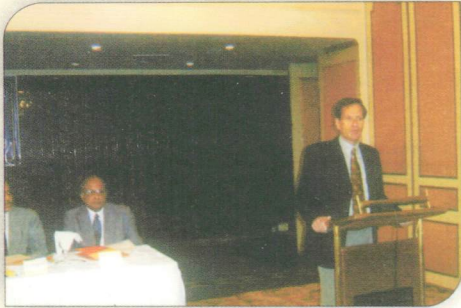
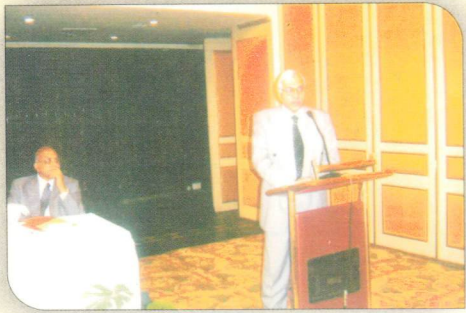


Peer Education

Successful Pathway to
Promotion of Healthy Sex Behaviour

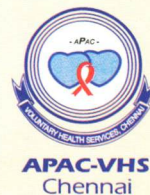
AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL (APAC) PROJECT



PEER EDUCATION :
SUCCESSFUL PATHWAY TO
PROMOTION OF HEALTHY SEX BEHAVIOUR



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PEER EDUCATION

PEER EDUCATION

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A low cost intervention adopted by APAC through its partner NGOs for HIV/AIDS prevention and control message dissemination among their target audience is to engage voluntary Peer Educators. These Peer Educators are effectively implementing APAC's activities at the field. APAC has also taken the initiative to network these Peer Educators at the District and State levels.

This document profiles the concept of Peer Education, its role in APAC interventions, the Peer Educator network and the deliberations at the District level convention of Peer Educators.

I am grateful to **Dr. N.S. Murali**, Hony. Secretary, Voluntary Health Services for his valuable guidance and support in all our endeavors.

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This report is based on discussions with the NGOs, interface with the Peer Educators and review of reports by the various NGOs. Grateful thanks are due to the NGOs and the Peer Educators for their valuable inputs.

This document is developed by Management Development Associates, Chennai and I would like to express my thanks to its Director, **Shri. K. Kasturi**, and his colleague, **Shri. R. Sathyanarayanan**, for this effort.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. P. Krishnamurthy'.

Dr. P. Krishnamurthy

Project Director

1.1 Background

The spread of HIV/AIDS among different segments of the population in the country is now assuming serious proportions posing a major challenge in the health sector. A little over 5 million persons are currently reportedly living with HIV in the country.

Of the different parts of the country, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra are reportedly having alarming levels of HIV prevalence. In Tamilnadu, prevalence levels exceeding 5% are reported among high risk groups. Transmission through the sexual route appears more crucial in the State, with commercial sex workers, truckers and migrant population figuring prominently among the infected. A rising trend of HIV positive cases is now reportedly witnessed among injecting drug users.

An encouraging factor is a declining trend in HIV prevalence in Tamilnadu, as indicated by the State's Hon'ble Minister for Health in the State Assembly on March 21st, 2005 recently while replying to the discussions for grants for his department. He said that a recent survey has revealed a fall in HIV prevalence, between 2003 and 2004, from

- 0.75% to 0.65% overall
- 9.2% to 8.4% among those who attended STI clinics
- 8.8% to 4% among commercial sex workers.

However, a rise in HIV prevalence is reportedly noticed among homosexual men, from 4.4% to 6.8% during the same period.

The number of AIDS cases in the country is reported at 96,978, as at end-December 2004, according to National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Government of India. Of these, 46% is estimated to originate in Tamilnadu. HIV/AIDS patients figure among all age groups but it is the reproductive age group that figures prominently in the HIV/AIDS profile. Around 89% of the AIDS patients fall in the age category 25-49 years. A disturbing feature is that one out of three AIDS patients is found among the young, below 30 years.

The consequence of HIV/AIDS transcends beyond the individual concerned and his/her health status to the family and its socio-economic conditions as well. Since those affected are generally in the productive age group of 20 to 45 years, the economic loss to the family and the country is considerable.

When pregnant women get infected, the progeny is also likely to suffer, if unattended, thus impacting the future generation as well.

1.2 APAC's role in STI/HIV/AIDS prevention

AIDS Prevention And Control (APAC) Project is administered by Voluntary Health Services (VHS), Chennai, with financial support from USAID under bilateral agreement with Government of India, to promote HIV/AIDS prevention activities, currently in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry. The Project is now in its Phase II.

In Phase I, the Project covered Tamilnadu from 1997 to 2002, with concentration on prevention and control.

Phase II began in 2002 and will run through 2007, with the project coverage extending over Pondicherry also and with stress on not only prevention and control but also care and support.

The APAC Project addresses the challenging task of reducing the risks in the dominant mode of sexual transmission besides raising overall awareness on HIV/AIDS. This is attempted through knowledge empowerment efforts among the high risk groups and also the general population. Currently, care and support activities are also addressed.

A twin approach is adopted in this context

- target specific interventions
- mass media activities

APAC has adopted a thematic approach to facilitate focused interventions among groups vulnerable to STI/HIV/AIDS.

The themes are

- prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS along the highways
- intervention among sex workers
- intervention among industrial workers
- intervention among adolescents
- integrated STI/HIV/AIDS prevention with MCH/Family Planning programmes.

The thematic interventions aimed at the high risk groups are

- Prevention Along The Highway (PATH) - truckers and cleaners
- Women In Prostitution (WIP)
- Slum Intervention Programme (SIP) in urban slums
- Prevention among Tourists and Women In Prostitution (TWIP)
- Clinic based STI Intervention Programme (CLIP) - STI patients
- Industrial Intervention Programme (IIP) - industrial workers
- Men having Sex with Men (MSM).

In addition to the target specific groups, the general population is also reached through mass media - print, outdoor and electronic.

Selected NGOs, supported by APAC as its partners, address specific high risk groups by implementing target specific interventions. These NGOs operate in different parts of the State.

A list of these APAC funded NGOs is given in the Annexure.

The targeted intervention programmes of APAC are implemented in 48 Priority Towns identified by APAC through survey and mapping.

The locations of these priority towns are indicated in the map given below.

NGO Support in Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry



1.3 Strategies of APAC

APAC has adopted multiple strategies to achieve its objectives. These include

- STI Prevention and Control
- NGO Support and Capacity Building
- Behaviour Change Communication
- Condom Promotion
- Research
- Advocacy.

Effective communication plays a vital role in bringing about any behaviour change among masses and remains one of the proactive measures of reducing incidences of STI and increasing awareness of 'safe sex'. Sustained and consistent efforts reflect on the impact and success of such measures.

APAC adopts various strategies and methodologies in bringing about behaviour change communication. They include Multi-channel targeted messages, Community level intervention to create a well-informed environment, Individual level communication to bring about behaviour change, Training NGO staff to recruit Peer educators to reach the target audience, Creating an environment that fosters a commitment of shared objective and a sense of achievement for the peer educators and the other volunteers.

1.4 Concept of Peer Education

The partner NGOs of APAC have effectively drawn on the concept of Peer Education to further their main goal of bringing about a desired behaviour change among their target groups.

Such Peer Educator involvement has been a significant, and quite a successful, component of target specific interventions by these NGOs. The aim is not only to reduce risk behaviour but also to promote healthy lifestyles among their target audience.

The Peer Educator performs the crucial role of outreach support by delivering key messages and relevant information to the peer group members in a personalised and voluntary manner.

2.1 What is Peer Education?

Peer Education is the process through which trained and motivated persons are deployed as an effective vehicle of knowledge dissemination and behaviour change. It is an informal means of education and a low cost tool which is found valuable in delivering culturally sensitive messages.

The peer is a person drawn from a specific target group and works among this group for its benefit in a sustained manner.

Peer Education is the process of developing the peer's knowledge with the objective of inducing an attitudinal and behavioural change among the target audience, individually or collectively. It helps in equipping the peer not only to disseminate information or distribute materials but also in advocacy and counseling.

The peer belongs to the same socio-economic environment as the target specific group and is more likely to have similar sexual orientation and health concerns. Hence with the right skills imparted, the peer can influence the sexual behaviour of the members of the group and encourage safe sex habits without much difficulty as the target audience members will easily relate to the peer.

2.2 Why Peer Education is important?

Peer Education is an informal way of sharing right information at the appropriate time. Since the peer interacts with the group regularly, an effective follow-up is also facilitated. In this process, not only sustained knowledge dissemination becomes feasible but also newly emerging myths and misconceptions are easily countered.

Peer Education offers several benefits.

- It is an essentially voluntary service which is inexpensive
- It is capable of discussing sensitive matters without fear
- It is an effective method of disseminating messages to target audience in a confidential environment
- A sustainable behaviour change can easily be brought about
- Better community involvement and commitment to the peers is encouraged
- Project sustainability is facilitated in the process since the Peer Educators will continue to live among the target group.

The key advantage of Peer Education over other forms of health message delivery lies in the perceived credibility of the peer among the audience. This credibility springs from the fact that the peer hails from the same social and economic mileau of the people he/she is addressing.

This aspect assumes crucial significance in a field like STI/HIV/AIDS where fear of stigmatization inhibits people from openly talking to or seeking assistance from others.

Further, since the Peer Educator works voluntarily out of own interest and motivation, the level of commitment is high and the service is likely to be sustained.

2.3 What motivates a Peer Educator?

A Peer Educator is one who has deep concern for other members of specific high risk group to which he/she belongs. He/she has an adequate understanding of the dangers of STI and also the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention and control and has the willingness and desire to share this knowledge with others.

The Peer Educator has also the keenness to update such knowledge and skills to keep abreast of the latest developments in HIV/AIDS.

In several instances, personal experience has also been a motivating factor. This is succinctly revealed by the experience of two women Peer Educators.

“With an irresponsible husband and 2 children, I was forced into prostitution for economic reasons. I contracted STI and got cured at a health camp. This timely help enabled me change my behaviour.

I got interested in helping and educating other women in prostitution through one-to-one and one-to-group interaction. I volunteered to become a Peer Educator to help others like me.

Just as I was motivated to change my behaviour I am now helping others to change their sex behaviour.”

“As a nursing assistant in a private clinic, I was forced into having multiple sex partners. I became a commercial sex worker due to financial constraints. I suffered from white discharge and got treated through timely communication and counseling provided by the NGO.

I started using condoms and got tested regularly after getting informed about STI/HIV/AIDS.

Now I am working as a Peer Educator helping other women similarly placed so that they can avoid the same suffering I had undergone.”

Recognition of the peer by members of the community and also those associated with the project is another motivating factor for a Peer Educator who aims at acquiring a distinct identity in the project.

2.4 Constraints in becoming a Peer Educator

The path to becoming a Peer Educator is not always a smooth one.

Several constraints have to be overcome if one has to become an effective Peer Educator with sufficient credibility among the group.

The major restraining features are

- social stigma arising out of being labeled as a member of the high risk group
- time inadequacy for Peer Education or unwillingness to take up additional responsibilities
- harassment or intimidation by pimps, madam and police as also other barriers to educating the people by self-styled “gate keepers”
- inadequate, or inaccurate knowledge on STI/HIV/AIDS as also their prevention and control
- lack of confidence to motivate others or to change their behaviour pattern
- unwillingness or indifference of the audience addressed to change its behaviour pattern.

2.5 How does a Peer Educator emerge?

A good Peer Educator is one who has the following characteristics.

- belongs to the group with which he/she is working
- available and accessible to the target group at all times
- has sufficient concern for the well being of the target audience
- well known and respected by the members of the group
- possesses effective interpersonal communication skills
- has the ability to listen to the group without bias or assumptions
- familiar with the language of the group members
- has a strong knowledge and skill base on the topics addressed
- confident to work with the target group and handle their queries.

Potential Peer Educators are identified through a variety of channels

- by NGO staff
- by Peer Educators
- referral by local community based or other organizations.

Representation to different categories of high risk behaviour groups and the need for adequate spatial spread, at cluster level, for maximum outreach among the target audience are the other determinants in picking up Peer Educators.

The goal is often to have one Peer Educator for 25-35 peers for effective interpersonal interaction and for optimal reach.

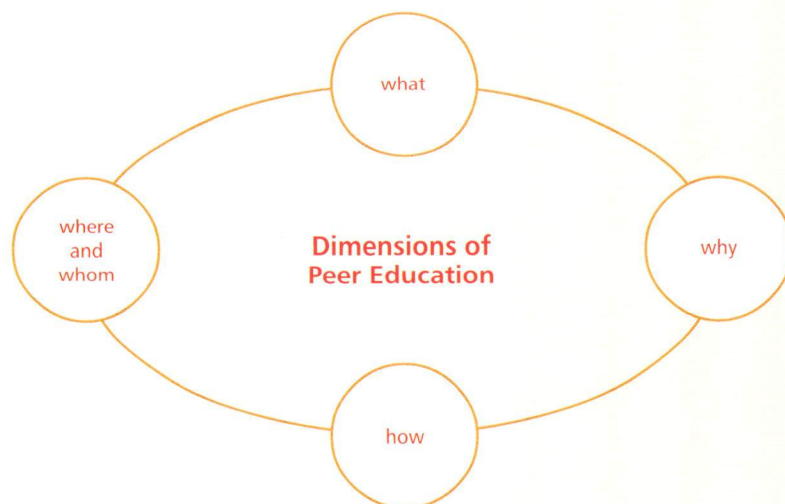
Successful implementation of the targeted interventions by Peer Education is facilitated by

- careful identification
- proper recruitment
- intensive training
- continuous motivation and recognition
- networking of Peer Educators.



3.1 What activities does a Peer Educator perform?

The role of the Peer Educator has several dimensions, schematically depicted below.



The dimensions are essentially

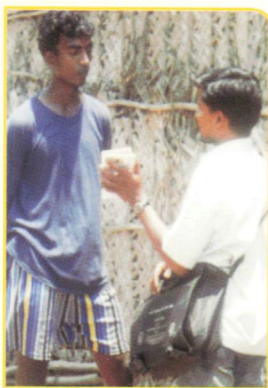
- what to impart?
- why to induce change in risky behaviour?
- how to motivate the target community?
- where and whom to provide information on support facilities and services available in the area?

The major objectives of Peer Education are to

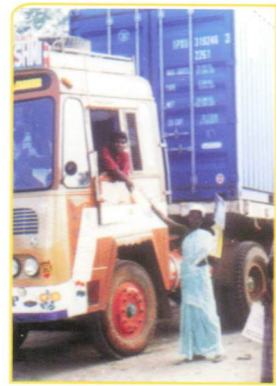
- inform and educate the peers on HIV/AIDS issues
- impart required skills through inter-personal interaction
- upgrade the capacity of the audience to handle sex related issues
- promote safe sex behaviour in the process
- motivate STI patients to seek early treatment
- distribute relevant IEC materials
- refer for counseling or for availing additional services.

Towards this, the Peer Educator performs a variety of tasks:

- disseminates basic facts on STI/HIV/AIDS and also on care and support
- trains high risk groups on safe sex behaviour
- motivates and trains high risk groups on condom use and condom negotiation with sexual partner
- facilitates condom promotion among high risk groups
- helps in need based free distribution of condoms to specific groups and in social marketing of condoms



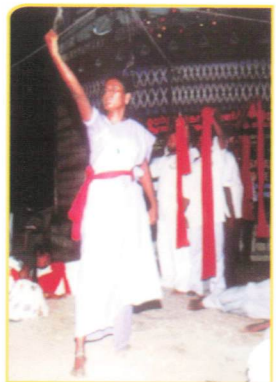
- identifies those with STI and motivates them to seek early, complete and partner treatment
- identifies and refers repeated STI and treatment failure cases to appropriate health facilities
- participates in project activities, such as preparation of IEC materials, monitoring, Peer Educator convention, training etc.



- extends support for organizing BCC events in the project area
- carries out linkage activities with condom outlets and service providers
- generates demand for counseling
- generates demand for VCTC
- disseminates information to bring about sustainable behavioural change with the help of program implementing agencies
- helps in identifying positives and referring them for availing related support and services.



While anybody can perform these services the Peer Educator scores over other BCC activities in reaching the audience in view of easy accessibility, and more pertinently, better acceptability, since the group relates to the Peer Educator.



3.2 How does a Peer Educator interact with the peers?

Peer Educators perform their tasks on a one-to-one or one-to-group basis.

Often each Peer Educator talks to more than one person at a time for a minimum of 30 minutes. The time spent by the Peer Educator will vary from person to person and group to group depending on the requirements identified through mutual consultations between the Peer Educator and his/her peers.

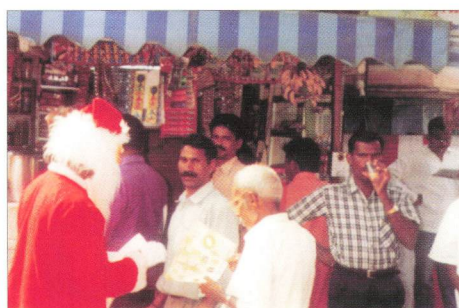
Sometimes a single session may suffice while in other cases follow-up sessions may also become necessary.

The place of such an interaction varies with the location and availability of place - schools, work places, halting points, lodges, brothels and bars and the type of contact.

The Peer Educators contact, on an average, 30 or more persons in a month.

The significant role the Peer Educators in the APAC project can be gauged from their reach, depicted below.

APAC Project - Peer Educator Performance				
	PATH	TWIP	SIP	WIP
PEs Identified	3204	620	5182	705
PEs One to One Interaction - Male	217926	244461	231010	3923
PEs One to One Interaction - Female	40536	38962	35457	51284
STI Cases Referred by PEs - Male	3907	5844	5386	2876
STI Cases Referred by PEs - Female	2170	7839	7402	7550
No. of Condom Demonstration	169286	20461	107498	56427
BCC Materials distributed	229563	63720	111616	74061



All the Peer Educators provide voluntary service and all of them are trained after proper identification and enrolment.

The number of Peer Educators enrolled and trained varies with the theme and the extent of coverage as determined by the respective NGOs on their field requirements.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Peer Education Model of APAC is observed, monitored and evaluated periodically. The salient features of APAC's Technical Monitoring process are

- the activities of the Peer Educators at the field are closely monitored by the outreach workers and the project staff
- the NGOs maintain all the documents relating to the activities of peer education
- NGO staff also interact with the Peer Educators in their places and as part of their regular field visits and outreach activities.
- best practices and contributions of the Peer Educators are published in APAC Newsletter
- reports are prepared on the Peer Educator Conventions held at the District and State levels and are submitted to APAC
- weekly/monthly review meetings are held by the staff of the NGOs
- Monthly Technical Reports (MTR) are presented by the NGOs highlighting the activities of the Peer Educators
- enough care is taken to review the activities of the NGO staff and that of the Peer Educator separately, to ensure that there is no duplication.



3.4 Volunteers

APAC has also introduced the concept of Volunteers in the project.

A Volunteer is a person who physically/financially supports the project related activities including BCC events in the area. Any individual/any member from Community Based Organisations (CBOs) who has got concern and willingness to support the project activities can become a volunteer. The volunteer can also be representing the secondary and tertiary groups.

Volunteers differ from the Peer Educators though the Peer Educators are also performing voluntary service.

The role of the volunteers is to help in

- distributing IEC materials on a regular basis/during special events
- conducting BCC events
- organizing street plays
- identifying high risk groups
- providing space and other infrastructure facilities to organise events
- participating as a member in cultural programmes/teams, like street plays, puppet shows, etc.
- providing first hand information to the members on the services available
- mobilising local community support for organising special activities
- identifying new volunteers.

3.5 Linkages

The Peer Education Model involves a linkage mechanism between the Peer Educators and their peers on the one hand and the NGO, APAC and other organisations on the other hand.



4.1 Training of the Peer Educators

To be effective, the Peer Educator has not only to acquire adequate knowledge and skills but has also to update these on a regular basis. An equally essential requisite is an appropriate motivation to transfer this knowledge and skills to others in the field.

The training organized for the Peer Educators is of twin type.

- basic training
- refresher training.

Basic training

Basic knowledge and skills on STI/HIV/AIDS are imparted to the potential Peer Educators through the basic training regimen, normally spread over a week, with the trainees exposed to one topic each day. In this training, the potential Peer Educator learns about

- APAC project and Peer Education
- Key issues on STI/HIV/AIDS
- STI referrals and treatment
- condom use and promotion
- interpersonal communication skills
- behavior change communication.

The training is comprehensive where the Peer Educators are exposed to all the relevant issues on STI/HIV/AIDS to equip them with the wherewithal to handle their role effectively.

The training is essentially participative and interactive. To ensure participatory learning, the number of participants in each training ranges from 10 to 25 trainees. Locally recognized terms are employed in the training sessions to ensure proper understanding and acceptance of the concepts.

An elaborate **Training Manual** is prepared by APAC for this purpose.

The basic training is spread over six sessions, each concentrating on a specific area. All Peer Educators undergo this basic training within 45 days of their selection.



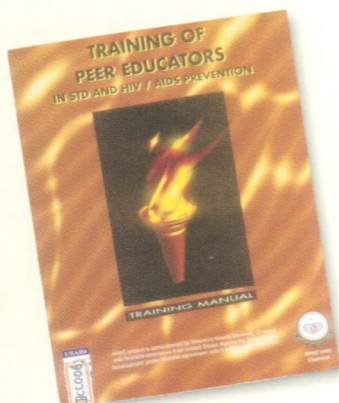
Interaction in Training



Special assignment during Training



Group Discussion in Training



The coverage in the various sessions is profiled below.

Session	Title	Contents
1	Introduction to APAC project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● APAC project and Peer Education ● need to address the specific target group and Peer Education with whom working ● understanding high risk behaviour of the target community ● expected outcome of targeted intervention programme ● need for Peer Educators ● role of Peer Educators ● do's and don'ts in Peer Education. ● Gender
2	Key issues on STI/HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● introduction to STI/HIV/AIDS ● symptoms of STI in males and females ● treatment and follow-up for STI ● linkage between STI and HIV ● frequently asked questions on STI with explanation ● myths and misconceptions related to STI.
3	STI Referrals and Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● services available for STI treatment ● syndromic management of STI ● service providers available in the project area ● need for follow-up of STI treatment, Partner treatment ● role of Peer Educators in STI referral ● promoting health seeking behaviour.
4	Condom Use & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use of condom for STI/HIV/AIDS prevention ● varieties, brands, flavours in condom (display/discussion) ● condom demonstration ● condom negotiation skills (role play) ● use of condom in oral and anal sex ● need for using lubricating gel in anal sex ● myths and misconceptions related to condoms.
5	Interpersonal Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● importance of interpersonal communication skills ● introduction and methodologies of conducting IPC one to one, one to group and counseling ● demonstration / role play ● basic approaches in one to one and one to group interaction ● referral for counseling ● use of communication aids and distribution material in interpersonal communication ● skills required for communication ● dos and don'ts in communication.

Session	Title	Contents
6	Behaviour Change Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction to BCC • need for bringing about behaviour change in an individual • efforts to sustain the behaviour change • how to measure behaviour change • sharing of experiences and presentation of case studies • services available from the NGO to support PE activities • role of counselor to support BCC activities • introduction about BCC events and its support for IPC activities.

Refresher training

A refresher training is organized for the Peer Educators three months after their basic training. In this refresher training, the Peer Educators are imparted adequate knowledge on care and support of the infected and affected.



The topics covered in the refresher session include

- importance of Care and Support of the infected and affected families
- components of Care and Support
- common ailments/opportunistic infections
- need for psycho-social support and counseling
- VCTC and PPTCT
- promoting networks and support groups for PLHA Community care centers
- role of Peer Educator in countering stigma and discrimination.

The refresher training is also used to

- strengthen the knowledge of the Peer Educators
- find solutions to their field problems
- educate them on how to counter myths and misconceptions
- get an orientation on the network of Peer Educators and role of District and State level Peer Educators Association
- impress on them the need for ensuring privacy while dealing with their audience.

It is only after completion of the full course of training, which may take a maximum of two months, a person becomes a full fledged Peer Educator.

An expansion of the Peer Educator universe becomes necessary over time owing to the need for

- maximizing the reach at the field
- overcoming monotony
- developing more communication agents
- ensuring sustainability of the activities initiated.

An active Peer Educator will be in a position to identify and motivate more Peer Educators in his/her area normally after a year of operation at the field.

The training of Peer Educators is organized at two levels

- training of key trainers (Training of Trainers - TOT)
- training of Peer Educators - The key trainers organize the training for the Peer Educators.

4.2 TOT Centres

The trainer's training is organized in four Training of Trainers (TOT) centers. These centers, supported by APAC, are organized thematic-wise to provide relevant, need based and realistic training. The TOT centers identified for training Peer Educators in each theme are selected from among the NGOs involved in the same theme.

The TOT centers currently operating are

- RIDO, Dharmapuri for PATH
- Teddy Trust, Madurai for WIP and TWIP
- NMCT, Coimbatore for IIP
- Imayam, Coimbatore for SIP.

The role and responsibilities of the TOT centers are

- preparation of curriculum for TOT and Peer Education training programme
- identifying TOTs for each NGO
- organising basic TOT training on Peer Education
- organising refresher training programme
- monitoring and providing support for conducting Peer Education training programme at NGO level

- documenting the best practices of Peer Educators and sharing it with NGOs
- preparation of guidelines for strengthening the networking of Peer Educators
- organising Experience Sharing meetings among TOTs (both theme-wise and cluster-wise).

The trainers on Peer Education are trained in the TOT centers. As a follow up of this training the trained trainers are expected to carry out the following roles.

- identification of Peer Educators
- organising training programme for Peer Educators
- sharing information with Project staff to maintain Peer Educator Master Registers
- strengthening the networking of Peer Educators
- sharing best practices with TOT centres and other Peer Educators
- acting as a resource person within the agency and to the agencies in and around the project area
- providing suggestions to overcome the problems faced by the Peer Educators
- submitting Peer Educator activities report/feedback to the TOT centers.

4.3 Information base

A Master Register is maintained at project level by the respective NGOs on the Peer Educators, theme-wise and cluster-wise, with details on their demographic characteristics, date of enrolment, training undergone and participation in Peer Educator conventions. The format of this Register is reproduced below.

Regn. No.	Name	Age	Sex	Education	Marital status	Occupation	Details of Training Dates of participation 1,2,3,4,5,...	Date of enrolment	Participation in PE convention 1,2,3,....	Date of Graduation	Special Remarks	Cluster	Category belongs to

In addition, a Comprehensive Master Register (CMR) is also maintained on the intensive training undergone by the Peer Educators.

Training on PE-Comprehensive Master Register (CMR)

Title	No. of hours of training	No. of sessions	Minimum No. of peer educators	Content to be covered	Outcome	Introduction-APAC project, PE and Facts on STI/HIV/AIDS	STI Referrals and Treatment	Condom use & Promotion	Interpersonal Communication skills	Behaviour Change Communication	Care & Support of the Infected and Affected	Refresher training	Special Trainings, if any

A detailed Peer Educator training report is also maintained.

This report contains such information as

- Title :
- Date & Time (from - to-) :
- Place :
- Training no. :
- Participants details (category of group) :
- Facilitator/resource persons name :
- No. of participants :
- Detailed report (Descriptive) :
- Important observations :
- Evaluation & feedback :

Signature of the Training Organizer

Peer Educator Pocket Diary

APAC has evolved a Peer Educator Pocket Diary, a pocket size handbook which can be used as a ready reckoner as well as a communication aid by the Peer Educators.

The pocket Diary contains a bonafide certificate, personal details, space for important numbers, roles & responsibilities of PE and information on STI/HIV/AIDS.

The Peer Educators keeps a record of their day-to-day activities in this Pocket Diary. Activities recorded in this diary are the number of

- one to one sessions
- one to group sessions
- STD identification
- STD referral
- IEC materials distributed
- Condom demonstrations held.

The Pocket Diary thus serves as an information base. This diary helps the Peer Educators who are illiterate to record the data as it is illustrative.

APAC believes in quality turnout of Peer Educators with stress on both process and outcome.

Apart from the reports and records, APAC has also evolved an innovative and appropriate model titled "Peer Educators Pyramid system" to track whether every Peer Educator has undergone all the required training sessions.



5.1 Peer Educators Association

Associations of Peer Educators are formed thematically at

- Cluster level
- District level
- State level.

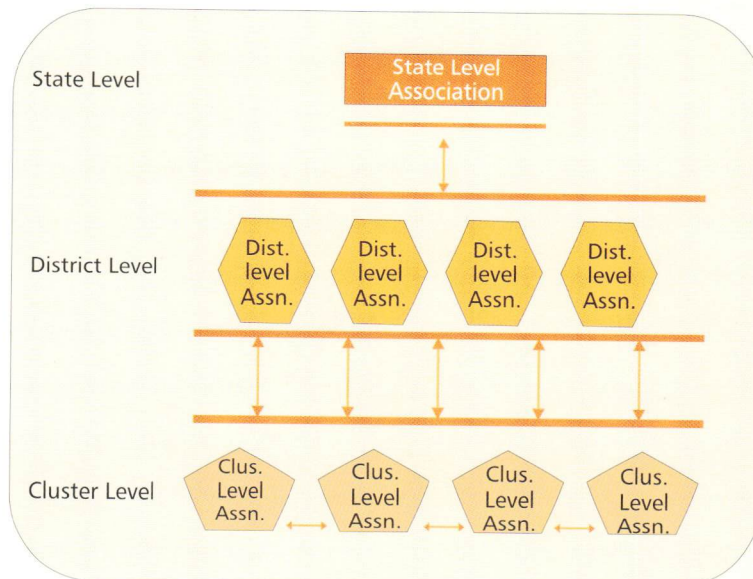
5.2 Why Peer Educators Association?

The objectives of forming Peer Educators Associations at different levels are mainly to

- facilitate networking
- provide a platform for exchange of information
- ensure coordination
- provide motivation and recognition
- capacitate the new Peer Educators by involving senior Peer Educators
- develop these as a strong community based organization to adopt and own the programme
- prepare them for sustainability of the programme.

5.3 Peer Educator Network

In each theme, the Peer Educators Associations are networked, as schematically depicted below.



At the base are the Cluster Level Peer Educators Associations where the Peer Educators meet once a month to share their common experiences. This gives an opportunity to the Peer Educators to develop their leadership qualities while serving as office bearers of these associations and participating in decision making and problem solving processes.

Above this are the District Level Peer Educators Associations, with representatives from the respective Cluster Level Associations. Office bearers of these associations are elected from among the representatives of the Cluster Level Associations providing them a status at the District level. The office bearers of the District level Associations meet once in six months.

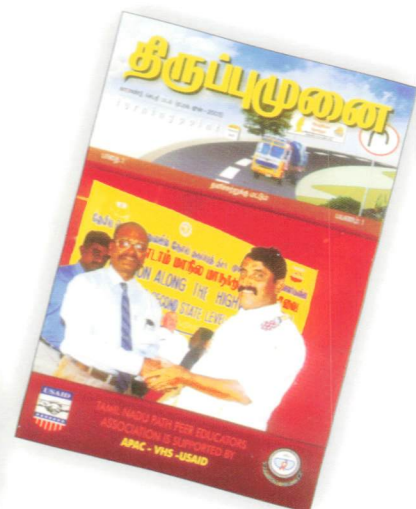
At the apex is the State level Peer Educators Association, with representatives from the District level Associations. The meeting of the State level Peer Educators Conventions takes place once a year. They meet periodically to plan for measures to strengthen the Peer Education movement and evolve suitable strategies to address their field issues. The list of office bearers of the Tamil Nadu Peer Educators Association is presented in Annexure II.

5.4 Newsletter

The State level Association publishes a Newsletter, "Tiruppumunai", meaning Turning Point - which is circulated to the Peer Educators all over the State through the District level Associations.

The Newsletter helps in

- recognizing Peer Educators' activities
- providing updated information to Peer Educators
- building the Peer Educator network
- sharing of field experiences by Peer Educators
- displaying their co-curricular skills.



This newsletter also serves as a medium to boost the image of the Peer Educators in the community they are working through recognition of their skills and activities by publishing their photographs, skits and articles. It acts as a motivating force not only for other Peer Educators but also for the volunteers. The magazine also helps in disseminating information of relevance to the work of the Peer educators on a regular basis.

Peer Educators are actively involved in the publication of this newsletter as they are part of the editorial team, along with technical experts from APAC and the NGOs. All the materials for the newsletter are developed by the Peer Educators themselves.

5.5 Peer Educators Conventions

Conventions of Peer Educators are held at the District level once in six months and at the State level, once a year. The State level convention is hosted by the State level Peer Educators Association in collaboration with other Associations.

Such conventions help to

- Provide a common platform to the Peer Educators for effective interaction with each other and to recharge themselves
- listen to experts in the field and learn about new trends in the field
- learn from each other's field experiences
- foster better understanding among them
- draw up strategies for strengthening their network
- chalk out their future actions.

The conventions also act as a morale booster to the Peer Educators since they present an opportunity for their good work at the field to get due recognition.

The objectives of these conventions are to help Peer Educators

- acquire/develop new skills and techniques for adoption in the field, infusing greater confidence in them
- get an exposure to the available supportive resources in their areas which they, and their target audience, can tap
- clarify their doubts
- strengthen their interpersonal skills

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Peer Educators are actively involved in the publication of this newsletter as they are part of the editorial team, along with technical experts from APAC and the NGOs. All the materials for the newsletter are developed by the Peer Educators themselves.



6.1 Peer Educators Convention by NGOs

A District level Peer Educators Convention, supported by APAC, is organized at different locations in the State usually during April-May and October-November.

The thematic NGOs organizing such District level Peer Educators Conventions so far comprise -

- PATH
- WIP
- IIP
- TWIP
- SIP

In each District level convention, an office bearer from the State level Association usually participates to motivate the Peer Educators and to facilitate their networking.

The NGOs and the Peer Educators participating in the District Level conventions organized in the letter part of 2004 are listed below.



NGO	Convention No.	Participant Peer Educators
PATH		1007
- RIDO	4	102
- ARM	4	152
- GRAMALAYA	4	135
- PACHE TRUST	5	123
- SSSR&WC	4	72
- HOPE	1	91
- PRAKRITI	4	120
- WORD	2	92
- AID	4	120
- VEST	4	
WIP		514
- TEDDY	3	65
- AIRD	1	12
- ANBALAYAM	3	107
- CSR	4	95
- TREE	1	78
- SEVANILAYAM*	-	-
- SFDRT	1	72
- CHES	3	85
IIP		621
- NMCT	2	176
- RIDS	2	107
- VEEDU	2	100
- CAT	2	98
- WCSSS	1	140
- SEPAD*	-	-
- GRAMIUM*	-	-
- SOJAHUR*	-	-
* New NGOs		

NGO	Convention No.	Participant Peer Educators
TWIP		607
- ICWO	3	99
- VEEDO	3	103
- CHANARD	3	73
- CAST	3	100
- AIRD	1	42
- MNTN	-	-
- READS	-	-
- SEDCO	3	80
- MSDS	3	110
- CHANGES*	-	-
SIP		2500
- PID	1	250
- ARD	1	250
- ISM	1	250
- IMAYAM	1	250
- EMPOWER	1	250
- DESH	1	250
- BRO.SIGA	1	250
- UDAUI	1	250
- BAJSS	1	250
- UBEDS	1	250
* New NGOs		



Group discussion - presentation



Lighting of Kuthuvilakku



Registration by participants



The core participants in these conventions, held at different locations, are the Peer Educators of the NGOs, along with the representatives from the State District level Association and other NGOs,



6.2 Convention regimen

The agenda for the convention, organised by different NGOs, is more or less similar, with some minor local variations. The staff of the organizing NGOs conventions provides the necessary organizational and logistic support. The activity canvas of the conventions displays the following.

- Registration by participants
- Inauguration of the Convention with the traditional Kuthuvilakku lighting
- Pledge by Peer Educators
- Souvenir release and exhibition opening

- Inaugural, Keynote and special addresses by the dignitaries
- Experience sharing by Peer Educators
- Group discussions
- Demonstrations, quiz programmes and contests
- Awards and certificates presentation and prize distribution
- Cultural programmes and Valedictory.



6.3 Pledge by Peer Educators

In each convention, the Peer Educators declare their continuing commitment to awareness raising on HIV/AIDS and its prevention and control by taking the pledge in the forum.

The oath is generally administered by one or a group of participating Peer Educators or, in some cases, the office bearer of the State / District level Association participating in the convention. The oath is taken in Tamil.

A free translation of the pledge by the PATH Peer Educators in English is reproduced below.





OATH TAKEN BY PATH PEER EDUCATORS

I working as a Peer Educator in the PATH project do hereby confirm that I will carry out tirelessly and with abiding interest, along with theNGO and APAC, all the activities intended for the welfare of the truck drivers and their associates on the highways.

I pledge that I will extend my full cooperation to all the activities undertaken in the PATH project for the unity of the truck drivers, upliftment of their living standards and solving their problems.

Further, I hereby give my assurance that I will continue to perform all the activities under the PATH project selflessly for the welfare of the truck drivers even after the project comes to an end.

Peer Educators working in other thematic interventions also take a similar oath in their respective conventions.

The significant factors here are

- the involvement and commitment of the Peer Educators to their tasks
- willingness to continue their work, even after the project comes to an end, assuring sustainability of such an involvement.

6.4 Souvenir release

At each convention, a souvenir is released. The souvenir, in Tamil, serves as a valuable source of information on key issues of STI/HIV/AIDS to the Peer Educators. It also provides a medium for the Peer Educators to exhibit their co-curricular skills.



Souvenir release

The souvenir usually contains, apart from congratulatory messages from the Project Director and other well wishers,

- key facts on STI/HIV/AIDS and methods of prevention and control
- importance of condom use
- counseling services and their need
- services of VCTC and PPTCT and their availability
- success stories of Peer Educators
- short stories, songs, jokes etc. by the Peer Educators
- participation in the Peer Educator Convention activities with photographs
- awards/prizes/certificates received, if any

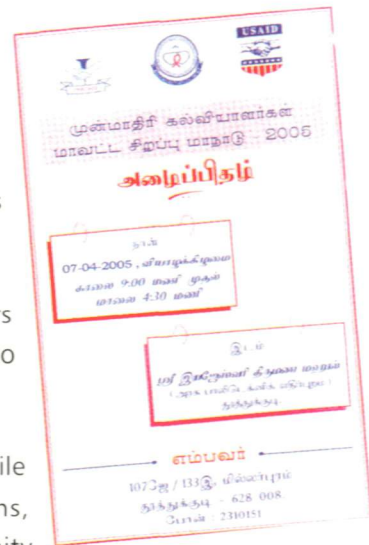
- names and activities of Peer Educators in the area
- office bearers in District and State Associations from the area.

The Souvenir contains selected activities of the Peer Educators during the last six months.

In the Souvenir, the names and addresses of the Peer Educators are also listed cluster-wise to give recognition to them and to help know each other.

For printing the Souvenir, APAC contributes half the cost while the other half is mobilized from local organizations, philanthropists and others. This is to ensure community participation and to motivate the Peer Educators mobilize resources for their Associations.

The Souvenir is circulated to all the Peer Educators who attended the District level Peer Educators convention.



Besides information dissemination, the Souvenir has become a multi-benefit medium.

- It facilitates experience sharing by Peer Educators.
- It motivates Peer Educators to emulate the example of their successful colleagues.
- It provides a platform to the Peer Educators to display their talents in writing short stories, jokes and songs relevant to their field operations.
- It serves as an image booster to Peer Educator when their achievements are publicized along with their photographs and these are seen and read by their peer group members.
- It motivates the Peer Educators to raise funds for advertisements in the Souvenir; besides increasing their contact points, it also helps in resource mobilization for their Associations.



6.5 Dignitaries in the Convention

The speeches of dignitaries, discussions and demonstrations as also the quiz programmes at the conventions enable the Peer Educators to clarify their doubts and expand their knowledge and skill base.

The Peer Educators get valuable exposure to technical inputs from several dignitaries participating in these conventions. These guest participants have also been a valuable source of information to the Peer Educators, on services available in their respective areas, in particular on areas such as testing and treatment.

These dignitaries are drawn from varying fields namely, health, police, legal cell, media, other service organizations, other NGOs and local leadership, which are of immediate relevance to the activities of the Peer Educators.

It needs mention in this context that not all these fields are represented in the dignitary participation level at all the conventions.

In the health sector, the participants comprised health administrators, like the Joint Directors and Deputy Directors of Health Services and health care providers, such as doctors from hospitals, STI specialists and consultants and counselors from VCTCs / PPTCTs. Their participation in the conventions has helped strengthen the knowledge levels of the Peer Educators and also bring them closer to the VIPs, delegates and officials. This is also one way of advocacy.

From their participation, the Peer Educators gain an insight into a variety of aspects, such as

- growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the State and the country
- latest trends in quality care for STI/HIV/AIDS
- significance of partner treatment
- importance of condom care and correct usage
- supportive resources, facilities and services, available in their areas, mainly for testing and treatment.

Police officials from Commissioner to Inspector at different conventions, have apprised the Peer Educators of the assistance they or their target groups can depend on at times of need.



Dignitary address

This is of special importance to those women in prostitution who face problems from rowdies in their areas or from perceived unlawful arrests.

Legal assistance is one of the many requirements of the target audience who often have no idea on the availability of free legal aid services in their respective areas or the mode of accessing these services. It is here that the participation of advocates from free Legal Aid Cells in some of the conventions is of help.

The convention activities and the contribution of the Peer Educators has been recognised through media participation, which has helped in giving publicity to their activities in their areas and mobilizing community support.



The Peer Educators got both encouragement and support for their activities, in addition to new contact points, through the presence of other guest participants in these conventions. Such guest participants included representatives from Lion's Club, lorry owners associations, lorry booking offices and paddy merchants associations, local community leaders and also representatives from the State and District level Peer Educators Associations.

Officials and consultants from APAC have also offered professional guidance and support to the NGOs at these conventions, besides playing a significant role in the planning operations.

6.6 Technical sessions

The two key areas of exposure to the Peer Educators in these sessions are greater awareness on the epidemic proportions of STI/HIV/AIDS and the important role of condom in prevention.

The important aspects focused are the

- ever growing HIV/AIDS prevalence, in particular among women and injecting drug users
- various STIs, caused by different causative organs
- modes of transmission, in particular the sexual route - vaginal, anal or oral
- women Peer Educators can play a key role to bring about the necessary behaviour change in women

*"Causative organ is different; Symptoms are different;
Test is different; Treatment is different;
Prevention is the same :CONDOM"*

- need for quality care and full compliance with the treatment regimen
- significance of partner treatment.
- importance of condom usage for sufficient protection.

The ABC slogan

- A - Abstinence
- B - Being faithful
- C - Condom use

is also stressed in this context.



The urgent need for condom promotion is another area of emphasis. At present, condom use is apparently low, particularly among the high risk behaviour groups, with only 20% reporting the use of it. At the same time, the difficulties in promoting condom usage are expressed as follows

- non-availability at times of need
- inherent inhibition in open purchase of condoms from vendors
- problems in storage
- difficulties in convincing the sexual partner
- inadequate knowledge/skills in condom negotiation.

Competitions on “right way of condom negotiation” in the conventions also help in skill improvement of the Peer Educators.

6.7 Experience sharing

Mutual sharing of their field and functional experiences is an opportunity provided to the Peer Educators in these conventions. These experience sharing sessions have twin benefits

- a learning experience on some of the major initiatives taken by enterprising Peer Educators to achieve their objectives
- an understanding of the constraints one faces in the field and how some have overcome it.



Satisfaction in the work done at the field is a common refrain of the Peer Educators in these sessions. Such satisfaction apparently emanates from the feeling that they have saved many lives from the possible danger of HIV infection by creating awareness on STI/HIV/AIDS, promoting and, at times, providing condoms and insisting on regular check-ups at VCTCs. A few women Peer Educators have observed that they have even motivated the males to visit VCTCs for testing. One woman Peer Educator emotively declared

"I feel that I have fulfilled the purpose for which I came into this world!"

One of the points raised by several Peer Educators working with women in prostitution is that while the women are motivated to insist on condom use, their clients normally refuse to use condoms.

In view of this, the feeling is that awareness raising efforts should also be directed equally and forcefully among the males. This situation is apparently slowly changing with women sex workers insisting on condom use and their clients conceding.

Those working with the truckers and industrial workers have observed that through one-to-one interaction, and sustained follow-up, a behaviour change has been brought about.

"I am a Load man. I used to take with me IEC materials to explain to other load men like me about HIV/AIDS. I usually exhort them to change at least one more person's risk behaviour."

"Here they call me a doctor because they value my services. It has been earned out of my sincere work and I am really proud."

6.8 New initiatives

Some new initiatives have been mentioned by a few Peer Educators. These include

- empowering women
- motivating a woman engaged in prostitution to give up the profession and set up a petty shop, flower or fruit shop, etc.
- promotion of employment oriented activities among women in prostitution

- providing non-formal and formal education to such women as also their children
- meeting their health needs.

The starting up of a forum for Peer Educators, where they can raise their issues and find suitable solutions, is another new initiative mentioned in one convention. The forum envisaged provision of vocational training to Peer Educators, promotion of savings and micro-credit through formation of self help groups among them, making provision for the welfare of their children and identification of potential Peer Educators and training them.

6.9 Group discussions

The group discussions at the conventions have essentially centered around issues of immediate relevance to the operations of the Peer Educators.



These discussions have given an opportunity to the Peer Educators to

- present their ideas on key issues
- offer their suggestions based on their field experience to improve service delivery
- develop their skills in communication.

After the group deliberations, the Peer Educators present the consensus arrived on the issues discussed. The key issues brought up during such discussions, and the recommendations put forward, are profiled below.

Bridging knowledge gap on STI/HIV/AIDS

- sensitise the police personnel
- organize frequent exhibitions at public places, RTO offices, lorry halting points, check posts and ration shops
- display HIV/AIDS messages on trip sheets of truckers
- promote condom sale at tea shops, dhabhas, saloons and petrol bunks through dispensers
- publish IEC materials in Hindi also, as many truckers from north India traverse the highways
- set up HIV/AIDS information center at several key places, as a model established at Koliyanur halting point.



Group discussion - presentation of Report

Capacity building of Peer Educators

- arrange for regular knowledge and skill updation of Peer Educators on STI/HIV/AIDS
- provide periodic counseling to change the mindset and get over their inferiority complex
- give exposure to such concepts as self help groups and micro-credit and currently operating government schemes from which the target groups can benefit
- provide orientation on cultural activities, like street plays, as a knowledge transfer and motivational medium.

Improved status of the Peer Educators

- rename Peer Educators as behaviour activators
- provide T-shirts, uniforms and caps with HIV/AIDS messages
- arrange for regular media publicity, in particular in the electronic media, to spread awareness on the activities of the Peer Educators
- encourage participation of NGO staff in Peer Educators' family functions
- provide incentives for improved motivation.

Enhanced role for Peer Educators

- organise blood donation camps in schools and colleges, stressing on how blood donation can help save a life
- maintain a list of volunteer blood donors in the area
- distribute regularly IEC materials, pamphlets on VCTC activities and condoms to the Peer Educators to meet the needs of the target group
- conduct regular AIDS/medical check up camps in villages with the assistance of health workers and members of self help groups.



Group Report Presentations

Strengthen Peer Educator network at the district level

- involve more Peer Educators in the system after careful selection; each well trained and experienced Peer Educator can recruit one new Peer Educator at least once in three months
- involve more women and Aravanis as Peer Educators
- arrange exposure trips to areas where innovative thinking has gone into Peer Educator activities
- facilitate frequent interaction between the Peer Educators operating in a district
- organize experience sharing sessions among Peer Educators at the zonal level
- arrange periodical visits to the district, for advice and support, by the office bearers of the State level Peer Educators Association



Street-play performance by Peer Educators

- encourage participation, at the State level meetings, by the office bearers of District level Peer Educators Association
- display name board of Peer Educator Association at petrol bunks, wine shops, automobile workshops and check posts.

Care and support to PLHA

- instill confidence in them to live long
- encourage them to think positive - "nan jayikkavillai enral yaar jeyippar" (if I cannot win, who can)
- refer them for periodic counseling
- stress the importance of immediate and regular treatment and nutritious diet
- arrange to get medicines, preferably free, from obliging agencies or provide information to them on such availability
- help provide an enabling environment to help them lead a dignified life
- identify and liaise with institutions which can provide them job support and education to their children
- encourage them to undertake income generation activities
- be aware of services and facilities available in government programmes and help them benefit from it
- educate them on the availability of free legal services and provide support
- frequently interact with them with the support of District and State level Association office bearers.

Better inter-sectoral coordination

- acquire adequate knowledge on activities and services available in government and non-government agencies in the area
- facilitate periodic interaction with these agencies, in particular the line departments
- distribute proceedings of the Peer Educators Association meetings to these agencies.

6.10 Best Peer Educator Award

The Best Peer Educator award is of great significance among the Peer Educators.

This award has acted as a valuable motivating factor since it is a symbol of recognition for the Peer Educators. It also helps in stimulating the co-peer educators emulate the example of the awardees.



Best Peer Educator award



Best Peer Educator award

Prizes, shields and certificates for best performance in the field is at once a recognition of the good work done by the Peer Educators encouraging the awardees to operate with more vigor at the field. This also serves as a stimulant to other Peer Educators.

Competitions, condom demonstration and group games for testing memory on available condom brands have helped kindle the competitive spirit in the Peer Educators.

6.11 Mobile exhibition

Mobile exhibitions at these conventions have displayed the IEC materials of relevance to the Peer Educators and their target groups. Other exhibits in these are creative presentations of the enterprising Peer Educators.



Exhibition

6.12 Cultural programmes

The cultural activities, like kummi, kolattam, drama, street plays and awareness songs, at the conventions have provided an opportunity to the Peer Educators to exhibit their talents in co-curricular fields besides helping them unwind themselves after a day's work. Some of the other events at the conventions include role play, debates and fancy dress competitions.

The cultural activities, usually towards the close of the convention day, are designed to provide a welcome change after a day's serious work. In these, the Peer Educators get an opportunity to exhibit their talents in the fields of singing, dancing and play acting.



Kummi



Cultural Programme by PEs

A variety of STI/HIV/AIDS related awareness songs are developed and sung by the Peer Educators.

6.13 Selection of Office Bearers

Election of office bearers for the District level Peer Educators Associations is yet another activity at the conventions.

Newly elected office bearers assume office and inform the Peer Educators about their plans and what they intend to achieve. Due appreciation is also expressed for the work of the outgoing office bearers.



6.14 Issue of ID Card

As a follow up of the request placed by the Peer Educators at the earlier conventions, every Peer Educator is provided with a laminated ID Card with his/her photograph.

7.1 Impact

The Peer Educator model has paid rich dividends in APAC's target specific interventions initiated through its partner NGOs. Several indications of the positive outcome at the field are noticeable in this regard.

Some of these are

- raised awareness on STI/HIV/AIDS prevention and control among the high risk groups
- growing desire for knowledge acquisition on STI / HIV / AIDS related issues not only among those with risky behaviour but also others
- greater recognition of the services of the Peer Educators as evident in the rising demand on their time and services
- change in the behaviour pattern of the risky groups with increased risk perception



- higher condom usage, both free and paid, among truckers some carry these in their trucks and commercial sex workers many of whom now insist on its use by their customers
- increase in the number of condom outlets in several areas
- increased referrals
- improved interest in partner treatment
- greater involvement of the community in HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts as evidenced in the rising incidence of volunteerism
- better community involvement in BCC events in their areas
- reaching the unreached

- countering myths and misconceptions
- easy access and immediate communication to new entrants
- help in continuous follow-up and sustaining the behaviour change
- falling trend in stigma and discrimination through proper sensitization efforts at different levels
- greater willingness on the part of the HIV positives to share their experience in public forum
- better recognition of the need for care and support to the positives
- ensuring the support of secondary target groups and community based organizations.

The District Peer Educator Conventions have proved a significant source of social recognition for the Peer Educators. Best Peer Educator award, distribution of prizes for successful participants in the quiz competitions and cultural programmes have provided the much needed impetus to them.



Street Play Performance by Peer Educators

The experience sharing sessions and participation in the group discussions at these conventions have helped stimulate the thinking and communication and capabilities of the Peer Educators besides providing them a forum to ventilate their field difficulties and find appropriate solutions.

The overall impact of these conventions can best be summarized in the words of the Peer Educators themselves who opined that they

- got to know each other better
- had recognition for their work
- are motivated after learning about the successful initiatives of others
- could improve their knowledge and skill levels through the technical inputs provided to them

- had an opportunity to develop their skills, in such areas as speaking in a forum
- establish better rapport with officials in the area
- gained an insight into the various government schemes of relevance to them and their target audience and how to benefit from such schemes.

7.2 Sustainability

The key factors that have helped in this in-built sustainable mechanism in the project are

- proper selection of the Peer Educators
- their capacity building
- their motivation
- their networking
- regular monitoring
- continuous follow up support to them.



APAC team encourages a cycle rally by Peer Educator

The Peer Educator movement after an initial push by APAC and its partner NGOs is now slowly gathering its own steam.

The recognition and respectability gained have invigorated the Peer Educators not only to sharpen their skills but also expand their reach. Some of the Peer Educators have gone beyond their target groups to raise awareness among other segments of the population in their areas as well.

Many Peer Educators are also engaged in identifying and recruiting more Peer educators and volunteers to enlarge their operational network. The Peer Educators are also utilizing their skills to tap community support for their activities in many ways.

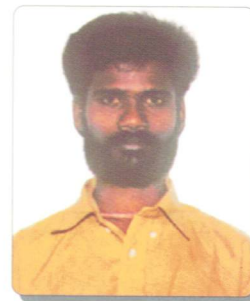
A few other indicators of the dedication of the Peer Educators in the program are

- printing of IEC materials at own cost by few Peer educators
- participation in a District Convention at own expense by some
- establishment of an AIDS Information Centre at a truck halting point at thier own expense, at Koliyanur. All the IEC materials supplied by APAC are displayed at this Centre, which is located on the highway where 50 to 70 trucks pass every day.
- Halt point committees have been formed in one area to sensitise the people and to enlist community support. The members of these committees are drawn from a wide cross-section police, cine fans associations and community leaders besides the Peer Educators.
- Media sensitization has also helped in raising community awareness and encouraging community participation, helping in the process to reach the unreached.
- Condom promotion efforts have been supported by assured condom availability. Some Peer Educators have started stocking condoms themselves while others obtain these from government hospitals.
- The continuing interest evinced by the Peer Educators, their field initiatives and the Peer Educator network are the essential sustaining features of the program.

A few suggestions by the Peer Educators on sustainability are worth a mention in this context.

- The network of Peer Educators at the district level needs expansion and strengthening.
- Periodical capacity building efforts are needed for Peer Educators.
- A healthy tie-up is essential with both the government and non-government agencies in each area.
- More innovative educational materials are required to support the Peer Educators' activities.

Identifying, capacitating and involving volunteer Peer Educators has resulted in developing a community owned program and also ascertains permanent flow of communication to their community member on a regular basis.



S Prabakaran, Male, 25 years

Peer Educator, PATH for 5 years

Member, District level Peer Educators Association

My vision is "AIDS free India".

My mission is to develop as many Peer Educators as possible with good knowledge on the subject and commitment to the cause because we need more trained Educators.

As a lorry mechanic I was working on a lorry when the driver wanted to know about HIV/AIDS. I took him to the local NGO and arranged for counseling and other services. I myself got interested in the topic and volunteered to get trained as a Peer Educator.

Today I take every opportunity to share my knowledge with truck drivers. I also go to places where women are engaged in prostitution in my cycle to educate them. I distribute condoms to those needing it.

I conduct one-to-one and one-to-group meetings with lorry drivers and cleaners and I am happy to say that the lorry owners' association in my area has given me a room in their office for this.

I want to try out new things always. I fitted a motor which runs on kerosene in my cycle by converting a Power Sprayer engine. On my own I undertook a cycle yatra from my town Trichy to Chennai, the State capital, a distance of 350 km., distributing IEC materials and spreading the messages on HIV/AIDS prevention on the way to mark the World AIDS Day.

I have also demonstrated proper condom usage using my tongue instead of the usual penis model.

Now I am working on developing a mike which will work without power of any type. I intend to continue my work as a Peer Educator always and I feel such a mike will be extremely useful.

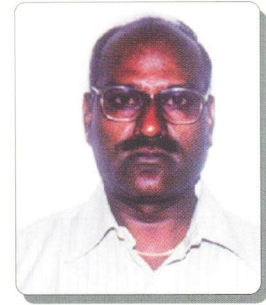
I have participated in several District and State level conventions and shared my experience with others.

I was just a mechanic. I became a Peer Educator when I started helping others. My enthusiasm was kindled and the skills inherent in me were brought out and today I have embarked on a journey to bring out the innate skills in others as well.

C Kabilan, Male, 46 years

Peer Educator, PATH for 6 years

State President, Tamilnadu PATH Peer Educators Association



I am working in Indian Oil Corporation and got motivated to become a Peer Educator after my mother's death due to cancer. Initially I wanted to work for cancer patients but when I learnt about this other killer disease from the NGO I volunteered my services.

First I started interacting with truckers and cleaners when they visited my factory for unloading but now I use every opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with others on STI/HIV/AIDS by attending all trainings and meetings organized by other NGOs and even in meetings on fire safety or environmental pollution attended by me.

The highpoint in my Peer Educator service is saving a 28 year old TV mechanic, married with two children, from committing suicide after testing HIV positive. He has returned to normal life after proper counseling. But when I started probing about his sexual life from his friends I learnt that he contacted this not from commercial sex workers but from other women in his area. Now I am pursuing others who are also likely to have been infected like him.

I feel everyone must be made aware of the risks involved in unsafe sex. Towards this I am now working on developing a Peer Educator in every village for knowledge transmission.

I started as a Peer educator but today I have become the State level leader of the Peer Educators Association. I consider this a reward in recognition of my Peer Educator's work.

I have participated in District level Peer Educators conventions and motivated several persons. In the process, I also got motivated.

P. Prema, Female, 33 years

Peer Educator, WIP for 5 years

Vice President, State WIP Peer Educators Association



“I will continue my work as a Peer Educator even if the project comes to an end and the NGO discontinues the activities.”

Today as a Peer Educator I meet girls practising the profession of a sex worker in bus stops and lodges and educate them on the seriousness of STI/HIV/AIDS, the symptoms and the importance of timely treatment. I myself take them to the clinics for testing whenever possible. I encourage them to take their sex partners also for testing and treatment.

I have persuaded the girls to insist on using condom and demonstrate to them condom negotiation skills, where needed. I also help them in procuring condoms. I am happy to say that almost all the sex workers with whom I have come into contact are now insisting on condom use or refuse to oblige their customers.

I intend continuing my work of organizing one-to-one and one-to-group meetings with sex workers to bring about a behaviour change.

I have also succeeded in communicating with the new entrants to this trade (WIP) and persuading them to adopt safe sex practices. Those who have benefited from this have always praised me.

In the process I have also cultivated many friends who have recognized my services as a Peer Educator and I am proud of this.

Besides sex workers I am also educating housewives in my area since they may also contact the infection from their wayward husbands. I feel that they should be aware of the implications of unsafe sex. I am glad to say that the response is quite good.

Such acceptance of my services has inspired me to work even harder.

K Kalaivani, Female, 33 years

Peer Educator, TWIP for 7 years



President, State level TWIP Peer Educators Association

I am proud to be working as a Peer Educator. I do face difficulties from rickshaw pullers, rowdies and the police at times but I am not dissuaded as I am committed to my work for the benefit of the sex workers in my area, a tourist center.

My previous experience as a film artiste helps me in acting and singing in street plays used for information dissemination to the sex workers.

As a Peer Educator I have voluntarily and with enthusiasm taken up STD/HIV/AIDS prevention activities among my peers. I got training in yoga and karate. Today I am an empowered woman. I can protect myself and I can protect others like me.

I feel that if counseling skills could be imparted to me, my contribution could be enhanced.



K Mokkairaj, Male, 26 years

Peer Educator, PATH for 6 years

Treasurer, District level Peer Educators Association

When a friend of mine, a load man turned fellow

driver, contacted some disease and died without treatment I decided to learn more about STD/HIV/AIDS from the local NGO.

I volunteered my services to become a Peer Educator and get trained.

I now contact not only truck drivers who are my primary target group but also others whenever possible and my training helps me in this.

I collect condoms in bulk from Government Hospital, keep them in a box in the lorry office and distribute them to those needing it. I have also printed handbills with all relevant information, at my own cost, for distribution to those interested.

I have the satisfaction of referring two women in my area for STI treatment besides persuading many sex workers use condoms regularly.

Personally I have benefited a lot by becoming a Peer Educator. Since I felt that others must also receive such benefits as me I am extending my services to others to learn about safe sex and lead a happy life.

S Renganayaki, Female, 39 years

Peer Educator, SIP for 1 1/2 years



“People should live without AIDS” this is my objective.

As a housewife I work with other housewives in my area who are mostly construction workers. I impress on them the need to use condoms and also distribute free condoms to them. I have also motivated seven persons to take treatment.

I feel proud to serve as a volunteer with the right knowledge to prevent this epidemic.

The Peer Educator conventions have helped me to know more about other Peer Educators and their work.

I am happy that in recognition of my Peer Educator activities I was honoured with a Shield on the stage in my area which made me very proud. I will continue my activities as a Peer Educator and motivate others in my area too to follow my work.

J Vijayakumar, Male, 26 years

Peer Educator, IIP for 2 years



Because of my interest in social service, I volunteered my services to be a Peer Educator. I work along with 10 other Peer Educators in my work place and we interact frequently with other workers in our factory.

We have displayed a board in a prominent location in our factory with the message

“Our fellow workers need have no fear about AIDS. Protecting them is our commitment.”

We conduct street plays once a month in the villages around the factory where the workers reside.

I distribute condoms to fellow workers.

I have the satisfaction of motivating five persons to undergo testing and be cured.

My voluntary service as a Peer Educator has today motivated me to carry on this work further.

In addition to being a mechanic carrying on my work in a mechanical fashion I have informally started sharing my knowledge on STD/HIV/AIDS prevention with my colleagues and their friends and persuading them to adopt safe sex practices.

Just as I follow the safety regulations in my work place I am teaching safe sex rules to those who engage in regular sexual activity in their lives.

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State Level TWIP & WIP Peer Educators Association 2004 - 2005 Office Bearers

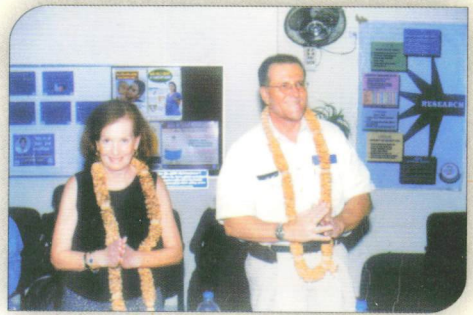
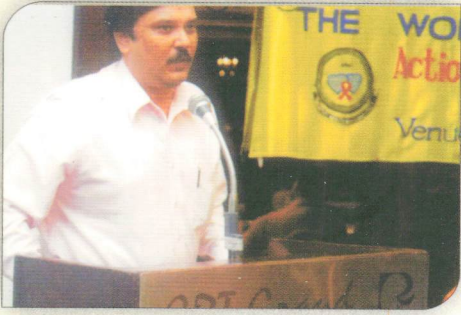
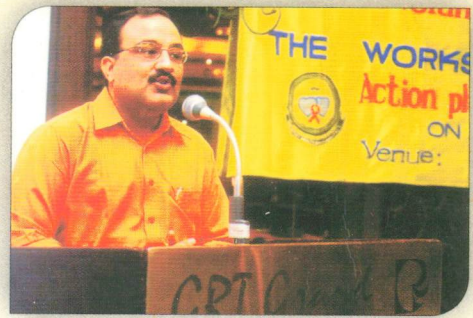
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5	R.Dharmaraj	VEST	State Vice President
6	N.K.Ragu	Prakrithi	Additional Vice President
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9	Mrs.A.Alagumani	Pache Trust	Joint Secretary
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13	Mrs.S.Vijaya	ARM	Executive Committee member
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16	C.Kumaran	HOPE Foundation	Executive Committee member
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22	Mrs.R.Kanchana	Gramcdhaya	Special Representative
23	Mrs.K.Kala	VEST	Special Representative
24	R.Arumugam	HOPE Foundation	Special Representative
25	Mrs.Shanthi	CRHSE	Special Representative
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THE VOLUNTARY HEALTH SERVICES AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROJECT
 Extension Block declared open by
Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss
 Hon'ble Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare,
 Government of India
 In the presence of
Mr. Walter E. North
 Director, USAID
 Presided by
Dr. N.S. Murali
 Hon. Secretary, VHS
 23rd October 2004



APAC project is administered by Voluntary Health Services, Chennai with financial assistance from United States Agency for International Development under bilateral agreement with the Government of India.



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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