

The HIV and Development Magazine for Asia Pacific

You and AIDS



Unsafe and uninformed mobility often lead women into the net of ruthless exploiters, including traffickers

Trek Through Travails

The increasing incidence of trafficking in women and children and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS have reached disturbingly visible levels in several parts of Asia. A comprehensive feature with inputs from various countries of the region.

PLUS

SPOTLIGHT

Millennium Development Goals

PHOTO FEATURE

Women living with HIV/AIDS

SPECIAL REPORTS

Despatches and updates from the region

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REACH Beyond Borders is UNDP's Regional HIV and
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 addresses the development and trans-border chal-
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 grated and rights based responses that promote gen-
 der equality, sustainable livelihoods and community
 participation. Focus areas of work include: Policy
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 Capacity Development and Greater Involvement of
 People Living with HIV/AIDS and Human Rights.



Reversing HIV is a Millenium Development Goal



ASIA and the Pacific is on the throes of a rapidly rising HIV/AIDS epidemic, that is threatening to escalate into one of the most serious development challenges facing the region. With more than one third of humanity, the largest pool of poverty and the presence of all the other underlying factors that fuel the epidemic, the vulnerability of the region to HIV is too obvious to overlook. The region has the second largest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world.

The concern over the potential impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on human development is articulated well by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which seek to set a global development agenda. Reversing and halting the HIV/AIDS epidemic is essential to achieve the MDG and to ensure that the development targets set by global leaders are met as planned.

The region's vulnerability to HIV stems from a variety of factors that are mainly rooted in extreme forms of inequality. One of them is the increasing population mobility experienced by most of the countries in the region. Evidence clearly suggests that unsafe mobility often leads people to situations that make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Unsafe mobility also leads to trafficking in humans, particularly women and children. This phenomenon has a direct correlation with HIV as the conditions under which women and children are trafficked are conducive to the transmission of HIV. The cover story of this edition of *YouandAIDS* seeks to explore the link between trafficking and HIV in detail and argues for responses that respect the rights of people to move in search of livelihoods and protect them from the traps that lie ahead.

This is the second edition of *YouandAIDS*, which is published by the UNDP Regional HIV and Development Programme. Originally started by UNAIDS, it seeks communicate in the form of a mainstream magazine and is an innovative model for outreach, communication, advocacy and partnerships.

Together with UNAIDS, which represents nine cosponsors, UNDP has taken forward the work on the YouandAIDS portal, which is an important regional platform on HIV and Development issues.

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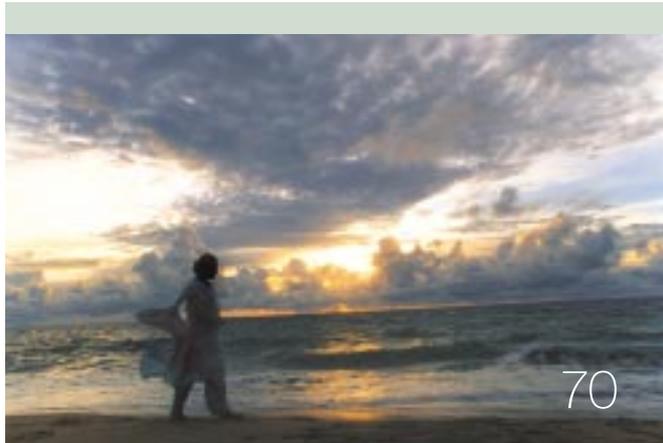
COVER STORY

TWILIGHT ZONE

The increasing incidence of trafficking in women and children and their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS have reached disturbingly visible levels in several parts of Asia. Needed are responses that respect the rights of people to move in search of livelihoods and protect them from the traps lying ahead. A comprehensive feature.



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PHOTO-ESSAY

HERE COMES THE SUN

At the centre of the epidemic in Asia are thousands of women who have no control over their sexuality, who are powerless and violated and have no access to livelihoods. Yet, when it comes to living with HIV/AIDS, they are outstanding examples of reconciliation, compassion and resilience. A photo-essay on the lives of women living with HIV/AIDS in Asia Pacific.

ROUND-TABLE

Extraordinary Epidemic, Extraordinary Responses

A report of the first ever regional editors' meeting on HIV and Development. Eight senior editors of the Asia Pacific region met for a round-table exploring ways to strengthen media-support to the campaign against HIV/AIDS.

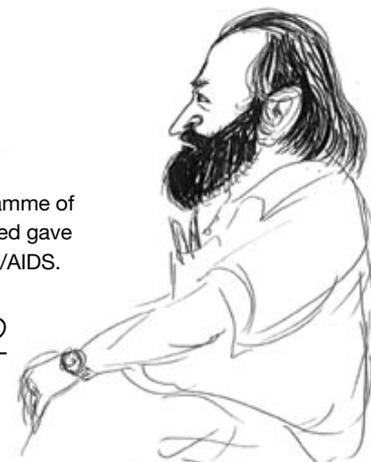


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ARTS AND MEDIA

New Icons, Metaphors

More than 120 arts and media leaders from India and Nepal converged in Goa, western India, for a transformative leadership programme of UNDP. The icons and metaphors they created gave a new meaning to the response against HIV/AIDS.



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SPECIAL REPORTS

Region in Review

Features and despatches from China (15), Laos (40), Afghanistan (46), Pakistan (60), Iran (68), Sri Lanka (79), Viet Nam (80) and Bhutan (84).

BLUE-PRINT FOR A PRE-EMPTIVE MISSION

Inspired by Queen Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuk's enthusiastic support, the Himalayan Kingdom has taken proactive steps to meet the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS. Even before the first case was detected in the country, the government had formed the National AIDS committee. **Chris Whitehouse** writes from Thimphu.

THE Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is yet to hit global headlines on the issue of HIV/AIDS. In fact, it boasts of an enviable HIV/AIDS record: most recent figures put the number of reported cases till date at a low 39 out of a population nearing 700,000.

Bhutan has taken proactive steps to meet the challenges posed by the infection. Even before the first HIV case was identified in the country, the government had already formed the National AIDS Committee.

With the help of the enthusiastic support from Queen Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, who regularly tours villages discussing health-related issues,

With the help of UNFPA and WHO, the UN family in Bhutan has been closely associated with the Royal government in tackling the issue.

Their efforts got a fillip more recently when UNICEF and UNDP too joined hands with them. UNDP entered the HIV arena in 2002, with a short-term but intensive programme to strengthen the capacities of the 20 district-level MSTFs, to help them perform their functions better, and to effectively co-ordinate with fellow MSTFs and the National AIDS Committee.

There were, however, many sceptics before the project began. But, in a very short period of time, the co-ordinator,

time-frame support is that what is quickly built up can be quickly undone. However, the project team, UNDP and the Public Health Division are optimistic that through focusing on all activities on how the benefits of the outputs can be sustained and weakening of MSTFs after the project ends can be minimised.

The steering committee will continue to monitor and support the young MSTFs long after project-closure, and there will be continued and detailed auditing of the use of seed grants provided through the project.

The MSTFs, formed through the support of UNFPA, are now more functional and better motivated, and to a limited extent, the UNDP project was able to boost the technical knowledge amongst MSTF members. Yet much more needs to be done.

The task forces still need to learn more about HIV/AIDS, about transmission methods, about counselling for people

living with HIV/AIDS, and means to address stigma and discrimination in order to effectively contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

As the MSTFs grow and mature, they will need to further develop their skills in management, planning, reporting, budgeting and in fund-raising. And, looking to the more distant future, when perhaps the number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) may increase, to encourage PLWHA to work together with MSTFs in carefully designed and targeted advocacy work. It has been an important beginning... ■

MANY FEAR that Bhutan's HIV prevalence may rise soon because of its porous border with India and the high levels of migration. Experts say that although the awareness level is relatively high in Bhutan, there is still a need for detailed knowledge.

HIV/AIDS has been considered a priority issue for the nation's policy-makers. In her capacity as the country's UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador, she played a pivotal role in the formation of Multi-Sectoral Task Forces (MSTFs) across the country. Although awareness about the existence of HIV and AIDS is relatively high in Bhutan, there is some concern on the lack of a detailed knowledge among many on the transmission and prevention methods.

Also, many fear that the country's HIV prevalence may rise soon because of Bhutan's porous border with India and the high levels of migration.

supported by a national assistant and an international United Nations Volunteer (UNV), met all the 20 MSTFs. A country-wide total of 445 participants from 115 different professional backgrounds contributed eagerly to the development of a manual/guidelines for MSTF operation.

It was indeed a success, thanks to the enthusiastic support of the Royal Government, the dedication of the project team, the calibre and enthusiasm of the dzongdas (district magistrates) and the flexible approach taken by the stakeholders.

The danger of an intensive short