

THE CALL TO PREVENTION ACTION

The spread of HIV continues unabated in all regions of the world.

We have seen the epidemic shattering individual lives and devastating communities. More and more, we realize that HIV/AIDS threatens the security, stability and development of whole regions, destabilizing already fragile economic and social systems.

Despite the devastating impact of this epidemic, the beacon of hope remains. For we have seen that prevention efforts, applied with collective resolve and boldness, can and do stop the spread of HIV infection. National governments and civil society must become increasingly and zealously engaged in HIV prevention and care, because sustained and comprehensive actions are needed, both to care for the 36 million people now living with HIV and to minimize those joining their number in the future.

To this end, prevention must remain a priority—prevention that goes beyond individual behavior change. Our prevention programmes must address the root causes of the epidemic—the social and economic factors that make women, men, and children vulnerable. Reducing obstacles to basic education, information on reproductive and sexual health, access to primary health care, and economic opportunities are central elements in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes.

We can and we must focus much greater attention on reaching out urgently to increase HIV prevention awareness and knowledge, introduce and support risk reduction behavioural and social change, foment positive and safe sociocultural norms, build solid national and transnational infrastructures, as well as share resources worldwide to reduce poverty as a driver of the epidemic.

In recognition of the vital role of prevention, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and Family Health International (FHI) are publishing the Family Health International/UNAIDS Best

Practices in HIV/AIDS Prevention Collection. Encompassing a broad body of knowledge and expertise, this book is centered on HIV/AIDS prevention in the non-industrialized world. This collection is based on the six years of work performed by FHI's international and local partners in the world's largest single international HIV prevention initiative to date, the AIDS Control and Prevention (AIDSCAP) Project. It offers a substantial number of models that may be replicated around the world.

During its years of operation, from 1991 to 1997, AIDSCAP managed and supported more than 800 HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention programmes in 50 countries through funding by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). From this group of interventions, 20 initiatives have been chosen that are considered to be of global importance for dissemination through a case study approach. These case studies will be useful to individuals, communities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, businesses and governments. And, these 20 state-of-the-art "best practices" from the

1990s still represent in the year 2000 some of the most innovative, effective and comprehensive approaches to HIV prevention that have been implemented in non-industrialized countries to date.

The case studies in this collection cover a range of different issues that includes training in the management of sexually transmitted disease (STD) syndromes for health workers treating STIs, refining the communication skills of outreach workers, and training business managers in cost-effective HIV prevention programming. These local initiatives have a proven track record as catalysts for change and offer global lessons, expanding our knowledge of what does and also does not work in HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection prevention programming.

The hallmark of these programmes is that individuals have made a difference. We trust that you will distill the lessons for yourselves and carry the banner of prevention forward.

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