

CHAPTER 17

Sri Lanka

Alliance Lanka

Project title: Our Health: Empowering Communities to Normalize HIV

Implementing organizations: Alliance Lanka and partner organizations: Community Strength for Development Foundation (Gampaha district), SERVE (Colombo), and the Wasone Foundation (Kurunegala)

Location: Kadawatha, Katunayake, Kelaniya, Peliyagoda, Ragama, and Wattala in Gampaha district; Moratuwa, Mt. Lavinia, and Ratmalana in Colombo district; Kurunegala, Mallawapitiya, and Maspotha in Kurunegala district

Background

Program goals: To improve awareness, education, and services on HIV in a nonthreatening environment and to facilitate voluntary counseling and referral for testing

Target audience: General population

Primary approach: Outreach

Description of intervention: The project involved four local nongovernmental organizations in efforts to provide training, advocacy, and voluntary

counseling and testing (VCT) referrals to men and women living with HIV and AIDS across three districts in Sri Lanka. The four coordinating agencies developed a training curriculum for HIV-positive individuals on healthy living, and training was held in a local hospital serving HIV-positive patients (51 were trained). Project staff members were trained to provide follow-up every two months for training participants. A second training was developed on business planning and management for HIV-positive individuals and their families.

In addition, the project identified 48 locations for setting up furnished summer huts as roadside stands to provide information services. Visitors who came to the roadside stand were able to complete a questionnaire. Complementing the roadside stands were three people's centers. These centers were furnished spaces staffed by project facilitators who provided referrals and information about VCT and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Counseling services were provided at the centers, and each center had recreational facilities. Other programs at the centers included education sessions on HIV and sexually transmitted infections, with some resource support from a local clinic, resource support on HIV-positive living from HIV-positive individuals, nutrition support from a nutritionist, and programs on domestic violence and family relationships provided by Alliance Lanka staff.

Each center had a telephone for those who preferred to call for assistance rather than appear in person. Contact information for the centers was provided at all of the roadside stands, and visitors to the roadside stands were encouraged to access more services through the centers.

Condoms from the National Sexually Transmitted Disease and AIDS Control Programme were distributed free of charge at the stands and centers. In addition, condom demonstrations and informational materials and posters were provided at the stands and the centers. An advocacy CD (compact disc) was also distributed through the centers.

Implementation, Results, and Challenges

Measurement strategies: Logbooks were kept of visitors to the roadside stands and the services provided at the stands and people's centers. People attending the 48 roadside stands completed 12,321 surveys.

Results, key findings, and lessons: Overall, 85 referrals to clinics for sexually transmitted infections and other counseling centers were made at the roadside stands, and 48 were made at the people's centers. The project's communication messages led 116 people to seek HIV testing at the centers. Project staff members felt the location of the stands and centers

along with outreach activities encouraged community engagement and facilitated visits for information, advice, and services. The acceptability of this format for providing information on HIV and stigma is attested to by the requests Alliance Lanka received from other districts to conduct roadside stands in their districts. Project staff members felt that playing catchy music at the roadside stands evoked curiosity among the general public and drew people to seek information. Displaying the hotline numbers at the roadside stands also appeared to be important, because it resulted in many private phone calls from people who wished to obtain assistance in a confidential manner. Both project staff members and hotline users viewed the telephone hotline as a successful strategy for involving individuals who might otherwise be unwilling to seek counseling and referral for HIV testing and support. Some people who initially called on the hotline eventually came in person to receive HIV testing, counseling, and support. As a result of the business planning training, one HIV-positive participant received financial support to purchase a machine to cut coconut husk chips, and two others will reorient or expand their businesses with support from Alliance Lanka.

Over the course of the project, visitors to the roadside stands completed more than 12,000 questionnaires. Survey results indicated that general awareness of HIV was high; however, in-depth information about the modes of HIV transmission and prevention methods was fairly low. In addition, stigmatizing attitudes were quite prevalent among roadside stand visitors. For example, 42 percent of respondents believed that HIV is punishment for bad behavior, and 80 percent believed that people with HIV are promiscuous. Shame was also quite high, with 58 percent stating they would be ashamed if they were infected with HIV and 54 percent stating that people with HIV should be ashamed of themselves. These findings demonstrate that the general population in the intervention communities needs additional efforts to increase knowledge and awareness of HIV and to decrease stigma.

Challenges and unforeseen outcomes: Local security personnel at times objected to the activities at the roadside stands. This issue was resolved by engaging security personnel in friendly discussions and by obtaining approval documents.

Additional Information

Program references, media coverage, and materials developed: An advocacy CD featuring messages of HIV-positive living was produced with four people living with HIV and AIDS and was distributed through the people's centers.

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Additional funding, replication, or scale-up opportunities or new partnerships resulting from the project: The National Tuberculosis Control Program requested that its activities be linked with the Alliance Lanka people's centers. This issue will be taken up in the Round 10 proposal to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Lanka+

Project title: Reducing Stigma and Discrimination Faced by People Living with and Affected by HIV/AIDS through Advocacy for Employment

Implementing organizations: Lanka+, International Labour Organization HIV/AIDS workplace program, International Labour Organization Start and Improve Your Business program, Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Services (SEEDS) Guarantee Limited

Location: Obeysekerepura, Rajagiriya, and Waishakya Mawatha

Background

Program goals: To empower and reduce self-stigma among Lanka+ members through skills training, advocacy for employment, and income-generating activities

Target audiences: People living with HIV, general population

Primary approach: Employment

Description of intervention: At the onset of the project, Lanka+ conducted a market survey assessment to test the marketability of products, identify useful skills training, and guide its livelihood and income-generating project into a sustainable program with a strong business case.

To ensure that the program had a strong stigma reduction focus, the project selected participants on the basis of need, income, and skills and conducted a baseline assessment of attitudes and perceptions related to self-stigma. The project aimed to reduce self-stigma among 21 people living with HIV through training in business and marketing skills, as well as technical skills.

The training program for technical skills development (including candle making and screen printing, among other skills) was completed by 46 Lanka+ members. Twenty-one people living with HIV received financial support for implementing small-scale enterprises, and a revolving

loan fund was set up. The project developed a Web site (<http://www.lankaplus.org>) for social marketing as part of the income-generating program. The Web site is in the process of being translated into local languages for the main target audiences. Products are currently being marketed individually and through Lanka+. The project had the assistance of 30 undergraduate sociology students from the University of Colombo in developing an awareness-raising campaign and product launch organized for World AIDS Day 2009. They helped produce a documentary of the project, as well as a brochure, posters, and t-shirts.

Implementation, Results, and Challenges

Measurement strategy: Marketing assessment survey

Results, key findings, and lessons: The main successes of the project were (a) developing a training program for building technical skills, such as business management, candle making and packaging, and screen printing; (b) training 20 women in a pilot marketing project; and (c) launching the Web site for social marketing purposes. As a result of the project, the participants' self-confidence has increased, and they continue to apply management skills they learned from the training to their business ventures.

Challenges and unforeseen outcomes: At the onset of the project, many of the Lanka+ members were not open about their HIV status, had low self-esteem, and had a high degree of self-stigma. In addition, many were living in poverty. Also challenging was the initial lack of confidence among the Lanka+ members that their products would be accepted on the market. The project addressed this concern by recruiting an experienced project officer and holding meetings with Lanka+ members to explain the potential benefits of the project.

Additional Information

Program references, media coverage, and materials developed:

- A Web site, <http://www.lankaplus.org>
- A documentary of the project
- Brochures, posters, and t-shirts

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Additional funding, replication, or scale-up opportunities or new partnerships resulting from the project: Additional funding was received from SEEDS.