

Prevention of HIV/AIDS Transmission among Drug users and their Sexual Partners in the Polonnaruwa District

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The HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasing throughout south Asia. Sri Lanka has a low prevalence of the epidemic and only less than 0.1% of the population is infected. However, concentrated HIV epidemics among female sex workers, homosexuals, and drug users and their sexual partners cannot be ruled out. This scenario is highly probable due to the existence of high transmission settings for HIV in the country such as prisons and correctional facilities. When there is high occurrence of drug usage and unsafe sex, people have a higher risk to HIV exposure and are often the most difficult to reach because homosexuality and drug use drive them underground.

This study was conducted from January to December 2005. The goal of this project was to maintain low prevalence among most at risk populations and to increase the quality of life of those already infected. Rapid situation response assessment was conducted for female sex workers and drug users. Designing and implementing interventions, reassessing the situation and collecting possible responses followed. Of the 9 sex workers 90% had no knowledge about HIV/AIDS and how to use condoms and had no ability to reject their customers who did not have condoms. Of the drug users, 86% had no knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the risks of sexual intercourse. The main problem among drug users was that 92% believe they have never been infected with HIV/AIDS and 95% of the drug users had high risk sexual behavior. After this study, 90% of female sex workers test their blood for HIV/AIDS and reject customers who do not use condoms. Of the drug users, 60% stopped drug use and high risk sex.