



HIV Prevention Now

Programme Briefs

No. 9 - Applying Population and Development Strategies to enhance HIV Prevention Programming

In combating HIV/AIDS, it is essential to translate awareness of the implications of the epidemic into effective policies and programmes. The ability of communities, nation states, and the international community to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, called for within the Millennium Declaration, requires an understanding of the social, cultural and economic factors that drive the pandemic. HIV prevention programmes can and should take advantage of the cumulative knowledge, methods and experience acquired in the area of population and development. Population and development¹ strategies can be adapted, based on the realities of the population groups, and used to help provide an enabling environment for action and to support the implementation of effective HIV prevention policies and programmes, especially within UNFPA's core areas of prevention among young people and pregnant women, and comprehensive condom programming.

*The Population and Development Branch
and
The HIV/AIDS Branch*

Why population and development?

A major focus of population and development has been the formulation of broad national policies that provide a framework for implementation of multi-faceted strategies and programmes. Activities in the area of population and development have greatly strengthened the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of population and health information to improve policy formulation, planning and decision-making at all levels and in many sectors. In many countries, structures and mechanisms for broad collaboration and coordination have been developed and operated within the framework of population and development. Population and reproductive health programmes have often been managed, monitored and evaluated within this same framework.

HIV/AIDS has marked effects on population dynamics, including population losses and decreasing life expectancy, slowing economic growth, increasing

extreme poverty and a multiplicity of factors that compromise development. Analyses of population-development interactions contribute to the identification and recognition of important linkages between HIV/AIDS and broad development initiatives. Concise presentation of key findings to policy makers and specialists can help to ensure that HIV prevention activities are effectively incorporated into development initiatives. Such initiatives which are strongly supported by the international community include: (a) national poverty reduction strategies; (b) Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) and national development programmes; and (c) international goals, including those set out in the ICPD Programme of Action, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the Millennium Declaration and regional development agendas, such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

Collection, analysis and dissemination of information undertaken within the framework of population and development programmes contribute to understanding

¹ Population and Development Strategies (PDS) focus on integrating population issues into sustainable human development processes.

how and why HIV spreads within given populations. Availability of relevant demographic, health and socio-economic data and their analyses and use, contribute to knowledge of trends and differentials in mortality, morbidity and migration including in relation to HIV/AIDS. The information generated is also used to establish benchmarks, set targets and determine the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of specific population groups..

Population and development programmes can provide indispensable information for planning and implementing effective and appropriate HIV prevention programmes: tailoring programmes to groups at risk and operationalizing strategies for bringing about changes in risky attitudes and behaviour. This can be critical because of the urgency for upscaling the prevention programmes required and the need to optimize use of limited resources.

Concepts and methods used to analyze interrelationships between population and development can also be used for HIV/AIDS and development issues. The extent and gravity of an HIV/AIDS epidemic are often not widely recognized, especially for nascent epidemics or in high population countries with low national prevalence rates. Concise analyses of the actual, or prospective demographic, economic and social impact of HIV/AIDS is crucial to build awareness and commitment for sustained, comprehensive HIV prevention programmes and to mobilize resources.

What have we learned so far?

- **An assessment of HIV/AIDS trends and dynamics in a specific country or population group must be based on data and analyses for that country or group.** Attitudes and behaviour strongly influence the transmission and spread of HIV/AIDS. Caution must be exercised when designing HIV prevention strategies and programmes on the basis of what has been observed or hypothesized elsewhere, especially with respect to trends in prevalence and incidence, the processes through which HIV spreads, the determinants of attitudes and behaviour, and the efficacy of certain

types of policies and interventions. Decision-makers at provincial and local levels generally are more receptive to and influenced by data and analyses for their respective areas than broader national or sub-regional data.

- **Prevention programmes should be reviewed regularly to respond to inevitable gaps between programme adoption and implementation due to the mercurial nature of the epidemic.** This lesson reinforces the continuing need for systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of information relating to causes, modalities and consequences of the spread of HIV among specific population groups. Bearing in mind the parameters of the national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS, UNFPA support for development and review of HIV prevention strategies and programmes should build upon the broad approach to social change and to policy issues that is characteristic of programmes in population and development.
- **There is often a lack of experience and skills to utilize new statistical tools and models developed for analyzing trends and dynamics with respect to the transmission and spread of HIV.** Conventional methods of data collection, analysis and dissemination are often not well adapted to producing the kind of information needed to plan, monitor and evaluate prevention interventions. Capacities are also limited as many countries have a shortage of skilled professionals.
- **Successful adoption of population –and development policies demonstrates that a wide range of decision-makers at different levels can be reached and mobilized.** Experience in supporting policy development and translating key policy makers' expressions of concern into action should be adapted and utilized for HIV prevention to better ensure long-term and determined support for interventions. Elements of this success include: (1) careful preparation; (2) understanding and responding to the decision-makers' concerns and priorities; and (3) making concerted and sustained efforts to secure broad awareness and commitment.

Securing the commitment of leaders and decision-makers at sub-national levels to HIV prevention is especially important in countries in which SWAPs are formulated (including allocation of resources) and managed at the provincial level.

- **Support and cooperation to achieve objectives in different yet complimentary areas are likely to result in synergies, greater programme impact and an increase in the resources available for implementing HIV prevention programmes.** Institutions dedicated to HIV prevention need to adopt an inclusive approach. Sustained efforts should be made to secure the support and cooperation of institutions and individuals which pursue poverty reduction, improve gender equity, ensure reproductive health, protect children, empower communities, accelerate economic development and assist refugees and displaced persons.
- **Migration within and/or between countries can accelerate the spread of HIV.** Rapid increases in the population of poor peri-urban areas and/or of large towns and migration brought on by humanitarian crises and armed conflicts², or from large-scale movements of persons made vulnerable by poverty, often create situations of weakened social controls which lead to conditions conducive to the spread of HIV.

What should be our guiding principles?

- Support should be provided within the framework of an agreed-upon, country-specific, intermediate-term HIV prevention strategy.
- Encourage and support the formulation and adoption of prevention policies that are equitable, based on human-rights principles, gender sensitive, and increase the effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies.
- Encourage and support the formation and strengthening of broad coalitions and networks of institutions and groups that support HIV prevention

measures, including continued and strengthened collaboration with United Nations agencies and other international agencies. Such collaboration has proven highly effective in planning and implementing large-scale data collection activities, such as population censuses and demographic and health surveys; and contributed to the efficacy of efforts to, analyze, interpret, repackage and disseminate demographic and other HIV-related data.

- Build on UNFPA's comparative advantage in formulation and implementation of multi-faceted population and reproductive health policies and programmes, to assist countries in translating broad prevention policies and strategies into operational programmes, including monitoring and evaluation. Efforts should utilize the experience that UNFPA has developed in such critical areas as: collection, analysis and use of data; legal, administrative and institutional reform; advocacy; and securing participation of stakeholders in programme design and management.
- Secure the participation of "local" researchers and analysts in studies of HIV prevalence and spread so as to increase the relevance of findings and to build local research capacity. Countries must be the driving force behind action to ensure sustainability.

What can UNFPA do?

UNFPA should capitalize on its expertise in data collection and analysis, awareness creation, advocacy, policy formulation and institutional strengthening to intensify the national responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Utilizing different programming instruments, including the Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and UNDAFs, as well as in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) UNFPA is well placed to support:

Evidence-based Advocacy

- Country level efforts to increase leaders' awareness of the need for strong multi-sector HIV/AIDS prevention policies and programmes, including

² For further information see HIV Prevention Now Programme Briefs No. 7 – HIV Prevention in Humanitarian Settings August 2002

promotion of and support for policy dialogue, with particular emphasis on the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

- Advocacy activities designed to expand and strengthen the commitment of leaders to invest in HIV prevention. Such efforts should be supported by data and evidence to make convincing case for policies and programmes.

Policy analysis

- Policy analysis from an HIV/AIDS perspective, utilizing data for improved decision making at all levels, with a goal of formulation and adoption of comprehensive and sector-specific national policies that provide a framework for implementation of a multi-intervention HIV/AIDS programme.

Strengthening Capacities for HIV Prevention Programmes

UNFPA has experience and expertise in basing programmes on estimates and projections, in building capacity, in addressing sensitive issues and in improving administrative frameworks. As a result UNFPA is well placed to provide advice and technical support relating to: preparation of staffing and training plans based on projections of human resource requirements at various levels; development of resource mobilization strategies; review of administrative and legal frameworks and formulation of recommendations for changes; and facilitation of networks of institutions and groups which support or undertake prevention activities including:

- Facilitating the establishment of strategic alliances and collaboration
- Utilizing known structures and mechanisms for broad coordination of multiple players in priority areas (such as young people, condom programming, pregnant women) around specific themes, including population and HIV/AIDS
- Sharing of best practices related to processes to enhance government action

Collection, Analysis and Use of Population-based data

UNFPA is well placed to provide guidance and support to strengthen systems of population and demographic data collection, analysis and use, as well as information relating to reproductive health. The objective of UNFPA support should be for improvements in the formulation and implementation of HIV prevention policies and programmes as well as national capacity building. Particular consideration should be given to promoting and supporting information activities: (a) that build capacity and systems for the collection, analysis and management of data to meet countries' minimum needs for information related to HIV/AIDS; (b) that foster a multi-disciplinary, gender-sensitive approach to information; and (c) that facilitate and support the analysis of and actual use of information to develop, improve and implement policies and programmes. To further UNFPA's HIV prevention strategy the Fund may support:

- Collection of accurate information concerning sexual knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people and their knowledge on HIV/AIDS disaggregated by age, sex, place of residence, school enrolment, level of education, marital status and other important variables.
- Cause and effect analysis, use of information on prevalence rates, and on attitudes and behaviour of young people to contribute to the design and implementation of HIV prevention policies and programmes.
- Preparation of estimates/forecasts of unmet needs of the number of potential users of condoms and their main socio-economic characteristics as well as implications for older persons for providing care for their extended family members.
- Analyses of factors affecting condom use by specific population groups, (especially knowledge and attitudes with respect to HIV/AIDS and sex and their ability to pay for condoms) in complement with analyses of geographic, socio-cultural, attitudinal and economic barriers to access to condoms from both the client and the service-provider perspective.

- The collection of data for monitoring the agreed indicators for tracking progress towards the ICPD, MDG and UNGASS goals on HIV/AIDS.
- Collection and analysis of data on local factors affecting HIV transmission during pregnancy and of information concerning the number of women who may become pregnant and the risks of HIV infection to which they are exposed.
- Preparation of scenarios at national and regional levels in order to facilitate formulation of operational HIV prevention programmes.

Other areas for potential support:

- International initiatives for improved monitoring and evaluation of HIV prevention programmes, especially UNAIDS Country Response Information System (CRIS) initiative and tracking financial resources (UNFPA/UNAIDS/NIDI) spent on HIV/AIDS.
- Preparation of estimates of the numbers, characteristics and place of residence of population

groups exposed to especially high risks of becoming infected; analysis of risk behaviour, with emphasis on factors affecting and differences of attitudes and behaviour and HIV/AIDS knowledge among the at-risk groups within a given country.

- Analysis of the ways in which gender relations affect HIV transmission and vulnerability with particular attention to treatment of reproductive tract infections, access to information and socio-cultural norms.
- Development of country-specific conceptual and empirical methodologies, models and scenarios for identifying critical points and stages in the spread of HIV/AIDS among major population groups, for examining regional differences and for forecasting the probable effects of alternative interventions.
- Impact assessments of the epidemic for use in planning, programme design, advocacy, prevention and mitigation. Such assessments can provide information that may be used for advocacy and planning for prevention and mitigation of HIV/AIDS.

Comments or questions on this Programme Brief should be addressed to Dr. Suman Mehta, HIV/AIDS Coordinator, Technical Support Division, UNFPA (hiv@unfpa.org)

Published Programme Briefs available on the UNFPA Website
(<http://www.unfpa.org/hiv>):

- No. 1 - Overview
- No. 2 - Prevention of HIV Infection in Pregnant Women
- No. 3 - Preventing HIV Infections in Young People
- No. 4 - Addressing Gender Perspectives in HIV Prevention
- No. 5 - Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) for HIV Prevention
- No. 6 - Condom Programming for HIV Prevention
- No. 7 - HIV Prevention in Humanitarian Settings
- No. 8 - Programming for Prevention in Various Stages of an HIV/AIDS Epidemic