

STI/AIDS prevention among vulnerable populations: An example in Senegalese rural area

1. Context

Senegal is a **concentrated** epidemic country where HIV prevalence turns round 1.4%. These data provided on the basis of the sentinel surveillance system only reflects the situation in urban areas. The rural areas, characterised by precarious economic conditions (poverty) and a high mobility of the populations (rural depopulation), are not sufficiently taken into account whereas they represent 60% of the total population. To this, should be added the emergence of risk sexual behaviours and practices whose determinants are not well known, particularly at the level of the no-identified specific groups (**bridging groups**). Now, the IEC/AIDS programmes developed are often conventional and do not take into account socio-anthropological realities in rural areas. This situation translates a real risk of HIV spread in the rural areas if actions are not taken. Moreover, People Living With AIDS (PLWA) are still victims of stigmatisation and discrimination related to the socio-cultural context in the rural areas.

Therefore, the need to develop new preventive approaches to maintain national prevalence rate below 2%.

2. Methodology

The strategy adopted, which combines research with action, has 4 components. The first one consists of an **Operational Research (OR)** to improve the knowledge of the socio-demographic, economic situation and socio-cultural realities, but also to assess the real rate of seroprevalence in the rural areas. Secondly, on the basis of the OR results targeted **IEC/CBC** and **PLWA support programmes** that take into account sociocultural factors, as well as the recorded constraints will be designed and implemented. This project designed and executed in partnership between organisations with complementary skills, will rest on CBOs and local health facilities. What's more, the populations involved in the study will benefit directly from the outputs.

3. Results

- ☞ HIV prevalence still low in the rural areas (0.6%) but identification of 4 risk groups: Transportation professionals, divorced women, home girl employees, and young people operating in tourist sector.
- ☞ Identification of economic and socio-cultural factors underlying risk sexual behaviours.
- ☞ Putting in place of a targeted IEC/CBC programme and an appropriate strategy for the PLWA support in rural areas.

4. Conclusions

Operational research has led to conclusive results (targeted interventions) under experimentation. This testifies the need to develop preventive approaches based on a good knowledge of the environment and a participatory approach.

CBC: Communication for Behaviour Change

IEC: Information – Education – Communication

CBO: Community -Based Organisation

PLWA: People Living With AIDS