



HIV and Human Development

UNDP's Response at a Glance:
Commitment and Action in Asia & the Pacific

"If we are to keep the promises we have made - if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015 - then individuals, communities and institutions must take action together." - Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator

Empowering HIV positive women through social enterprises: The story of 'WE'



To help women living with HIV attain sustainable livelihood, the Regional Programme has launched a pilot project titled "Women and Wealth" (WWP) in partnership with Population and Community Development Association (PDA) in Thailand. Implemented in Cambodia, China and India, this socio-economic empowerment initiative has trained women living with HIV in market savvy enterprises and helped them establish their own social enterprises and market their products and services. In the second phase of the project, women living with HIV will implement a micro-credit scheme developed by the PDA called "Positive Partners Project". Under the WWP, positive women's groups⁴ in Cambodia⁴ have set up an apparel manufacturing unit called MDSF (The Modern Dress Sewing Factory) to supply to the local and export market. In India, the Positive Women's Network (PWN+) has set up a design and publishing unit called "Social Light Communications," while in China, positive women from AIDS Care, is in the process of establishing "Positive Candle Works", a candle manufacturing unit. Besides a regular income, this project is also aimed at reducing stigma, improving self-esteem and camaraderie and ensuring ARV adherence. The Women and Wealth Project products are being marketed under the brand name "WE" (Women Empowered) and is a great opportunity for consumers and corporate houses to support women living with HIV.

Confluence of purposeful visuals

National broadcasting companies from 11 countries in the region joined hands with UNDP Regional Programme and the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) to create "Live Positive", by far the biggest public television initiative on HIV in the region. With an estimated viewership of a billion people, "Live Positive" narrates stories in depth. Their prime time reportage, short and long form documentaries and special features focus on HIV and human development; HIV and governance; and HIV, human rights and gender. Telecast across the region on World AIDS Day in 2006 by all the participating broadcasters, "Live Positive" also made it to other channels in Asia Pacific. Select productions were also aired on channels outside the region. The broadcast will continue throughout 2007. An international edition with English voice overs and sub-titles are available on request from ABU for license-free use.

⁴ Cambodia Community Women (CCW) of the Cambodia People Living with HIV/AIDS Network (CPN+)

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UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. As a trusted development partner, and co-sponsor of UNAIDS, it helps countries put HIV/AIDS at the centre of national development and poverty reduction strategies; build national capacity to mobilize all levels of government and civil society for a coordinated and effective response to the epidemic; and protect the rights of people living with AIDS, women, and vulnerable populations. Because HIV/AIDS is a world-wide problem, UNDP supports these national efforts by offering knowledge, resources and best practices from around the world.

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by the care of their spouses, illnesses and responsibility of running the household, women are often denied their rightful access to property when their spouses die. Blamed, abused and expelled from marital homes, positive women are often denied access to their children as well. The situation is acute when the avenues for legal redress are meager. Even where progressive statutory laws exist, accessing these rights is difficult for several reasons ranging from lack of awareness, lack of access to legal services, conflict between statutory and customary law and the existence of biased judiciaries. A recent study of the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in India shows that despite constitutional guarantees and legal safeguards, as high as 79% of HIV-positive widows, most of them in the prime of their youth, were denied a share in their husband's property. More than 90% of the HIV-positive widows had stopped living in their marital homes after the deaths of their husbands.³ Studies in South Asia show that women with access to properties are less vulnerable to violence compared to women without properties, and are in a stronger position to negotiate safe sex.

Though the linkages between access to inheritance and property rights and women's empowerment, particularly in the context of HIV and AIDS, have been clear, there has been little acknowledgement and remedial action. To address this gap, the Regional Programme is supporting research, capacity development and advocacy in partnership with the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), UNIFEM, UNAIDS and other government and civil society stakeholders in the region. Notable among them are a three-country study in south Asia; a reference guide on gender and HIV and policy inputs to the Commission on HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. For high level advocacy and public outreach, the Programme also organized an Asia Pacific Court of Women in conjunction with the 8th ICAAP in Colombo, in partnership with Asian Women's Human Rights Council (AWHRC).

Making the money work

UNDP plays a lead role in helping countries manage resources from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). In Asia, UNDP is the Principal Recipient (PR) in Iran, Nepal and the Maldives.

In terms of capacity building, UNDP provides technical support to national governments in specific areas of management of the funds and implementation of projects. In Cambodia, UNDP has provided capacity support in financial management, monitoring and evaluation, and procurement. Capacity support on grant implementation has also been provided to PNG. In Indonesia, support has been provided to review the progress on issues related to the Time Bound Action Plan associated with existing GFATM grants and their timely implementation

At the regional level, the Regional Programme provided financial and substantive technical support to ASEAN Secretariat in the development and submission of a regional proposal on mobility and HIV involving the 10 member countries for Round Seven of GFATM.

³ B. Pradhan & R. Sundar for NACO, UNDP, NCAER 2006: Gender Impact of HIV & AIDS in India

and providing access to information and services at source, transit and destination areas has now been accepted as a model approach to mobility and HIV.

The Regional Programme works closely with SAARC and ASEAN in promoting cross-country and sub-regional safe mobility initiatives in the region. In addition, in South East Asia, it also supports the Joint UN Regional Task Force on Mobility (UNRTF) to reduce HIV vulnerability throughout the migration cycle by promoting an enabling legal and political environment, multi-sectoral partnerships, an effective framework for prevention, care and treatment services, and by establishing an operational regional and national institutional framework

To address the vulnerabilities faced by migrants from the region to the Middle East, inter-regional efforts focusing on advocacy and provision of services are being initiated. To support policy advocacy and evidence-based programming, the Regional Programme in partnership with CARAM Asia and IOM, has initiated a four-country gender study to assess the conditions of female migrants from the region to the Middle East. The Regional Programme also took the lead role in supporting ASEAN's submission of a ten member-country regional proposal on migration and HIV to the 7th round of Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).

At the national level, effective safe mobility initiatives are also being implemented in China, India, Nepal and Thailand.

Response to trafficking and HIV

Building on the achievements of its partnership initiative with the Japanese Government against human trafficking and HIV in South Asia, the Regional Programme is currently expanding its anti-trafficking efforts to the rest of Asia and the Pacific. Implemented in partnership with NGOs and UNDP country offices, the initiative focuses on reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to both HIV infection and human trafficking as well as supporting rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked young girls and women. More than 600,000 people in the region have been outreached through this initiative and about 9,000 women have been supported through vocational training and social support. The project also led to the rescue of more than 300 women. A publication "Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS: Exploring Vulnerabilities and Responses in South Asia", was launched at the 8th ICAAP in Colombo. The Regional Programme has been successful in advocating for the integration of HIV prevention and care activities in trafficking projects as well as employing a minimum standard of care for trafficked women rescued from forced labour and sex work. A three country study in association with Harvard School of Public Health to collect and analyse disaggregated data on the linkage between trafficking and HIV, and inform policies and programmes in the region, is currently underway. Trafficking and HIV are also part of the country office initiatives in Nepal, Bangladesh and India.

Inheritance and property rights of women living with HIV

The unequal right of women to inheritance and property in many parts of the region has been severely aggravated by HIV. Burdened

In China, UNDP is one of the lead agencies in institutionalizing a joint UN programme to assist the development of enabling national and local legislation, and facilitating civil society participation, women's empowerment and mainstreaming HIV into local poverty initiatives. The role of UNDP in strengthening the governance of HIV responses is also evident in Indonesia where the National AIDS Commission became fully operational at the national and district levels; while in countries such as PNG, Lao PDR and Vietnam, UNDP continued to support the National Programmes. In Nepal, HIV has been integrated into the decentralization efforts, while in Cambodia, it has been mainstreamed into the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports at the national and decentralized levels. In Vietnam, UNDP has played the most critical role of bringing HIV into the party leadership agenda and changing the latter's approach to HIV from that of a "social evil" to "a multi-sectoral development issue".

HIV, Human Rights and Gender Empowerment of people living with HIV

In this regard, the Programme continues to build on the success of its Asia Pacific Initiative for the Empowerment of People Living with HIV (2003-2005) in partnership with the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV and the Indian Network for People Living with HIV (INP+), in which 23 networks of people living with HIV across the region were supported in strengthening leadership, capacity, networking, treatment literacy and organizational management. The Initiative has considerably helped improve the participation of PLHIV in AIDS responses at the national and regional levels. Presently, the Regional Programme is working with APN+ to further strengthen the implementation of GIPA in the region. A guidance note, that will help NGOs, Governments and others engage with positive people is under preparation in addition to ongoing advocacy efforts on key issues such as access to treatment, human rights and stigma and discrimination. In addition, the Regional Programme is continuing its regional campaign against stigma and discrimination. A review report titled "HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Review of Human Development Consequences" authored by Yale University researchers was released at the 8th ICAAP in Colombo.

At the national level, PLWHA groups received continued support, particularly with a view to implement GIPA. In countries such as Iran, Fiji, China, Malaysia, India and Vietnam, UNDP has also been strongly active in addressing the issues of people living with HIV, women and communities

Mobility and HIV

The HIV vulnerability of people arising out of migration across national borders, and trafficking of women and children has been part of the agenda of the UNDP Regional HIV Programme for about a decade. UNDP addresses the human development, governance, human rights and gender dimensions of mobility and trafficking. The Programme has played a critical role in advocating for safe mobility initiatives in South and North East Asia as well as in South East Asia that emphasize reduction of the HIV vulnerability of people without hindering their right to move in search of livelihoods. The focus on informed choices by people who are on the move, or likely to move,

Now or Never: The narrowing window of opportunity

Home to the second largest number of people living with HIV and one of the fastest infection rates in the world, the Asia Pacific region has emerged as the new epicenter of the global AIDS epidemic. Three countries of the region have HIV prevalence rates exceeding one percent of the general population. The region also has severe rising sub-epidemics concentrated among vulnerable groups such as sex workers, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men.

“ The epidemic in the region, like in the worst affected parts of the world, is marked by an alarming increase in the number of new infections among women; severe stigma, discrimination and violation of human rights; deep-rooted socio-economic factors that make people vulnerable to HIV infection; and extremely poor access to information and services, particularly life-saving treatment.

Besides being powerless to protect themselves against HIV, the majority of women in the region are also targets of severe rights violations.

The epidemic threatens to impoverish poor people further and intensify the already existing inequities related to gender, sexual orientations, rights, governance, livelihoods, and services.

There is increasing concern over the socio-economic impact of HIV in the region; particularly at the household and community levels; and the disproportionate impact on women as evidenced by their heightened vulnerability¹, denial of inheritance and property rights and barriers to services including treatment.

Though modern treatment options such as antiretroviral treatment have made a dramatic improvement in mortality, morbidity and quality of life associated with HIV, only 19 per cent of the people who are in need have access to them. Efforts to expand this access are threatened by unfavourable patent regimes embedded in bilateral and regional trade agreements.

Another major concern in the region, in the context of HIV, is the large-scale movement of people within and across national borders and trafficking of women and children. About 40 million people are on the move in Asia and the Pacific at any point of time and annually about 450,000 women and girls get trafficked in the region. Increasing infrastructure projects and unequal growth across the region is fuelling this national and cross-border movement of people, often in distress, without adequate informed choices and protection

¹ 30 per cent of the new infections in Asia Pacific are among women: UNAIDS, 2006

against HIV. The trafficking of women and their vulnerability to HIV is an added concern in this regard.

The daunting epidemic burden and momentum, however, is masked by the large population of the region, leading to low reported prevalence, which has resulted in considerable complacency among governments and development stakeholders. This is a key challenge to fighting the epidemic in Asia and the Pacific.

The region also has witnessed impressive responses. For instance, Cambodia and Thailand have been able to reverse the trend of the epidemic, while countries such as India and China have been able to generate breakthroughs in prevention and enhancing access to treatment. There have been consistent efforts in improving the legal and ethical situation to empower people living with HIV; good practices in national strategic planning, mainstreaming, access to treatment and socio-economic empowerment of women living with HIV; participation of networks of positive people in policies and programmes; and socio-economic analyses aimed at policy change.

However, responses to HIV in the Asia Pacific region are mostly health-centric and do not comprehensively address the underlying human development factors that fuel the epidemic. HIV is perceived more as a short term medical emergency than a long term development crisis, leading to flawed response strategies. Lack of commitment and capacity among national governments and others compound this situation.

Much of the Asia-Pacific's vulnerability to HIV as well as the solutions transcend borders, calling for regional collaboration and collective, integrated action both at the national and regional levels. In addition to addressing shared vulnerabilities such as unsafe, trans-border mobility of people and the swelling epidemic burden, integrated efforts at the regional level will help optimal utilization of human, technical and financial resources, knowledge, and experience. Collective efforts will also help countries influence global, regional and national agendas and gain from each other's comparative advantage in responding to the growing and related challenges of HIV and human development.

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UNDP's Response

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Given its rich experience and the repertoire of knowledge and technical resources in the diverse aspects of human development across the world, UNDP is uniquely positioned to effectively address the human development causes and consequences of the epidemic, which are often overlooked by conventional AIDS responses. With more than a decade of policy and programme experience in Asia and the Pacific, the UNDP Regional HIV and Development Programme seeks to address the human development and trans-border challenges of HIV and AIDS in the region. It promotes integrated, rights-based, and multi-sectoral responses with a view to helping countries achieve MDGs, and comprehensively address the socio-economic factors that fuel the epidemic. Gender equality, sustainable livelihoods, regional collaboration, joint initiatives, community participation, inclusive leadership and capacity development are among the guiding principles of the Regional Programme.

As a cosponsor of UNAIDS, UNDP is globally mandated to lead the responses in HIV and development; governance of HIV responses; and HIV, human rights and gender. According to the regional division of labour, UNDP is the lead agency for mobile populations, migrants and human trafficking in Asia and the Pacific. The efforts of the Regional Programme as well as the UNDP Country Offices are consistent with this mandate and the labour division.



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HIV and Development Achievement of MDGs

The human development linkages of HIV are best illustrated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A key MDG by itself (MDG 6), HIV is central to the achievement of other goals, particularly the goals on poverty, gender equality, child and maternal mortality and education. On the other hand, poor performance on other MDGs can decelerate the progress on HIV. In supporting countries to achieve MDGs, the Regional Programme has developed an MDG-consistent HIV/AIDS costing tool and a needs assessment user guide in partnership with UNAIDS Asia-Pacific Regional Support Team which countries can use to plan and implement initiatives to achieve the 2015 MDG targets. These tools are being deployed in a number of countries in the region to support MDG-consistent strategies and plans.

At the country office level, HIV is being integrated into the MDG national strategies and in costing guidelines in Mongolia and Bhutan, with plans for roll-out in 7-10 countries. UNDP is also supporting national teams to review the needs, costs and financing requirement for achieving the MDGs and engaging the UN Country Teams and national partners through this process.

Socio-economic impact studies

A notable weakness of the responses to HIV in the Asia Pacific region is the inadequate acknowledgement of the impact of the epidemic on people and communities and the absence of appropriate remedial steps. The socio-economic burden of HIV on nearly six million people living with the virus in the region and the resultant morbidity and mortality are not commensurately reflected in policies and programme responses.

In view of this deficiency of scientific evidence, the Regional Programme, in partnership with UNDP country offices and national governments, has launched large-scale household impact studies in Cambodia and China. While the studies are being organized in three provinces in China, in Cambodia, it will cover most parts of the country. A similar study will be launched in PNG. Besides two national reports, the studies will also lead to a regional report and a series of policy advocacy initiatives at the national and regional levels.

The methodology of the study is based on the highly successful socio-economic impact analysis in India, which covered 8,000 samples in six high prevalence states in the south, west and north-eastern parts of the country. By far, it has been the largest household study on HIV in the region.

Trade, TRIPS and HIV/AIDS

Availability of Anti Retroviral (ARV) drugs has transformed HIV from a fatal disease into a manageable, chronic infection. Although the prohibitive costs of ARVs severely limited its access in the 1980s and most part of 1990s, the availability of generic versions and the provisions of the "Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health"², have substantially brought down the bar on accessibility. However, adopting the TRIPS flexibilities into national legislation so that HIV medicines become affordable and accessible, is a challenge many countries are struggling to come to terms with.

To help countries; including governments, civil society and PLHIV networks; adopt TRIPS safeguards and flexibilities for ensuring sustainable access to low cost HIV medicines, the Regional Programme is undertaking a series of capacity building initiatives. In partnership with Third World Network (TWN), the Programme has organized training programmes for government and non-government stakeholders in the Pacific as well as for networks of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the Asia Pacific region. Documentation of adoption of TRIPS flexibilities in three countries, and the role of PLHIV networks in mobilizing the public to secure access to generic, affordable HIV medicines in two countries are underway.

² Adopted at the WTO Ministerial conference in 2001 in Doha

At the country office level, enabling capacity support is provided to government and non-government organizations on expanding access to treatment.

HIV and Governance Commitment and capacity for multisectoral responses

UNDP's global experience in strengthening leadership, commitment and capacity for mobilizing multi-sectoral responses against HIV and strengthening the governance of HIV responses has been demonstrated in several countries of the region such as China, Cambodia, Nepal, India, Vietnam, Mongolia and Lao PDR. These efforts, in partnership with UNDP country offices and national and provincial governments, have been able to catalyze comprehensive and integrated responses to HIV at various levels. In Mongolia and Lao PDR, the methodology of this programme is now being used for efforts at improving governance while in China it is being expanded to key provinces for HIV prevention and care. In Cambodia, it was used for mainstreaming HIV into the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports at the national and provincial levels. The rationale behind the programme that a favorable socio-economic and political environment and empowering leadership are necessary for successful AIDS responses, has gained wider currency in several countries of the Asia Pacific region. The Regional Programme will continue to build on the headway gained over the last four years with regard to cross-sectoral linkages and synergies to further strengthen multi-sectoral responses to HIV.

Support to Three Ones, joint UN programmes

In China, UNDP is in the lead for institutionalizing joint UN programming while in India, it ably supported the government's third phase of the National AIDS Control Plan (NACP-III). Multisectoral partnerships, governance, migration, trafficking, rights of people and women living with HIV and stigma and discrimination have been given prominence in NACP-III. Additionally, UNDP has been part of a joint UN programme in the four north eastern states.

