



HIV/AIDS PREVENTION

Protecting health and development through prevention. Making a difference with information and services for young people.

New HIV infections topped five million in 2003, bringing the number of people living with HIV/AIDS to 40 million. The epidemic escalated in all regions, spreading fastest among people made vulnerable by poverty, gender inequality and a severe lack of information and services for prevention.

UNFPA continued its leadership in HIV prevention, particularly among young people and pregnant women, and in condom programming. Partnerships multiplied the impact of our efforts, especially through the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, of which UNFPA is an active co-sponsor. Each action takes us closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action, and ultimately ending this devastating epidemic.

ACTION AGAINST HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS remained a high priority in 2003. UNFPA established HIV/AIDS focal points in all country offices to augment the headquarters and regional HIV/AIDS teams. UNFPA Representatives participated actively as members and as chairs of each country's United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS.

Prevention efforts covered many fronts, serving to build the capacities of countries and to share life-saving experience about interventions that prove prevention works.

- Because HIV/AIDS is as much a threat to development as a health issue, HIV prevention must be integrated within poverty eradication efforts, concludes a 2003 UNFPA report, *The Impact of HIV/AIDS: A Population and Development Perspective*.

- In Indonesia, UNFPA contributed to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and supported the development of a national strategy on young people and HIV/AIDS, initiating a nationwide debate on condom programming.

- The 12th annual report, *Preventing HIV Infection, Promoting Reproductive Health: UNFPA Response 2003*, documents UNFPA action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

For staff, UNFPA held five subregional orientation workshops during 2002-2003 (in Addis Ababa, Dakar, Harare, Kathmandu and Mexico City), using as a framework UNFPA's new HIV/AIDS training manual on issues including gender, condom programming, vulnerable populations, and prevention among young people and pregnant women. To respond to staff needs related to HIV/AIDS in the



"What's Your Excuse?" Condom Campaign

HIV/AIDS is spreading faster in Eastern Europe than it has anywhere else in the world. A new ad campaign asks, "What's Your Excuse?" with the tag line: "There is no excuse. Wear condoms." The youth-oriented campaign, launched in Belgrade in April, features ads, posters, T-shirts, television and radio commercials and condom packaging. It is supported by UNFPA and produced by Population Services International, a Washington-based social marketing organization.

Photo from "What's Your Excuse?" campaign

workplace, UNFPA and UNICEF launched the "Caring for Us" Initiative to help managers attain minimum standards for their offices with a tool kit of guidance and resources.

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Half of all new HIV infections, along with at least a third of the 333 million new cases of curable STIs, are among people aged 15 to 24. UNFPA works with adolescents and young people to equip them with the knowledge, skills and services they need in order to protect their reproductive health and prevent HIV infection. UNFPA is building a coordinated UN response as the designated UNAIDS convening agency on young people and HIV/AIDS.

- Six countries in Central America and the Caribbean are the focus of a three-year programme in HIV prevention supported by the OPEC Fund for International Development and UNFPA. Implementation began in 2003, reaching vulnerable young people in Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras and Saint Lucia with life skills and youth-friendly, culturally sensitive information and services.

- A new manual, *Preventing HIV/AIDS among Adolescents through Integrated Communication Programming*, provides examples of effective prevention programming that integrates advocacy, behaviour change communication and educational strategies with other policy and service components.

- The Geração Biz programme in Mozambique was selected as a best practice under the World Bank initiative on education and HIV/AIDS. With support from UNFPA and Pathfinder International, the programme has trained 3,000 peer educators, established "youth corners" in 27 schools and 14 communities, developed two videos for youth and, in 2003, distributed 230,000 condoms during 50,000 client visits at 32 sites offering youth-friendly health services.

- Peer education in 27 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia gained unprecedented electronic support with the creation of a distance-learning network, the Youth Peer Education Electronic Resource (Y-PEER). At its core is a Web site (www.youthpeer.com) that provides subscribers with information on adolescent reproductive health as well as

training resources for peer education. Through 185 member organizations, the Y-PEER network reaches an estimated 1.3 million youth.

EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Most people do not know their HIV status. Too many young people are unaware of how to protect themselves from infection; some have never heard of HIV/AIDS. Information, education and advocacy can help impart the knowledge and skills to prevent infection and, in addition, help overcome the stigma and discrimination that cripple efforts for prevention, treatment and cure.

- A video-conference learning event entitled "Strengthening the Linkages Between Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Programmes" enabled 250 participants from around the world to share their experiences and perspectives. The June event was hosted by UNFPA, the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

- An interactive CD-ROM produced in 2003 explains how to create radio dramas with local FM and community radio networks. It is based on materials collected from regional training workshops conducted by UNFPA and the Population Media Center (PMC) in Africa and in Asia that applied entertainment and education methods to develop culturally sensitive, research-based serials.

- The Institute of Adult Education at the University of Ghana launched a three-month distance learning certificate programme on HIV/AIDS counselling and caregiving, with UNFPA support, training 369 participants in 2003 and preparing a counselling and caregiving manual. Also in Ghana, UNFPA and EngenderHealth developed and tested a programming and training manual for HIV prevention in maternal health settings.

CONDOM PROGRAMMING

Condom programming ensures that condoms are widely available, affordable and correctly and consistently used. In 2003, UNFPA continued to respond to massive shortfalls in supply, frequent stockouts and limited resources to promote safer sexual behaviours. As the designated UNAIDS convening agency on



Global Youth Partners: New AIDS Group

Young people say that there is no time to waste when information and services can save lives now. "Some groups think we are too young to know. They should know we are too young to die," said participants at the first meeting of the new Global Youth Partners. The youth-led campaign advocating information and services for HIV prevention was founded by young people from 27 countries in September 2003 with support from UNFPA.

Participants in a Global Youth Partners workshop making a banner during a September meeting held in New York.

Photo: Omar Gharzeddine/UNFPA

condom programme, UNFPA strengthened partnerships with UN agencies and other partners to overcome challenges in this important aspect of HIV prevention.

- African Youth Alliance (AYA) programmes in youth-friendly health facilities have distributed 1.5 million condoms to sexually active young people in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Advocacy activities have created a more supportive environment for young people to obtain services including voluntary counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS.

- In Eritrea, UNFPA carried out an assessment of commercial sex workers with a view towards promoting 100 per cent condom use by adding the female condom to the distribution of the male condom.

GENDER AND PREVENTION

The heavy toll of HIV/AIDS on women is evident in shocking statistics: two thirds of young people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide are female; rates of infection for women and girls are two to six times higher than for men in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa; globally, half of adults living with HIV/AIDS are women. UNFPA is co-chair with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) of the UNAIDS inter-agency task team on gender and HIV/AIDS.

- In 2003, a focus on partnership and collaboration forged stronger links between UNFPA, UNIFEM and other organizations.

UNFPA was an active member of the Secretary-General's task force on women, girls and HIV/AIDS in southern Africa and contributed to the development of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, taking a leadership role in action for HIV prevention among girls and young women.

- Bias and violence increase women's risk of HIV/AIDS, said experts at a roundtable co-hosted by UNFPA and UNIFEM during a September meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. The discussion called for legislation, funding and action to change attitudes that lead to violence against women and workplace discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

- "Yes for Prevention, No for Discrimination" was the slogan of this year's World AIDS Day commemoration by UNFPA in Sudan. The December event included public awareness and fund-raising campaigns and culminated in a highly publicized football match between Khartoum's two most popular teams.

- UNFPA conducted training workshops in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana and Malawi to encourage health providers to integrate HIV prevention into their routine antenatal care services for pregnant women.

- In October, UNFPA joined UN partners in promoting good infant feeding practices to help reduce child mortality and HIV transmission. The agencies launched a five-step framework with guidelines to strengthen action to save lives, support mothers and ensure the well-being of children.