



Nepal Responding to HIV and AIDS

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HIV and AIDS in Nepal

HIV is a virus that causes AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a serious disease of the immune system. It is transmitted through blood and body fluids, especially by sexual contact or sharing hypodermic needles. The HIV and AIDS epidemic poses a serious threat to the population of Nepal, especially the lives of children and young people.

The estimated prevalence of HIV and AIDS among the general population is still relatively low in Nepal compared to some countries around the world. Current data indicate that HIV prevalence is around 0.5 percent in the adult population¹. Of these, half live in districts along the highways, and a quarter are women.

Who's at risk?

Female sex workers:

High vulnerability to HIV and AIDS because they have multiple sex partners, are poorly educated and exploited. They do not always use condoms.

Clients of female sex workers:

Includes truckers, migrant or seasonal laborers, rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, police and security forces, businessmen and students. Without the right information on HIV and AIDS and how to avoid it, many men, especially migrant workers, put their wives and children at risk through their behaviour.

Injecting Drug Users:

Drug use is on the rise in Nepal. Government statistics² indicate 17458 injecting drug users in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur together, 5112 in Pokhara, 3186 in Sunsari, 1316 in Morang and 2588 in Rupandehi.

Young People:

Pre-marital casual sex with multiple partners is increasing in young people in Nepal; many do not regularly use condoms.

World Vision



Pandap doesn't know how long he's been living with HIV and AIDS. He only heard of the virus for the first time last year; His wife has already died; he, his 10 year old daughter and 4 year old son are all HIV-positive..

Fast facts on HIV and AIDS

An estimated 75,000 people, or around 0.5% of the adult population, are living with the virus.

One quarter of them are women.

Injecting drug users are extremely vulnerable to infection.

AIDS has orphaned 13,000 children in Nepal; around 111,000 children may have been affected because of HIV and AIDS in their parents, carers or community.

1. UNAIDS Global Report 2006, http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/2006GlobalReport/default.asp

2. Centre Statistics Department, Ministry of Home Affairs- Control center 2007

What's the solution?

The government, UN bodies, national and international agencies can all help to change the situation.

The government of Nepal, in a multi-sectoral approach alongside non-government organisations, needs to give a high priority to **HIV and AIDS awareness and strategies** for the reduction of sexually transmitted diseases.

Voluntary Testing and Counselling, care, support and treatment will help to improve life for people already living with the virus.

As well, programs that address **issues of poverty** will also help to lessen the risks of HIV and AIDS. Better education, improved livelihoods to lessen migration, and **stronger healthcare networks**, could all play a part in protecting communities from HIV and AIDS.

In Nepal, HIV awareness and prevention, plus care for children and families affected by HIV and AIDS, is a goal of all development programmes World Vision delivers.

Both in school and out of school, children and youth benefit from HIV awareness and peer education initiatives, such as quiz contests, public speaking, essay and drawing competitions. In addition, students perform street dramas on HIV and AIDS and participate in rallies each World AIDS Day and International Candle Light Day to help raise awareness.

To make this possible, World Vision works closely with schoolteachers, school management teams and parents of school children, as well as with local authorities. HIV awareness is also conducted within these groups, with newsletters and other materials published for their ongoing reference.

World Vision also communicates the risks to groups and communities who are most at risk. In Bhutwal, a remote area with high migrancy in search of work, spouses of migrant workers meet regularly for discussions on HIV and AIDS, behavioural change, reproductive health, safer sex and sexually transmitted disease.

Carpet factory workers in Bhaktapur meet with peer educators who advise on issues of sexual health and provide referrals to testing and counseling if required. In Kathmandu, taxi drivers and rickshaw pullers receive information and advice on the dangers of HIV infection both through unprotected sex and through needle-sharing.

In central Kathmandu, World Vision's Sangati Extended Care Centre is helping to rehabilitate drug addicts.



Former drug dependent youth take the stage alongside dignitaries to celebrate four years of rehabilitation and care at World Vision's Sangati Extended Care Centre.

Taxi drivers change their ways

HIV and AIDS has many similarities to other sexually transmitted infections, including people's ignorance or unwillingness to talk about it. Using easy-to-understand brochures and leaflets, World Vision peer educators can play a vital role in helping young people stay healthy and safe.

Shyam,* 22, is an unmarried taxi driver who migrated to Kathmandu from Dhading District. After several attempts to finish school, he took a night shift driving taxis. In that course of time, he met lots of other taxi drivers, who used to frequently visit brothels. He began to join them and never used a condom during sexual intercourse. In his words, "I did not like wearing condoms."

Shyam started experiencing rashes on his genital area. Concerned, he contacted a World Vision peer educator, who was able to give him information on sexually transmitted infections. After going through the leaflets and brochures, he finally recognised the risks he had been taking. The peer educators recommended him to Nepal Youth Society, a World Vision partner organization, for confidential treatment of his condition.

Now he has fully recovered from the infection, he understands that the risks are real. Shyam says he knows about the importance of safe sex, and he always uses condoms. Interventions like this not only give protection to sex workers and their clients, but drastically reduce the transmission of HIV and AIDS into families.

* name changed

As well as a drop-in centre offering support, counselling and recreational activities, the centre provides a residential refuge for boys and young men who want to become drug-free. HIV and AIDS awareness and counselling is an important part of Sangati Centre's program. More than 250 former drug and alcohol dependent people have used Sangati's services to recover from their addictions.

Kaski's Naulo Abhas HIV and AIDS Care Centre is a bridging house to help people recently diagnosed with the virus to prepare both physically and psychologically for life with HIV and AIDS. To address stigma, residents are encouraged to become active members of their community and educate others against HIV and AIDS. The project is extremely successful and several support groups have been formed as a result, including one to advocate for the rights of HIV-positive women.



For further information on World Vision's programmes to reduce HIV and AIDS in Nepal:

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