



Tackling HIV/AIDS Related Stigma and Discrimination in Vietnam

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM RESEARCH,
ADVOCACY AND INTERVENTION**

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HIV Epidemic in Vietnam

- Infection rate: 0.44 – 1.2% among adults aged 15-49 years (MOH, 2005)
- 52% of all reported cases among Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) (MOH, May 2006)
- Stigma and discrimination is severe



Collaborators

- Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) and International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
- Partnering with Central Commission for Ideology and Culture (CCIC) of the Communist Party of Vietnam
- Funding
 - First Phase: USAID/Change Project(AED)/ICRW and GlaxoSmithKline's Positive Action Programme
 - Second Phase: USAID/PACT



Project Components and Activities

- Research
- Adapting Anti-stigma toolkit
- Sensitizing policy makers
- Advocacy through media and IEC activities
- Policy formulation and dissemination
- Community intervention



2003 Research: Key Findings

- HIV-related stigma is manifested in various forms and prevalent in different settings
- All PLHAs are stigmatized, especially IDUs and CSWs



Key Findings (cont.)

Stigma stems from 3 inter-related issues:

- Fear of casual transmission
- Link of HIV to “social evils” (e.g. drug use and prostitution)
- Perpetuation of misinformation about HIV and negative images of PLHA through media and IEC campaigns



Adapted Anti-Stigma Toolkit

“Understanding and Challenging HIV Stigma: Toolkit for Action”

Modifying various modules

- Adding new modules
- Using information, case studies, stories from Vietnam



Sensitizing policy makers and media

In 2004: using adapted toolkit

Organized 2 sensitizing workshops
with staff of IC Department of
29 provinces and cities



National workshop with CCIC and
key governmental and party agencies



Advocacy through Media

- Sensitization workshop with national media using toolkit
- Provided research findings and information
- Supported and collaborated with media to develop:
 - Anti-stigma programs in VTV and Voice of Vietnam
 - Newspaper articles on stigma and discrimination
- Facilitated contact with PLHAs and other experts in HIV/AIDS and stigma and discrimination



IEC Activities: Advocacy for Positive Images of PLHA

In 2004, organized exhibition of paintings of two artists living with HIV

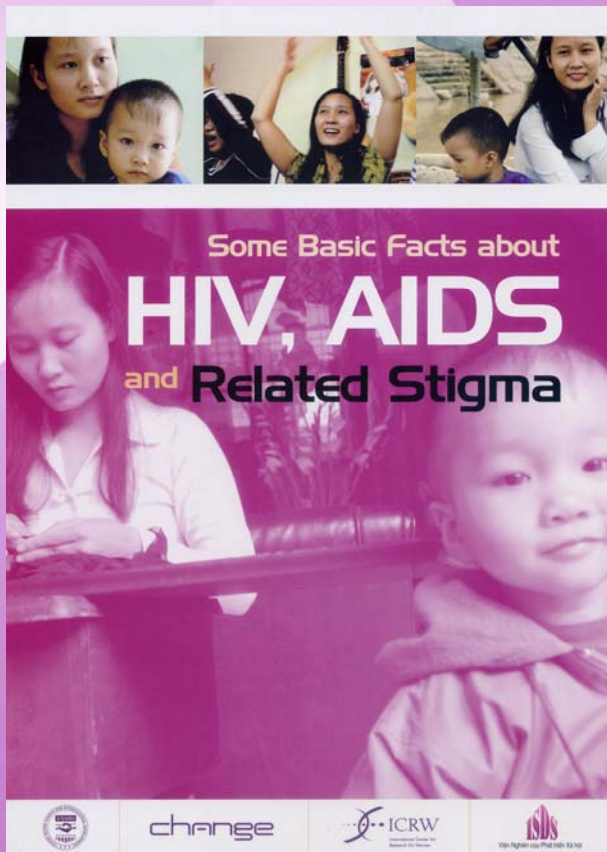


In 2005, organized an exhibition of photos on PLHAs with positive living

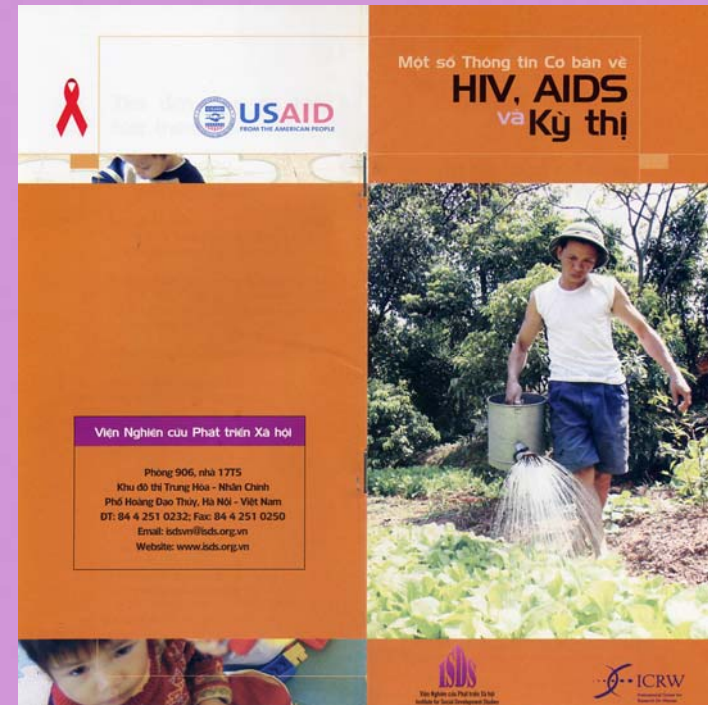


Developing and Disseminating IEC Materials

2004



2005





Policy Formulation and Dissemination

- Assisting policy makers (CCIC) in development of national anti-stigma guidelines for media and IEC activities
- Disseminating guidelines, September 2006



Community Interventions

- Sensitizing workshops in two provinces and two communes
- Conducting TOT on anti-stigma toolkit for key officials of provincial party agencies
- Developing and implementing anti-stigma program in the two communes
- Targeted Program Evaluation of Commune Program



Lessons Learned

Stigma-Reduction is
Possible



Lesson Learned 1: Open the Gate

- Involve policy makers from the beginning
- Create the feeling of ownership among policy makers
- Work closely with policy makers, build capacity



Lesson Learned 2: Target the Media

In collaboration with policy makers:

- Sensitize media on issues of stigma and discrimination
- Support media in development of media programs and reporting
- Provide media access to information and contacts among PLHA and experts



Lesson Learned 3: Use Effective Tools and Methods

- Adopt participatory approach
- Apply Anti-stigma Toolkit
- Diversify IEC activities: TV, radio, newspapers, art exhibitions, print materials
- Use of positive images of PLHA



Lesson Learned 4: Involve and empower PLHA

- Sensitize PLHA to self-stigma and provide support to overcome
- Support PLHA in volunteering their stories for media, peer education and community activities
- Create and identify opportunities for PLHAs to work with different organizations on HIV/AIDS



Lesson Learned 5 & 6

Skills Are Not Built Overnight

Stigma Reduction Takes Time

- Include follow up activities and refresher training after TOT
- Select TOT participants from intervention communes
- Stigma is deeply rooted: need sustained programs over time



Challenges & Next Steps

- Scaling up lessons learned to national level
- Integration of stigma-reduction into all HIV/AIDS efforts
- Maintaining community, government and donor interest for sustained effort over time
- Ensuring evaluation of programming
- Sharing knowledge with others with similar epidemic
- Understanding and addressing together gender, stigma and violence
 - Layered stigma (IDU and CSW)
 - Female partners of IDU