PATH Expertise in AIDS and STI Prevention and Control

Since 1986, PATH has managed HIV and STI-related projects in 35 countries worldwide.

Founded in 1977, Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization based in Seattle, with offices in Washington, D.C.; Bangkok; Nairobi; Jakarta; Lombok; Kiev; and Manila. PATH has a number of affiliates around the world including Canada and India.

PATH’s mission is to improve health, especially the health of women and children in developing countries, with an emphasis on improving the quality of reproductive health services and reducing the incidence and impact of communicable diseases.

Rather than provide direct health care services, PATH acts as a catalyst to improve health products and services and to transfer technologies and behavior change intervention skills to others. PATH emphasizes participatory and experiential learning based on sound theory, international lessons learned, and respect for local research and conditions. PATH helps its colleagues to understand their situations and generate their own solutions.

PATH is a World Health Organization Collaborating Center on AIDS, on Hepatitis B Vaccination, and on Research in Human Reproduction. Descriptions of PATH AIDS and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention programs are presented in the following pages.
Overview of PATH AIDS and STI Expertise

Strategic Planning
PATH staff have assisted USAID, AIDSCAP, the European Community, the United Nations, and local governments with national and regional assessment of the AIDS and STI epidemic and development of cost-effective responses. PATH's continuing involvement ensures that strategies are updated based on the evolution of the epidemic in a given country or region.

Behavior Change Interventions
Since 1987 PATH has pioneered AIDS education and skills building for decision-makers, the general public, and hard-to-reach groups (such as low-literate women and youth, injecting drug users, and commercial sex workers). As the epidemic evolves, information on the needs and care of persons with HIV or AIDS has also been integrated into PATH programs. PATH's use of computer-based teaching and training tools allow AIDS programs to address behavior change in ways never before possible.

Partnerships for Sustainability
PATH has managed many AIDS projects and programs, but building local capacity and transferring management responsibilities to local partners is central to our mission. PATH has strengthened the skills of AIDS program administrators, clinicians, field workers, and peer educators in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. PATH links grassroots NGOs, international and local governmental organizations, and the private sector through regional and national coalitions, networks, and partnerships.

STI/HIV Diagnosis and Management
Sexually transmitted infection diagnostic and management systems play an increasingly important role in AIDS control programs and safe blood initiatives. PATH works with pharmacists and clinicians to foster widespread use of effective syndromic protocols and to integrate STI/HIV services into family planning and mother and child health programs. In situations where easy-to-use, inexpensive HIV and STI diagnostic technologies make sense, PATH transfers market evaluation and production capabilities to developing-country counterparts.

Technologies to Prevent Infection
PATH is well-known for the development, introduction, and transfer of appropriate technologies for improving health. PATH's safe injection technologies can prevent the spread of infection by HIV and other viruses where there is a risk of inappropriate reuse of needles and syringes.

Improved Access to Condoms
High-quality condoms, used properly, are crucial for HIV and STI control. PATH works to improve male and female condom acceptability and social marketing, and to assure the quality of condoms as they are procured, shipped, stored, and distributed.
Strategic Planning

USAID, AIDSCAP, the European Union, the United Nations, and national AIDS committees have all asked PATH for assistance analyzing AIDS/STI program needs and developing strategic plans based on the stage of the epidemic, local resources, and political and cultural considerations. PATH works with local colleagues to develop successful programs that address AIDS/STI issues from a variety of perspectives. Our programs have included:

* Policy work
* Behavioral research
* Community mobilization and coalition building
* Integration of AIDS/STI prevention with other health services
* Mixed media campaigns
* Interpersonal counseling and communication skills building
* Peer education systems
* Special outreach to women, youth, and marginalized groups
* Management and technical training
* Monitoring and evaluation protocols
* Social marketing
* Condom procurement and quality assurance
* Safe injection initiatives

Nepal: AIDS Programming in a Conservative Culture

Beginning in 1993, the AIDSCAP project asked PATH to provide technical leadership for the behavior change component of its new program in Nepal. A staff person seconded by PATH to the AIDSCAP Regional Office and a Nepal expert from PATH headquarters teamed with the newly appointed AIDSCAP resident advisor and the USAID mission to determine how to most effectively address the epidemic in a conservative Hindu society where sex is seldom discussed and a woman’s place is in her kitchen.

Prior to the PATH visit, it was assumed that commercial sex work was concentrated in cities on the Indian border and that this was where resources should be targeted. However, a rapid assessment showed that prostitution was highly decentralized with a large number of one- or two-person sex establishments scattered along the country’s main highways. The PATH team designed a strategy which expanded the project area to include the entire highway system from the Indian border to Kathmandu and which included peer education of female sex workers and transient men who use their services (truck drivers, police, military, factory workers, and students). PATH also helped identify local NGOs to implement the project, worked with them to develop recruitment, training, supervision, and evaluation systems, and selected and developed media products for use in the field. The Nepal program has been successful beyond everyone’s expectations and has, for the first time in that country, trained and supported female outreach teams who travel the highways delivering AIDS and STI prevention messages to sex workers and housewives.
Behavior Change Interventions

PATH has 20 years of experience pioneering new approaches to behavior change interventions (BCI) in reproductive health, STI prevention, and family planning. In the past decade, PATH has added HIV prevention activities, with an emphasis on involving key constituencies in all phases of planning and development.

PATH manages USAID's AIDS prevention program in the Philippines (ASEP) and is a major subcontractor to the USAID-funded AIDS Control and Prevention Project (AIDSCAP). Since 1991, PATH has provided BCI technical assistance and seconded staff to over 30 AIDSCAP projects worldwide.

Behavioral Research
To be effective, behavior change interventions must be based on a clear understanding of a particular audience’s knowledge and practices. PATH has been a leader in promoting the use of audience research for program planning and for BCI media development. Our staff train local counterparts in research techniques that fit well within the staffing and budgetary constraints of their institutions.

Teen Talk About AIDS in Nigeria and Ghana

Accurate information on adolescent attitudes toward HIV and sexual practices was limited until PATH trained colleagues in AIDSCAP’s Nigeria Youth AIDS Project to conduct qualitative audience research with teens. The interview and focus group data were used to evaluate interventions, design new strategies for changing teen attitudes and behaviors, and develop appropriate and effective messages and materials for youth.

PATH provided a small grant to the Youth Population Information and Communication project to conduct similar research, leading to the development of a peer education program. The peer educators reach young people at the places they congregate, teach about sexuality and sexual health, and distribute condoms. Difficult cases are referred to a counseling center.
Behavior Change Interventions (continued)

Effective Media Mix
PATH is well known for its pioneering work developing pictorial print materials, such as comic books and photo novellas, for low-literate audiences. PATH also works in other media, such as radio, video, songs, games, and theater. PATH has developed materials for many audiences but has been especially innovative in its programs for difficult-to-reach groups, such as commercial sex workers, injecting drug users, and out-of-school youth. PATH was among the first NGOs producing TV spots and films about AIDS in Asia, beginning in Thailand in 1988. Now PATH is breaking ground with its innovative and practical computer-based solutions to BCI challenges.

"New Media" to Improve Risk Perception

Over the years, PATH staff noticed that even AIDS-savvy clients often underestimate their personal risk of exposure to HIV or STIs. RiskAdvisor, PATH's innovative software for Windows™, was developed to address this behavior change issue and to help HIV/STI counselors talk about AIDS more effectively. The program first asks questions about the client's behavior, then responds with an animated, color-coded "risk meter" for personalized feedback. This makes it harder for "at-risk" clients to deny their vulnerability.

Evaluation data from Seattle and Manila suggest that RiskAdvisor facilitates the counseling process and that clients enjoy the interactivity of the program, tend to be more frank and honest answering the computer, are impressed with the risk meter, and believe what the computer tells them. RiskAdvisor is being used in many countries worldwide and has been translated into Tagalog and Bahasa Indonesia. The paper-based version, Village RiskAdvisor, is available in Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, and Nepali. More information about RiskAdvisor can be found in the PATH website: <www.path.org/riskadvs/riskbroc>.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Behavior Change Interventions
Monitoring and evaluation activities are essential if programs are to evolve and improve and if we are to learn what works and what does not. PATH helps implementing organizations build evaluation components into their project plans and budgets. Both qualitative (exploratory) and quantitative (validating) techniques are included in order to maximize lessons learned and gain a clearer understanding of the topic. The data collected provide rich, detailed feedback for creative program development.

PATH teaches colleagues to use both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods.
Behavior Change Interventions (continued)

Interpersonal Communication and Counseling and Peer Education Systems

HIV and STI prevention programs must raise awareness among the general population, but must also meet the specific information needs of individual clients. In addition to developing mass media campaigns, PATH works with local staff to improve their interpersonal communication and counseling skills and conducts training-of-trainers workshops. Bringing the AIDS message to marginalized groups, like sex workers or injecting drug users, often requires interpersonal interventions such as a system of trained, motivated peer educators.

AIDS in Thailand: The Early Years

In 1987 the Thai government was not yet ready to deal with AIDS, and few NGOs had begun AIDS education activities. PATH, working with the Thai Red Cross, developed some of the first programs reaching out to young sex workers in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Project staff designed sexy condom promotion posters for the bars, a video demonstrating “condom negotiation” strategies, and a multi-lingual pocket card for sex workers to share with their customers. A series of entertaining workshops featured information about AIDS, humorous skits teaching correct condom use, and an audience participation contest for the most successful condom negotiator. The Ministry of Health later reprinted the posters and other materials for widespread use around the kingdom. Ten years later, PATH is still active in Thailand, most recently spearheading the "Bangkok Fights AIDS" initiative funded by AIDSCAP. PATH also works with Thai provincial governments, the police, the military, business leaders, pharmacist associations, and many other organizations and NGOs.

Information Dissemination

PATH produces and distributes several technical publications for developing-country audiences. Outlook, a quarterly publication, features research findings and other news related to reproductive health. Outlook is available in Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Recent issues have dealt with syndromic diagnosis of STIs, integrating STI/HIV prevention into family planning programs, and male involvement in women’s reproductive health. PATH’s Global Access to STD Diagnostics focused on new developments in that field. Another PATH publication, Global Perspectives on Hepatitis, published in English and French, provided updates on hepatitis-related developments. PATH also designs and hosts workshops, seminars, and study tours to facilitate sharing of lessons learned and research data.
Partnerships for Sustainability

As the need for AIDS/STI prevention and care services increases worldwide, support for such programs is dwindling. Cost-effective partnerships between international and national organizations, community groups, governments and NGOs, and the private- and public-sectors can help sustain interventions and maximize resources. PATH contributes to its partnerships in many ways: by providing technical and management training, building coalitions, raising policy-maker awareness, and mobilizing communities for positive change.

PATH works closely with the World Health Organization as a Collaborating Center on AIDS; with USAID projects such as AIDSCAP, FPLM, MotherCare, PRIME, and SEATS; with AUSAID, ODA, the European Community; and with United Nations agencies. PATH has worked on AIDS/STI programs with NGOs and governmental organizations in 35 countries worldwide and is often a lead agency in local AIDS networks. PATH also collaborates with international NGOs such as AMREF, CARE, DKT, FHI, IPPF, INTRAH, JSI, PACT, PCI, Plan International, PSI, and Save the Children.

NGO Strengthening in the Philippines

In 1992, the Philippine national health department and the USAID mission in Manila selected PATH to manage the education component of the 5-year, $6.5 million AIDS Surveillance and Education Project (ASEP), the largest AIDS prevention effort in the country. The aim of ASEP’s education component is to institutionalize public- and private-sector mechanisms, to reduce STI/HIV risk behaviors, and to systematically build the capacities of local NGOs. Together with technical experts from PATH and from experienced Filipino organizations such as Kabalikat and ReachOut, ASEP has provided technical assistance to over 20 local NGOs. Trainings have focused on project and financial management; behavioral research; media materials development; community outreach and peer education among sex workers and gay men; harm reduction for injecting drug users; STI prevention and syndromic management; condom distribution; and project reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. Since the health department has recently been decentralized, ASEP has actively promoted NGO collaboration with city health departments. The combination of institutional strengthening and coalition building between public- and private-sector agencies has resulted in higher-quality interventions and increased coordination.
Partnerships for Sustainability (continued)

Skills Building: Kenya AIDS NGO Consortium

The Kenya AIDS NGO Consortium is comprised of 250 national, international, and grassroots NGOs dealing with a host of issues: prevention, research, policy work, community outreach, and care of people with HIV and AIDS. When the Consortium decided to upgrade their media and materials development skills, they called upon one of their own to help: PATH. Materials developed as part of the initiative were launched at a national seminar in April 1996 and are currently available in the Consortium’s Resource Center. PATH is a founding member of similar consortia in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines and frequently provides technical assistance to fellow agencies.

Training Systems: Kenya, Malawi, and the Dominican Republic

Simply providing the facts about AIDS is often not enough to help teenagers change their risky behaviors. Reproductive health should be addressed within the contexts of sexuality, relationships, gender and power structures, and rights and responsibilities, coupled with skill-building and rehearsal activities. PATH recently developed a prototype "Life Skills Training Curriculum" aimed at youth aged 15-19 and designed to be used by young peer educators. The curriculum was field tested in Africa and Latin America and is currently available to NGOs worldwide. PATH also worked with local groups to train teachers from 160 high schools in Malawi, collaborated with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF to urge the government to make AIDS an examinable subject in the national school system, and helped develop the examination questions, too!

Cross-Border Initiatives: Indonesia

Indonesia and Thailand do not share a common border, but they are neighbors across the Java Sea and Thai ships often dock at Indonesian ports. A new project spearheaded by PATH Indonesia, in collaboration with local NGOs and PATH Thailand, is developing a series of interventions aimed at foreign sailors and their local sexual contacts. Owners of entertainment establishments and local government are being involved in attempts to promote AIDS prevention messages.

Private-Sector Involvement: Thai Business Coalition on AIDS

At the request of the European Community (EC) AIDS Programme and the Thai Business Coalition on AIDS (TBCA), PATH developed a Training of AIDS Trainers module for TBCA to market to member businesses interested in implementing AIDS in the Workplace programs. PATH was also a member of the EC/TBCA working committee during implementation of the AIDS training program.
STI and HIV Diagnosis and Management

To be effective, HIV and STI prevention and control programs must be able to accurately diagnose disease and to identify contaminated blood products. Training local clinicians and pharmacists to recognize and correctly treat symptomatic STIs is an important intervention in which PATH has been active in many countries.

**Bolivia and Nicaragua: Integrating STI Diagnosis and Treatment with Family Planning**

As technical advisors to the PRIME project, PATH staff helped introduce STI syndromic protocols, counseling, and treatment into both the Bolivian and Nicaraguan national family planning program. Similar projects in Cambodia, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam focus on increasing STI awareness and treatment skills of pharmacy staff (who are often the first or only medical staff consulted by clients with embarrassing problems) and private providers.

**Development of Appropriate Diagnostic Tools**

STIs often are asymptomatic and require testing for effective management. Developing-country settings in particular can benefit from diagnostics that are rapid, inexpensive, easy-to-use, appropriately sensitive and specific, and designed with heat-stable reagents. From 1990 to 1994, PATH served as the secretariat for the STD Diagnostics Initiative (SDI), an international network of STI experts established with support from USAID. The Initiative’s goals were to stimulate the development, evaluation, and adaptation of appropriate diagnostics and test methods; to facilitate their introduction, marketing and distribution; and to identify mechanisms that will allow private industry to play a more active role. The Initiative also produced a newsletter for program managers, *Global Access to STI Diagnostics*. Since 1994, the SDI has been managed by UNAIDS. PATH, as a participating center, is developing rapid, simple, low-cost tests for gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis (with support from the USAID-supported HealthTech project and other donors).

**Rapid HIV Diagnostic**

*PATH’s HIV dipstick kit is an easy-to-read, low-cost screening test for detection of antibodies to HIV-1 and -2. Evaluations of the test by WHO and others have demonstrated that it has a sensitivity of virtually 100 percent and a specificity of 98 percent or more. PATH transferred the production technology to manufacturers in developing countries. Kits are currently being packaged and distributed in Zimbabwe, and manufactured and distributed in India, Indonesia, Thailand, Argentina, China, and—soon—the Philippines.*
Improved Access to Condoms

Correct and consistent use of high-quality condoms is key to reducing the spread of HIV. PATH has long been involved in promoting condoms for family planning and disease prevention, verifying and maintaining condom quality, and collaborating with the private sector in local production and social marketing.

Condom Specifications and Quality Assurance

PATH is an active contributor to the condom standards of the International Organization for Standardization and the American Society for Testing and Materials. PATH’s early research in condom quality issues was crucial in persuading USAID to adopt the condom air-inflation test for its purchasing specification, and a PATH-developed air-inflation test protocol and a method for equipment validation have been accepted for inclusion in the condom standard of the United States. PATH also established independent condom quality management laboratories in 16 countries. Many of these laboratories test condoms on behalf of their national family planning and AIDS programs.

Condom Procurement and Local Production

Procurement practices can have a profound impact on condom quality, reliability of supply, and program costs. PATH provides procurement assistance to developing-country family planning and STI control programs. The continued rise in demand for condoms is causing many countries to consider establishing or upgrading local manufacturing capabilities for condoms. Since 1978, PATH has assisted the governments of 21 countries to determine whether local production of condoms would be a cost-effective alternative to international procurement.

How To Use A Condom Correctly: From the Page to the Monitor

In 1988, PATH developed pictorial condom use instructions for the World Health Organization and evaluated them worldwide. The resulting set of images has been reproduced and adapted for many cultures and media, but most recently by PATH for the computer screen. When our NGO partners in Indonesia learned about PATH’s interactive media capabilities, they requested a “cute animation” for use in settings where the explicit drawings seemed inappropriate. But the animation alone could not address all condom use issues, so PATH combined three modes of teaching condom use into a single computer program. The animation is now complemented by an interactive version of the original drawings plus a “common condom questions and answers” section. PATH plans to produce a new program, "How To Use Female Barrier Methods Correctly", in 1997.
Technologies to Prevent Infection

In addition to diagnostic technologies, use of computers for education and training, and condom quality assurance testing, other PATH technologies also contribute to reductions in the spread of HIV and other STIs. Recent surveys in developing countries suggest that 30 to 50 percent of medical injections may not be safe. Disposable syringes are often reused and reusable syringes are often improperly sterilized. New methods are needed to ensure that medical injections are delivered safely, particularly in countries with high prevalence of HIV or hepatitis B. PATH has been a leader in programs designed to educate the public, and medical service providers (including pharmacy staff and untrained local healers), about the dangers of cross-infection and the need for ensuring that all injections are safe. PATH also has designed and evaluated a number of safe injection systems incorporating nonreusable needles, syringes, and other injection devices.

Breaking the Chain of Cross-Infection

Immunization programs worldwide have adopted a single-use syringe developed by PATH, manufactured by Becton Dickinson and Company (B-D), and distributed by UNICEF. The B-D SoloShot™ syringe can be used only once. After the plunger has been depressed for injection, a small metal clip inside the barrel of the syringe locks it in place so that the plunger cannot be pulled out again. This "auto-destruct" mechanism prevents possible cross-infection by blood-borne diseases. At the request of UNICEF, PATH created a video, brochure, and training flipchart to facilitate introduction of this new injection technology. Other PATH safe injection technologies include the UniJect® system (a small blister packet pre-filled with medication and with an integrated needle) and MEDiVAX™, a prefilled, needleless injection system.
For more information, visit the PATH website or contact any of these PATH locations:

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