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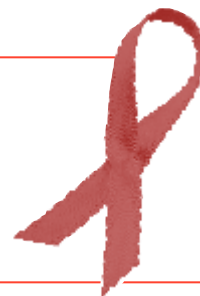
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AIDS PREVENTION:

It is increasingly clear that youth must be at the center of AIDS prevention strategies, especially in hard-hit countries. Where the epidemic is less severe, addressing youth helps to ensure that they remain HIV-free. Experience suggests that, to deal with HIV/AIDS effectively, a broad alliance of organizations in public health, education, development, and public policy, working together with the private sector and NGOs, must be forged. A strategic framework focused on youth recognizes that the AIDS epidemic has many components and that no single approach can succeed alone.

The emphasis among the various elements of the strategy depends on the specific pattern of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in a country. For example, countries still at the beginning of the epidemic would focus more on educating young people about AIDS, while countries where HIV/AIDS is already widespread would emphasize curtailing its further spread and on mitigating its effects.

For a successful HIV/AIDS strategy, program responses should be based on formative research and needs assessments. As a strategy is carried out, monitoring and impact evaluation help planners determine what is working and what is not working, and whether resources are being well used. Evidence of the program's impact on young people's behavior is key, since behavior change is the goal of AIDS prevention programs (50).



Youth at the Center

Key Components of a Strategic Approach



Changing Behavior Through Education and Communication

- Promoting a choice of protective behaviors, including delayed sexual debut, abstinence, consistent condom use
- Youth participating in every aspect of programs, from needs assessment to delivering the message
- Using all opportunities, from classroom to community to television
- Entertaining while educating
- Developing risk-avoidance skills such as refusing sex, negotiating condom use
- Encouraging self-efficacy—feeling confident and able

Making Youth Services Friendly

- Friendly, empathic, discrete care providers
- Range of services and referrals, including for voluntary HIV counseling and testing, emotional health, social needs, substance abuse counseling
- Confidentiality always respected
- Convenient walk-in hours, minimal paperwork
- Low or no cost

Creating an Enabling Environment

- National leaders publicly give the issue high priority, call for commitment
- Policy and law provide resources to youth programs, advance youth's right to health care and information, protect youth from discrimination
- Linking and coordinating organizations in all sectors

Strengthening Financial Commitment

- More funds for HIV/AIDS prevention overall
- A larger share for youth
- Commitments from private sector as well as government and international donors

Making Condoms Available

- Easy access, multiple outlets
- Free or very low cost
- No questions asked
- Emphasizing *consistent* use in vaginal, anal, and oral sex

Developing Programs for Youth with Special Needs

- Street youth, orphans, sex workers, refugees, military
- Going where they are
- Meeting their immediate needs first

Mitigating Economic and Social Hardship

- Education in and out of school
- Job training and business skills development
- Microfinance and income-generation activities
- Food, housing, and childcare

Monitoring the Epidemic

- Age-specific prevalence and incidence of HIV and other STIs
- Monitoring health knowledge, attitudes, behavior
- Evaluating program impact

Mobilizing Communities

- Involving parents, teachers, other adults
- Demonstrating concern and caring
- Advocacy on behalf of youth
- Setting good examples
- Challenging risky traditional practices