

### CHINA-AUSTRALIA XINJIANG HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND CARE PROJECT 中国-澳大利亚新疆艾滋病预防与关怀项目

#### PROJECT LOCATION

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is situated in North-West China. The Project operates in three sites in this Province: Urumqi, Yili and Kashgar.

#### CHALLENGES

Rapid population and economic growth plus social change add extra challenges to those posed by Xinjiang's remote location, size, arid climate, diverse ethnic population mix, international borders and transport routes that facilitate both trade, and the illegal trafficking of drugs.

The first case of HIV was reported in Xinjiang in 1995. In 2003 the number of cases reported were 8153, but anecdotal evidence suggests the figures may be as high as 60,000.

The main HIV transmission route is through injecting drug users (IDUs) sharing needles. Infection is concentrated in the Uygur population, the largest ethnic minority group. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and how HIV is transmitted is low among vulnerable groups (IDUs, commercial sex workers, youth and mobile populations) as well as in the general population.

#### PROJECT APPROACH

- The project began in 2002.
- The overall strategy is to strengthen multi-sectoral capacity to implement prevention, care and treatment interventions.
- Planning has been undertaken with multi-sectoral organisations, such as health, public security, justice, education, religious leaders, community leaders and target groups.
- A Health Promotion Operations Group, with members from the multi-sectoral agencies will be used to plan, monitor and co-ordinate behavioural and community self-care interventions. These interventions are funded through an Activity Support Facility.

#### KEY INTERVENTION AREAS

- Condom promotion
- Behavioural change with vulnerable groups
- Reduction of stigma and discrimination

#### CASE STUDIES:

"A next-door neighbour found out that the son was positive and told the rest of the community. When the family goes into the street they are verbally abused and discriminated against."

"He owned a small farm and when the next-door neighbours found out (he was positive) they discriminated against him. They claimed that any water that ran from his farm contaminated the grass and went into the grass then into their sheep. The local community cut off the water supply to his farm and turned it into a desert. He had to leave the area."

"Commercial sex workers (CSWs) do not ask clients to use condoms, as this would indicate that they are HIV positive. CSW do disclose their status to other sex workers."

"Men often do not disclose to their wives until after they are married that they are HIV positive and their wives generally become positive as well."

#### EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS

##### Combined Harm Reduction and Care in Yining City, Yili Prefecture

**Target population:** Injecting drug users and their families.

**Goal:** To further reduce the transmission of HIV among injecting drug users, and to improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS, through a needle and syringe program (NSP) and community and family-based care.

**Progress:** In March 2004, Yining city launched NSP in 3 communities where the HIV epidemic is serious and the drug users are concentrated. 20 clinics, pharmacies and private shops have been selected as the fixed sites of the NSP, 12 ex-drug users have been recruited to do street patrol everyday. Both fixed sites and street patrols are responsible for delivering syringe packs which include one time use syringe, normal saline and disinfected cotton, and for providing counseling and condoms to active drug users. All participants have been trained. The local government, police and community leaders provided great support to the program. During the first week in one community, 600 syringe packs were delivered by street patrols and more than 400 used syringes were reclaimed.

**Implementing agency:** Yining City Epidemic Prevention Station and Yining City Street Administration Offices.



##### HIV/AIDS Prevention and Health Education for Secondary and Primary Level Teachers in the Education Systems in Urumqi, Yili and Kashgar

**Target population:** Secondary and primary school teachers.

**Goal:** To work with school leaders and teachers to ensure middle and primary school students have HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge, attitudes and skills.

**Progress:** Training has been conducted in Urumqi for 200 education administrators and teachers. Planning is underway for training in Yili and Kashgar and to undertake needs assessment.

**Implementing agency:** Xinjiang Regional Department of Education and the Education Bureaus of Urumqi City, Yili and Kashgar Prefectures.

##### HIV/AIDS Related Stigma and Discrimination Reduction in the Muslim Community in Tianshan District, Urumqi City

**Target population:** Religious leaders (Imams) and their followers.

**Goal:** To reduce stigma and discrimination in the Muslim community of Tianshan District in Urumqi, to reduce negative community behaviors and attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS and injecting drug users.

**Progress:** KAP surveys, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions have been held with Imams, drug users and the general community. The findings will be used to develop training materials. Some IEC materials have already been developed.

**Implementing agency:** The Tianshan District Epidemic Prevention Station in partnership with the Bureau of Religious Affairs and the multi-sectoral group.



##### Establishment of Red Ribbon Activity/Drop in Center

**Target population:** People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs).

**Goals:** To train PLWHA volunteers in Urumqi to establish an HIV/AIDS office for PLWHA, and to implement activities include counseling, a PLWHA club for personal support, a phone counseling hot line, the production of a newspaper advisory column, assistance to improve PLWHA's living environment and quality of life and to enable more people to understand, care and help PLWHAs.

**Progress:** The concept of setting up a drop-in place for PLWHA, where counseling is also provided is great. We have already seen many positive things happening. For example, after reading about the setting up of such a centre, a man in Tuksun county has started to send 50 yuan to the centre to help PLWHAs. At one of the New Years' party in the Centre, 20 positive people attended. Some played guitar, some sang and danced, while the rest of them were exchanging experiences of being a positive person.

**Implementing agency:** Urumqi Municipal Centre for Health Education in collaboration with PLWHA.

##### Using Health Promotion and Popular Opinion Leaders to Promote Condom Use in Commercial Sex Workers in Urumqi, Yining and Kashgar

**Target populations:** Mainly commercial sex workers (CSWs), as well as clients of CSWs and owners of public places for recreation and bathing.

**Goals:** To promote condom usage among the CSWs through the influence of popular opinion leaders to educate CSWs to take self-protection measures to reduce the risk of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Standardized STIs diagnosis and treatment services plus Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) services will also be offered.

**Progress:** One of the project staff said that the commercial sex workers are working with their own sub-culture and their sub-language. The project staff are learning their language so that they can get their trust to work better with them.

**Implementing agency:** HIV/AIDS and STIs Control and Prevention Centre, Regional Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

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