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HIV/AIDS and Development

THE WORLD BANK IN ACTION

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY



HIV/AIDS & Disability: The Hidden Risk

Individuals with disability are assumed to be at little or no risk for HIV infection therefore have not typically been included in HIV/AIDS outreach efforts. This assumption was shattered by The World Bank/Yale University Global Survey on Disability. This study found that individuals with

disability are at equal or increased risk of exposure to risk factors for HIV/AIDS. Disabled people are as likely as their non-disabled peers to be as sexually active and to use drugs and alcohol. Homosexuality and bisexuality appear to occur at the same rate among individuals with disability as among the non-disabled and while disabled people are more likely to be victims of violence or rape, they are less likely to be able to obtain police intervention, legal protection or prophylactic care.

One person in ten, or as many as 600 million people worldwide, live with a physical, sensory (deafness, blindness), intellectual, or mental health impairment. Eighty percent of these people live in the developing world, in many of the countries most severely affected by HIV/AIDS. Disabled people are often excluded from school or the workplace, making them among the poorest, most stigmatized and most marginalized of all the world's citizens.

Why are People with Disability not reached by HIV/AIDS services?

A lack of education often inhibits ability to obtain and process information. For example, the global literacy rate for adults with disability is as low as 3%, and for women with disability, the global literacy rate may be as low as 1%. Literacy is a vital component for understanding HIV/AIDS messages and translating such messages into individual behavior change. But even literacy may not overcome all obstacles; HIV/AIDS messages are often inaccessible to people with disability. Radio campaigns miss those who cannot hear, bill-

boards do not reach those who cannot see, complex messages do not reach those with intellectual impairments, and clinics/services are often inaccessible to those with physical disabilities. The AIDS crisis cannot be addressed successfully unless individuals with disability are routinely made part of all AIDS outreach efforts.

Suggestions on ways to better reach Disabled People:

- Involve people with disability, disability advocacy groups and NGOs in AIDS outreach activities.
- Depict disabled people in posters, billboards or other materials about HIV/AIDS.
- Make HIV/AIDS services accessible (ramps, sign language interpretation, verbal presentation and tactile demonstration for blind people).
- Remember that people with disabilities are present in all traditional 'at risk' groups.
- Train AIDS educators, outreach workers, clinic and social service staff on disability issues, including human rights.

What is the World Bank doing?

The Bank is working to mainstream disability into all Bank activities (economic and sector work, Country Assistance Strategies, project design, implementation and evaluation, policies), to make them inclusive of everyone, and eventually improve the prospects of the disabled poor. The Bank is also raising awareness among staff and country programs that people with disability are at equal or greater risk for HIV and must be included in HIV/AIDS activities. The Bank will host the second International Disability and Development Conference later this month, during which special sessions will be devoted to the issues of HIV/AIDS and disability.

To learn more go to:

www.globalsurvey.med.yale.edu
www.worldbank.org/aids
www.worldbank.org/disability
www.unaids.org

Or contact:

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www.globalsurvey.med.yale.edu

