

JAPAN TRUST FUND

CHINA

GETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

PROJECT TITLE: Rural education movement on HIV prevention by utilizing FPA network

IMPLEMENTING BODY: China Family Planning Association (CFPA)

AIM: To develop a new approach to improve HIV/AIDS awareness and service capacity in rural areas

As the first deaths were reported in rural Chinese villages, popular myths about HIV/AIDS transmission flourished. Fear and stigma also thrived in an information-starved environment. **Lack of accurate, appropriate and timely information is largely responsible for HIV infections among Chinese youth and women of childbearing age.** Young people often leave the countryside in search of work and can't cope with the challenges of an urban context. The HIV infection rate among injecting drug users in China is also increasing and provides an opportunity to address SRH needs of this community.

To help improve the situation, the China Family Planning Association (CFPA) built on the work of an earlier JTF/IPPF-funded project that targeted 'floating' youth. This time, CFPA hoped to educate young people before they moved to the cities and also to generate HIV/AIDS awareness within the wider family group.

The aims of this project were:

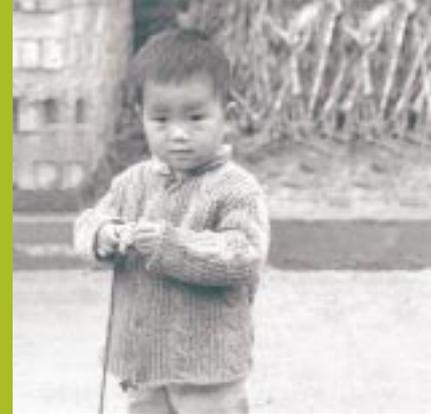
- to build capacity among the vast network of CFPA volunteers – comprising local community members – to deliver HIV/AIDS services in rural areas
- to provide a cost-effective model for covering extensive territories which could be expanded to other regions of China

CHALLENGING THE MISCONCEPTIONS

In China many believe it's possible to contract HIV/AIDS by speaking to an infected person. Before the project people said they avoided travelling through villages housing anyone known to be infected with the virus. **A survey indicated that more than 75 per cent believed that someone recently infected would no longer look 'normal'.** Where fear was highest, the turnouts at local HIV/AIDS training activities were good. What were intended as small group activities often became gatherings of an entire community!

Local CFPA branches organized a wide range of community activities. Experts were invited to provide facts about transmission and prevention. Knowledge contests were organized, while songs, stories, comedies and dramas were developed by a folk art performance team that travelled from village to village. Community media such as billboards, posters, loudspeaker announcements was also extensively used to increase local awareness and participation.

THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION (IPPF) is a global network of Member Associations in 148 countries and the world's foremost voluntary, non-governmental provider and advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights. IPPF envisages a world in which every woman, man and young person has access to the information and services they need; in which sexuality is recognized both as a natural and precious aspect of life and as a fundamental human right; a world in which choices are fully respected and where stigma and discrimination have no place.



access=life

Population (2001):

1.3 billion

Urban population (2000):

32%

Main language/s:

Putonghua (Mandarin)

Main religion/s:

Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity

Life expectancy (1995–2000):

70 years

Infant mortality (1995–2000):

41 per 1,000 live births

Literacy level (1995 est.):

81.5%

GNI per capita (1999):

US\$780

Adult HIV prevalence (end 2001):

0.1%

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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

LOCAL NETWORKING

Some 22 local project groups were established at county and township levels.

PREVENTION INFORMATION

Around 250,000 families received HIV/AIDS prevention information developed specially for rural people.

HIV/AIDS COMPLACENCY

Interpersonal communication skills were developed among 100,000 CFPA members and they were provided with HIV/AIDS information and materials.

LESSONS LEARNED

LOCAL PARTICIPATION IS CRITICAL

The active participation of the target population was central to the project's success.

IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING THROUGH PARTICIPATORY TRAINING METHODS

Transfer of skills and knowledge was enhanced through the use of participatory techniques.

LOCAL AUTHORITY BUY-IN

The support of local authorities and other community leaders was very important.

EMPOWERING LARGE NUMBERS

The impact of the project was huge:

- more than 100,000 branch staff and volunteers were trained
- information was provided to some 400,000 rural people including 200,000 women of reproductive age
- condom use was promoted and a wide distribution network established

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND CONDOM USE

Project workers report that HIV/AIDS awareness among rural people has increased. **Since the project, people laugh about their earlier belief that HIV/AIDS had nothing to do with them.** Now they're taking IEC materials to their families and friends and making sure everyone knows that HIV/AIDS is also their business. Most people in Qixian County now have a basic understanding of how HIV spreads, how they can help prevent infection and where they can go for support if they are HIV positive. The global challenge remains to convert this understanding into personal action.

Before the project more than 70 per cent of married couples surveyed said they never used condoms – this has since dropped to 40 per cent. Access to free condoms has also improved. Free condom distribution had increased from 390,000 in 2001 to 580,000 by the end of 2002.

CASE STUDY

Mrs Ting first heard about HIV/AIDS when another villager returned home after working in Peking. He always seemed unwell. After a while rumours spread that his illness was due to AIDS. "At first we all kept well away and nobody would go near him or even his family if they went down the street," Mrs Ting said. "We all thought we'd get it too. That was months before the project started in the village and they organized talks and shows here. We all went to find out more.

"Now we feel much more comfortable about HIV/AIDS. There wasn't much anybody could do for our neighbour, but we can support his wife. At first she had to deal with her husband's illness and our alienation. Now she's also tested positive for HIV. But since the project we are more informed and empathetic, so we talk to her and give her comfort. And now we know how the virus is transmitted and how we can protect ourselves, we're not as afraid."

JAPAN TRUST FUND FOR HIV/AIDS (JTF) is IPPF's first fund established exclusively to support the HIV/AIDS prevention programmes of its Member Associations. This is funded entirely by the Government of Japan and is a key instrument in IPPF's response to HIV/AIDS. The objective of the JTF is to enhance the institutional capacity and managerial skills of IPPF and its Member Associations in Africa and Asia to carry out effective and innovative prevention and care programmes for STI/HIV/AIDS. Since the establishment of the JTF in October 2000, 32 Member Associations in Africa and Asia have received support from the fund to implement a total of 64 projects.

