear up misunderstandings. People often look to health workers for information about HIV, so it is especially important that they know the truth and teach it to others.

Working with traditional healers

When most people in the world get sick they visit a “traditional” healer. Although we discuss Western medical treatments in this book because they are what we know most about, traditional healers have much to offer in terms of HIV prevention and care.

You can find out who the traditional healers are in your community and where they work. Involve them in your prevention program. It will help you learn more about what they are doing for people with AIDS and help them learn more about what you are doing to prevent the spread of HIV.

In South Africa, each traditional healer has an average of 2,000 visits a year from people seeking health care. In 1991, people in that country started an HIV prevention program that involved training South African traditional healers in how to prevent the spread of HIV. The healers discussed among themselves how to mix Western ideas with their own traditional ideas. They then trained other traditional healers. Information about preventing HIV and treating people with AIDS spread quickly.

In your community, you will find people with different backgrounds, jobs, and lifestyles. HIV prevention programs will work better if they are tailored to reach different kinds of people. Street children, mothers, truck drivers, sex workers, army personnel, migrant farmworkers, and drug users are all at high risk for HIV; help these people create their own HIV prevention programs. If everyone puts creativity and time into designing an HIV prevention program, it will work.

Outreach to people in bars in Bangkok

People in Bangkok, Thailand, organized an outreach program to get information about AIDS to people at high risk. In Bangkok, people who visit bars and work in them are at risk for getting HIV because many people go to bars to meet people for sex. Waiters, bartenders, doormen, and customers all need to know about HIV.

To get started, HIV health workers visited bars and met with people working there. They talked with them and established feelings of trust and familiarity. Then the outreach workers started bringing AIDS information to the bars. They talked about ways that the bar workers could share AIDS information among themselves and with customers. For example, when a sex worker or customer leaves the bar, a waiter or doorman hands her a condom and says, "Travel safely." The outreach workers also told people where they could get more information outside the bar.

Here are the basic steps used in the Bangkok project:

1. Visit the bars and get to know the people there. Make sure to meet the boss.
2. Learn the rules of behavior at the bar. Always pay your bill.
3. If sex is being exchanged for money, learn how the business works.
4. Learn about the bar workers' private lives: their backgrounds, future plans, relationships, families, sex lives, and health conditions.
5. Learn about the workers' beliefs about HIV and sex.
6. Choose a time and place for HIV education that does not disrupt the day for the workers in the bar.
7. Be flexible; do not push people too hard to change.
8. Show that you do this work because you care about the people working at the bar and want to help them stay healthy.



HIV education in jails and prisons

People who are in jail or prison are at high risk of getting HIV. They often have unsafe sex and share needles when they use drugs. Men and women in jail can be raped either by guards or by other inmates. Prisoners often do not know a lot about HIV because it is hard for them to get good information. In the United Kingdom, former prisoners are trained to talk about HIV. They give talks to people in prison to tell them how to protect themselves from HIV.



HIV in prison

In Tegucigalpa, Honduras, AIDS is the leading cause of death in the central prison, where in 1998 over 100 prisoners had HIV and 65 had died of AIDS. Officials at this prison are encouraging same-sex marriage among gay inmates to promote monogamy. The officials hope that by being married and having only one sexual partner, men will be less likely to get HIV.

In the United States there are over a million people in prison. The rate of AIDS among prisoners is almost six times that of the rest of the adult population. In spite of this, only 75% of prisons offer AIDS education. This figure is lower than it was a few years ago.

Teaching sex workers about HIV

A sex worker is any man or woman who exchanges sex with multiple partners for money, food, or housing. There are many names for sex workers, such as prostitutes, hookers, and working girls. In some communities sex work is a normal job, while in other places it is illegal and sex workers can be put in prison.

Helping sex workers understand how they can avoid getting HIV is an important part of preventing the spread of HIV. Sex workers should always use condoms to protect themselves and their customers from HIV and other diseases. If a sex worker has a customer who refuses to use condoms, she can suggest a safer practice like oral sex. Sex workers can be great teachers for condom use; some know how to put on a condom without their clients' knowing. Sex workers often have a regular sexual partner (boyfriend, girlfriend, husband,

wife) as well as customers. They should be encouraged to have safer sex and to use condoms with that partner as well.

Sex workers can have problems getting health care. They are often victims of discrimination in and outside the health care setting. In some parts of the world sex workers have formed groups to protect their rights. You can help sex workers in your community organize a prevention project. At the same time you can answer questions and encourage discussion about their own HIV risk.

Condoms work

Since 1992, a government program in New Delhi, India has supplied more than 180,000 condoms each month to brothels in New Delhi. In early 1997, the condom supply started to run out. This left nearly 10,000 sex workers at higher risk for getting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. People worked hard to get the condoms supplied again.

A few years ago, a group of sex workers in Greece took part in a study. About the same number of sex workers in the study used condoms as did not use condoms. In one year, twelve sex workers who did not use condoms got HIV, while only two workers who did use condoms got HIV. This information was given to sex workers throughout the country. The rate of condom use went up.

In the United States wives and husbands of people who had HIV were asked if they used condoms. These people all got tested for HIV. Eighty-five percent of the partners who did not use condoms had HIV. Only 10% of the partners who did use condoms had HIV. Condoms worked.

Teaching drug users about HIV

Find out whether people in your community inject drugs like heroin and amphetamines (speed). Teach them about how to avoid spreading the virus when they use drugs. Drug users should get their own needles and syringes and never share them. If they cannot do this, they should clean their needles and syringes with bleach before sharing them. Help drug users understand that they should clean needles and syringes that they buy on the street—they may be used and still have HIV in them. (We discuss how to clean needles in Chapter 6.)

People use drugs for many reasons; often these reasons are complex. Some drug users believe that sharing needles builds trust and makes people closer, almost like having sex; they may not want to stop sharing needles. It is difficult to help drug users change their behavior, but it can be done. Some people will change, some will continue to use drugs, but everyone deserves a chance to change. Do not get discouraged.

Prevention Point, San Francisco, USA

In most of the United States it is against the law to have needles or syringes that are not prescribed by a doctor. Because of this, drug injectors end up sharing needles. When needles are shared, blood is passed from person to person. This spreads HIV. In San Francisco, California, thousands of people inject illegal drugs. A small group of people interested in stopping the spread of HIV decided to get needles to the people who needed them. They bought clean new syringes and needles and went out on the streets. They traded one new needle for each used one. With the new needles they gave out small bottles of bleach and water to clean the needles between uses. They also talked to drug users about how they could avoid HIV and where they could be tested. The need for clean needles was so great that the workers expanded to five street corners in the city. After a short time they were trading 12,000 syringes a week. A few of the workers were arrested by the police while passing out clean needles. However, the people of San Francisco and doctors and nurses in the city protested in support of the workers. The police commissioner then announced that he would order the police not to bother the workers.

HIV testing as part of prevention

Testing people for HIV can be part of a prevention program. Offering HIV testing can help draw people to your project who might not come otherwise. Pre- and post-test counseling sessions will give you a chance to teach people about HIV. In some communities, local volunteers have been trained as peer counselors and counsel people before and after they get tested for HIV. You can teach people with positive HIV tests how to avoid spreading the virus. You can talk with people with negative HIV tests about how they can stay free of HIV. You can set up regular times when anyone can talk to a counselor about HIV in private. (We talk about HIV counseling in Chapter 8.)

Encouraging people to be voluntarily tested is usually a good idea. It gives people information that can be useful in changing behavior. However, forcing people to be tested can be harmful. Some communities test all



people who want to get married, but many people have sex before they get married—testing at the time of marriage is too late! Some countries test all immigrants for HIV, but testing immigrants will not prevent the spread of the virus if the country already has many people with HIV. In fact, it could give people the false idea that HIV is being kept out of the country and that they do not need to exercise safe behavior.

In some places, people have talked about branding or tattooing people who have HIV. Others have suggested that they be quarantined (separated from the rest of society) or put in jail. Carefully think about whether your testing program will be helpful or not. The best testing programs are planned with the help of people in the community who already have HIV and people who are at high risk for infection.

How to create a good message

Deciding that you want to teach people about HIV is only the first step to a prevention program. You also have to think about the *audience* (whom you want to reach), the *message* (what you want to say), and the *medium* (the way that the information is presented). The *audience* could range from street children to health workers. The *message* could range from encouraging people to use condoms when they have sex to telling children not to be afraid of other children who have AIDS. The *medium* could range from fliers to radio announcements, from newspaper articles to songs. The audience, message, and medium all need to be kept in mind. For example, if you want to reach truck drivers, a radio campaign may work well, because people often listen to the radio while driving. The medium matches the audience. If you want to encourage people to get tested for HIV, a poster with complicated medical information about AIDS will not be useful. The people you want to reach

Your message about HIV

These are the basic parts of any HIV prevention message. When creating your message, think about them, as well as about whom you want to reach:

Content: what is being said.

Presentation: how the message is laid out, and where (for example, in a poster, in an advertisement, or on the radio).

Tone: the mood of the message (happy, fearful, inspiring, serious, etc.).

Benefits: what a person will gain by learning the information.

must understand the message, not be offended by its content or tone, and be attracted to the presentation.

Different people listen to different sources of information. Teenagers may believe facts given by famous rock, movie, or sports stars. Health care workers and professionals trust information from the health department. Parents may be more interested in hearing information from other parents or a trusted health care worker.

Tone is an important part of any message. Posters in Kenya show a big fist crushing AIDS as a symbol for the power of the community to beat the disease. In one radio advertisement, a mother talks softly to her daughter about the risks of HIV to her daughter's baby. The tone is intimate. It attracts people and makes them listen. Think about who will be hearing the message and tailor it for them. Choose the right medium. Use the right tone.



Focus groups

The best way to create a message that works is to invite people from the community to help you plan your message and choose the best medium. For example, you may want to increase the use of condoms in your community. You can meet with a group of people from the community—a “focus group”—and ask them the best way to get information about condoms to people. After several suggestions, the group may decide that posters would be a good medium for spreading the word about condoms. The focus group can help with the words, the picture, and the tone. After you have made the poster, ask another focus group from the community to look at it and give suggestions. Once you know that the



Common misunderstandings about HIV and AIDS

Attitudes about HIV will affect how well your message works. If people do not think that HIV will affect them, then they will not listen to your message. In one part of Tanzania, some people thought that AIDS was caused by witchcraft. They thought that traders in the bordering countries of Zaire, Burundi, and Rwanda used witchcraft to get even with traders who had cheated them. They believed this because at first, most of the people who became ill were traders. People believed that if they were not traders they were safe. Of course this was not true. Traders travel; many got HIV from sexual partners in places where HIV was widespread. Sex, not trading or witchcraft, spread HIV in this part of Africa.

In parts of Africa some people believe that only very thin people have AIDS. In some areas AIDS is called “slim disease.” People believe that if they avoid having sex with thin people, they will not get HIV or AIDS. Even though being ill with AIDS can make you “slim,” people with HIV can be fat or thin and can give other people the virus no matter how big or small they are.

In one part of Uganda, people thought that if a person had sex just once with someone who had HIV she would get infected. This meant that many people who were married to people with HIV did not get tested and did not practice safer sex because they thought they were already infected. People were encouraged to get tested as part of a study. When the results were shared with the participants, many people who thought they had HIV found out they were not infected. Many of them changed their sexual behavior to lower the chance that they would become infected, or, if they had HIV, to avoid spreading the virus to their partners.

People in the state of Florida in the United States thought that HIV was being spread by mosquitoes, because many people who had HIV lived next to a swamp. People refused to go out at night. They worried that a mosquito bite would give them HIV. Finally, health workers and epidemiologists carried out a study and found out that drug use and sex, not mosquitoes, were spreading HIV. Mosquitoes have never spread HIV.

These examples of misunderstandings about HIV show how important it is to find out what people in your community think about HIV before you begin your prevention program. Then you will know what false information needs to be proven wrong, and who is most likely to need education.

poster is understandable and will work well, you can make copies and distribute them in the community.

Focus groups can help clear up confusing messages. Imagine that you want to design a poster that lists the signs of AIDS. After making a rough draft you show it to a small group of people to see how it works and how it can be improved. Do they understand it? Is it clear? Do they like it, or is it offensive? They tell you that they have never heard of “thrush,” one of the signs of AIDS.

You can then change your poster to include a description of thrush as a white, pasty mouth infection. Focus groups help you create a message that is made especially for your community.

How to get the word out

There are many ways to get messages about HIV to people in the community. One way is person to person. By talking with someone you can find out what he already knows about HIV and what you can teach him. Pamphlets, billboards, and radio and television announcements cannot do that. Many people already talk about HIV to each other; they just might not know as much about HIV as someone who has been trained. The more people you talk with about HIV, the more effective their conversations with their friends will be. Each barber, traditional healer, truck driver, taxi driver, and bar worker that you teach about HIV will talk with several other people about the virus. In time the whole community will know something about HIV and AIDS.

Teach community organizations about HIV. Give talks at meetings, show videos, and pass out pamphlets. Members of churches, the police, unions, companies, business groups, the army, and professional groups such as teachers are all interested in HIV and can teach other people about it. Government organizations such as the ministries of health, defense, and finance are other organizations that can teach their members about HIV.

A sample project: Teaching pregnant women about the spread of HIV

Define your target group: Women of childbearing age at a local clinic.

Define your goals: By the end of the training session, women in the group will know that HIV can be spread from mother to baby during pregnancy, birth, and breast-feeding.

Design your materials: Develop a ten-minute training session for mothers waiting at the clinic. Make some visual aids, such as posters, to help explain some of the ideas. Discuss the ways HIV can be spread to babies and what mothers can do to prevent it from being spread.

Evaluate your project: After the session, ask women in the clinic questions about how HIV is spread. This will tell you what they did or did not learn and how you might improve your training.

Talking to people about HIV at work is a great way to reach people. This is especially true if they are given a special break from their work for your talk. On-the-job discussions of HIV can help stop rumors and fears that spread in the workplace. In one small city, people at a telephone company refused to go to work because another worker had HIV. The man with HIV was then fired from his job. One of the workers knew HIV was unlikely to spread on the job and started to teach other workers that they could not get HIV by working with someone who has the virus. The workers went back to work and the man with HIV got his job back.

Creative ways to publicize your message

Over the years people have used hundreds of creative ways to teach about HIV. They have written messages about HIV on car bumper stickers, shopping bags, and T-shirts. They have mailed letters to every household in a city. They have organized puppet shows, community theater, AIDS days, and fairs to bring attention to HIV. At these events musicians, actors, puppeteers, and people from AIDS projects teach the community about HIV. You can use resources from your own community to be just as creative.

Community theater and puppet shows

Community theater is used all over the world to present political issues, educate communities, and provide entertainment. Theater attracts a crowd. It is a break from everyday activities. Community members can write their own play and take part as actors, directors, and stage helpers. They can include a point in the play where people from the crowd can join in. The people in the play can have fun and even laugh at their own mistakes. After the play, people in the crowd may talk about the characters they saw and think about their own lives.

Theater can be used to talk about HIV and private issues such as sex, illness, and drug use. Stories about HIV touch deep emotions, but they can also be funny. A common story is a play about a husband and wife who both have lovers. Neither knows about the other's; they only talk about their lovers with their friends. Many stories can be adapted to different age groups, languages, or cultures. If you put on a play, learn which words are used in the community. For example, in some Spanish-speaking countries, using *la colita*, which mean "private parts," may be better than using the exact words

Community theater in Thailand

In the countryside of Thailand, community theater, or *maw lum*, is used to teach about HIV and AIDS. *Maw lum* mixes music, dance, drama, and mime. Colorful costumes worn by the actors bring many people to see the play. Since many people in the countryside do not speak Thai, they are not able to understand AIDS messages on television and radio. *Maw lum* uses the local language instead of Thai. The whole community comes out to watch the play, which is followed by school programs, counseling, and condom distribution.

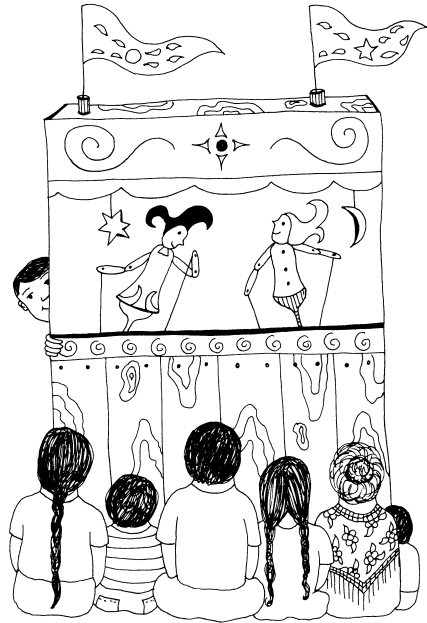
A common *maw lum* story is about two young men who leave their village to go to Bangkok to find work. In Bangkok, they visit a brothel. Most of the sex workers have learned to use condoms, but one of the men does not like using condoms. Years later he comes home to the village and starts to have early signs of HIV disease. After time passes he dies of AIDS. The play shows the feelings of his family and friends. The man's wife gets HIV and his children talk about how they feel about their parents' illnesses. They must face the fact that their mother and father are dying and they will have to live with their grandparents. The play also shows the life of sex workers in Bangkok and shows how the sex workers, the brothel manager, and clients in the brothel try to teach everyone to use condoms each time they have sex.

for “vagina” and “penis.” In some parts of Zimbabwe, it is less offensive to use *kutsi*, meaning “down there,” than to use more specific words.

Puppet shows can also be used to tell a story about HIV. Puppets can be used to speak openly about sex. Small puppets can be beautiful and yet easy to make, and tall puppets that are meters high can attract a large crowd.

Hotlines

Some communities where many people have telephones have set up a telephone number that people can call to get information about HIV. This is called a “hotline.” Hotlines help people get information when they need it, often 24 hours a day. The people who answer the phone need to be knowledgeable about HIV; they also need to know where a caller can get tested for



HIV, receive medical care, or get help when having thoughts about suicide. Educational materials from your project can have your group's hotline number printed on them so that people can call if they need help.

Using the media

There are many ways to use the media to present your message about HIV. The possibilities include print media, like newspapers and magazines, and broadcast media, like television and radio.

"Prudence" condoms in the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo condoms are now distributed in an attractive package. They are called "Prudence" condoms. Prudence means being careful. The name helps people understand why using a condom is a good idea. Also, the condom package shows a leaping leopard, which is the mascot of the national soccer team. The condoms are sold for a small amount of money in pharmacies, small shops, and on the street.

It was not always like this. In Kinshasa, in 1986, pharmacies only sold condoms in small numbers. They were expensive and rarely used. One study that asked married couples what they used for contraception found out that only 1 of 100 couples (1%) used condoms. In 1987, 200,000 condoms were given away for free and 20% of the men who were asked said they would use them to avoid AIDS. Thousands more condoms were then brought into the country and sold to businesses for resale. Radio advertisements, T-shirts, keychains, printed plastic bags, leaflets, a comic book, and a song were all made about Prudence condoms. After that, almost all of the pharmacies in Kinshasa sold condoms, and they sold 40 times more than they had before. People borrowed ideas that had been used for marketing products in business and used them for social causes. This "social marketing" campaign increased condom use.

Think about the most important parts of your HIV message. Talk about them. Next decide on the best way to get the message out to the community: Radio announcements? Advertisements in the newspaper? Community theater? Pamphlets in medical clinics? Talks at schools? Could someone help you make the posters? Would the radio station give you free airtime? Do you know anyone who works at the local newspaper and would be interested in writing an article about your program? Knowing what medium you are going to use will influence your message and vice versa.

Print media: newspapers and magazines

Newspaper or magazine stories about people with HIV can teach other people about the virus without their even knowing that they are learning. These stories help readers understand the life of a person with HIV. They can make readers sympathetic toward someone with HIV—someone they might have avoided before they read the story. Newspaper and magazine stories also let people with HIV know that they are not alone.

Newspapers in Uganda

In Uganda, some newspapers have regular columns on HIV and AIDS. The New Vision newspaper has an insert called “Saving Youth from AIDS.” The insert has stories and information about HIV and can be given out separately from the newspaper.

Another newspaper, called Straight Talk, focuses on changing the way teenagers think about AIDS. The paper was started in 1993 and reaches about one million readers in six languages. Straight Talk openly discusses sex and HIV. It includes articles on sex before marriage and advice columns on AIDS. It tells the truth about sexual myths. The paper encourages teenagers to not have sex at a young age. It teaches sexually active teenagers the importance of condom use.

A newspaper not only provides a way to teach about HIV, but can also give you a chance to find out what people already know. In Kenya, a group made up a list of questions to find out what people in the area knew about HIV. The group then got the questions published for free in the local newspaper. People mailed back their answers, and the group used the information to design educational campaigns.

More people will return a survey or questionnaire if you mention that a drawing will occur in which one of the people answering can win money or a prize (like a bicycle). You can try to get these items donated. Include your program’s phone number or address in the newspaper so people can get more information about HIV and your project.

Films and videos

Films and videos are powerful ways of telling a story about someone with HIV. Having a friend who is sick with AIDS is a moving experience. Films and videos can bring this same feeling to people who may not know someone with HIV.

Films and videos are especially useful when limited help is available and when there are language differences. What if only one person at your project

Sample survey

The following is a copy of a survey used to ask people what they knew about AIDS. It might be useful in areas where people do not know a lot about HIV. You can change the questions or add new ones to fit your community.

Please circle the answers you think are right and return the questionnaire to [your group's address].

1. What causes AIDS?
 - a. a bug
 - b. a bacteria
 - c. a plant
 - d. a virus
2. How do people get AIDS?
 - a. from sharing clothes
 - b. from toilet seats
 - c. from mosquitoes
 - d. from sex
3. Can you tell if someone has AIDS by looking at them?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
4. Is there a cure for AIDS?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
5. Will most people with AIDS die from the disease?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
6. What is one way to avoid HIV?
 - a. use condoms during sex
 - b. wipe off toilet seats before use
 - c. avoid mosquitoes

If you have any questions about HIV, call or visit your local health clinic.

speaks Hausa, but several people who speak only Hausa are interested in being tested for HIV? First, show a video in Hausa on HIV testing. Then the staff member who speaks Hausa only needs to spend time answering questions after the video.

Videocassette recorders (VCRs) are spreading throughout the world and video parlors are quickly becoming popular. Be creative about where you show your videos. VCRs can be used to show videos in the waiting rooms of

Film, video, and television

Film, video, and television work because they are:

Attractive: People like visual images and remember them.

Influential: They are seen by many people and can influence public opinion.

Educational and entertaining: They can combine a message with a story.

Emotional: While telling a story, they can touch people's emotions and change their viewpoints.

Inspiring: They can show role models teaching about HIV.

Cost-effective: They can reach a lot of people at once; they can be copied and used many times.

Portable: VCRs can be used almost anywhere there is electricity.

Some of the limitations of film, video, and television:

Cost: It can cost a lot of money to make a video or buy time on television.

Difficulty: Experience is needed to make a good video or film.

Limited audience: You will not reach people who do not have access to televisions or VCRs.

One-way flow of information: These media do not allow conversation or disagreement.

Mass media work if:

The message is made for a specific target audience, such as teenagers or pregnant women.

The information comes from a source that people like, understand, and believe (such as doctors, basketball players, or musicians).

The presentation gives a clear message that matters to the viewer.

The message tells people how to take action to avoid getting HIV.

The program connects people with other programs that are available in the community.

clinics, in mobile vans, barbershops, schools, and video parlors. If you make a video, make copies and lend them out.

Broadcast media: Television and radio

Television and radio, like film, can bring HIV messages to life. They also reach large numbers of people; that is why they, along with newspapers and magazines, are called "mass media." Millions of people have a television or



radio in their home. Radios outnumber televisions in most countries, but the number of televisions is growing fast. There are around 1 billion television sets in the world—and 5.5 billion people. Many countries have only one channel. This means that if you show a program about HIV, it will not be missed!

Radio campaigns in Cameroon

National AIDS programs have set up competitions for musicians to make songs about HIV. If the song is catchy and the singer popular, then the radio stations will play it. Often stations will play the song for free, as a public service. In Cameroon, stations played a song called “Le SIDA ne pardonne pas,” which, translated, means “AIDS is unforgiving” but also means “AIDS is a fatal disease.” It has a catchy tune and people hummed it in the streets. It got people thinking about AIDS. The next step was to teach people how to avoid the virus.

Using famous people in your information campaign

Mass media campaigns are often successful when they use famous people to give a message about HIV or AIDS. People talk about these advertisements. Imagine a poster presenting a picture of a famous cricket player in India: “There were 2.5 million people living with HIV in India in 1997. You can help stop the epidemic and avoid getting HIV by suiting up for the game every time.”

This poster works for three reasons. First, it presents facts about HIV that get the message across: that there are many people with HIV in India, and therefore the person reading the poster should care about his own risk. Second, it shows a famous athlete caring enough about HIV to be on the poster without embarrassment. The viewer need not be ashamed to find out more about HIV. Third, it uses humor to make the issue less depressing and leaves a lasting impression on the viewer. People might ask their friends, “Did you see that funny poster of the cricket player?”



Did our project work?

Here are some questions you can ask yourself after your project has been going for a while:

1. How many people have heard your message?
2. What groups were you trying to reach, and did they hear the message?
3. Have people begun to change their behavior?
4. What did people think of your project?
5. Were the benefits to the community worth the expense?
6. How can the project be improved?
7. What is the most successful part of the project?
8. What is unsuccessful about your project?
9. What would you do differently if you could start over?
10. Would this work in another city or neighborhood?

Answering Carlos's questions

“Can you help me teach the students at my old high school about HIV? How can I reach teenagers who do not go to school? How can I get on the radio or television to tell people about HIV?”

Carlos should think carefully about whether he wants other people to know he has HIV. If he is willing to tell people, then he could teach high school students even more effectively. Teach Carlos about HIV and AIDS and help him learn how to talk to groups of people. Then call up schools in the Houston area and arrange for Carlos to speak with other students about HIV. Have an HIV health worker help him during the talks.

Carlos is also interested in reaching teenagers who do not go to school. A radio advertisement on a popular station is a good way to start. Help Carlos call the local radio station to see if he can make a public service announcement—using free airtime—about HIV. See if someone from the station will volunteer to help him make his announcement. He may even want to go on television. By using radio and television and by talking in the schools, Carlos can teach many young people about HIV.