

AIDSCAP Nepal: A Case Study

Ven Sriram, Morgan State University
Franklyn A. Manu, Morgan State University

This case study, written for classroom use, describes the marketing actions undertaken by a USAID-funded project to control the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. It details the communication strategy used to achieve the program's objectives. The focus of the case analysis requires students to evaluate the results of a preliminary research study conducted to assess the program's effectiveness and to decide whether to undertake a larger-scale assessment and if so, identify the specific data needs.

Introduction

Although AIDS was first recognized internationally in 1981, it was identified in Nepal in 1988. The total number of HIV/AIDS cases reported in the country was in the hundreds according to the National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), but were projected to reach 15,000, in a country of almost 19 million, by the turn of the century. NCASC was of the view that the situation offered a unique opportunity to support and undertake preventive activities before the disease reached an epidemic stage in the country.

Additionally, epidemiological evidence indicated that the two primary modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS in Nepal were through heterosexual contact with commercial sex workers (CSWs) and by intravenous drug use.

AIDSCAP

An AIDS Control and Prevention Project (AIDSCAP), was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), to help the Nepalese government. Futures Group International were appointed as consultants for the project. For the initial phase the activities of both Stimulus (which handled the communication program) and CRS (which handled condom distribution) were managed by the Futures Group. Given all the available evidence, AIDSCAP decided that its goal was to reduce the rate of sexually transmitted HIV infection in the Terai/Central given the high concentrations of CSWs working in these areas. The targets of the campaign were the individuals at highest risk: CSWs and their clients (e.g., transport workers, migrant laborers, military, police).

The Strategy

AIDSCAP developed a strategy which focused on the increased accessibility and proper use of condoms and increasing awareness of HIV transmission and risk.

In order to reach the clients, the agencies proposed that the primary target be defined as sexually active men aged 15-35 years who engaged in commercial sex, with the CSWs as the secondary target.

Preliminary Results

In May 1996, the AIDSCAP project commissioned a market research agency to conduct a rapid qualitative assessment of the impact of the program on behavior change among CSWs. A convenience sample of 25 CSWs and 25 clients from the AIDSCAP intervention area transportation routes was surveyed using personal interviews. The specific goals of this study were to assess awareness of HIV/AIDS and AIDSCAP communication messages, risk perceptions, and condom use.

The study concluded that the awareness of the campaign slogan was high, with most respondents having been exposed to it via radio or through billboards. A sizable number had heard some of the other campaign messages as well. It appeared that the AIDSCAP promotional campaign did have a positive impact on AIDS awareness levels. However, perceptions of risk from AIDS were still low.

The Decision

Given the results of this study, and using results of a previous study in 1994 as the baseline data, AIDSCAP had to decide if the current campaign was working and what, if any, changes or modifications were needed. Before doing that, the agency had to determine whether there was sufficient data to evaluate the current phase of the campaign or if a more detailed follow-up quantitative evaluation was necessary.