

# HIV Prevention for Sexual Partners of Injection Drug Users (IDUs), Ha Giang Province, Vietnam

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## Background

- Vietnam’s HIV epidemic is currently concentrated among IDUs but with increasing sexual transmission and some evidence of generalization (>1% HIV prevalence among antenatal women in several provinces, particularly those with high HIV prevalence among IDUs).
- To prevent further generalization, it is critical to reach sexual partners (SPs) of IDUs with prevention interventions.
- SPs may be difficult to reach: they may not even know their status, fear identification, and/or fear jeopardizing their relationships or subjecting themselves to abuse.
- Ha Giang is a poor, remote, mountainous province in northwestern Vietnam, with very few previous HIV programs.
- There are about 1,000 IDUs in Ha Giang Province, with HIV prevalence ~30% among IDUs and ~60% of IDUs sexually active (by self-report).

## Interventions

- We initiated a peer-based HIV prevention intervention for IDUs in Ha Giang town in 2003 (part of the Cross-Border HIV Prevention Project, Vietnam and China).
- We expanded interventions to target women at risk (WaR: sex workers [SWs] and SPs of IDUs) in Ha Giang Town and Bac Quang District in 2005.
- WaR interventions include peer education (12 women peer educators hired and trained), condom distribution, and women’s clubs.
- Women’s clubs meet weekly for discussion and mutual support. They are open to all and typically attract 15-20 participants.



## Methods

- To assess the interventions, we carried out cross-sectional surveys of WaR (behavioral interviews and confidential HIV testing with counseling) at baseline and 24 months post-implementation.
- Further follow-up surveys are being done at annual intervals.
- Samples were recruited using modified “snowball” techniques.
- Average total n for WaR surveys (including both SWs, SPs, and SW/SPs)=70 in Ha Giang Town and 50 in Bac Quang District.
- Analysis of SPs includes SPs and SW/SPs.

## Key Results from Surveys of Sexual Partners

| Measure (last 6 months)                            | Ha Giang Town Baseline (n=31) | Ha Giang Town 24 months (n=7) | Bac Quang District Baseline (n=28) | Bac Quang District 24 months (n=26) |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Perceived self to be at risk for HIV               | 45%                           | 57%                           | 54%                                | 90%                                 |
| Received condoms                                   | 65                            | 57                            | 25                                 | 83*                                 |
| Received advice from peer educator                 | 26                            | 63*                           | 12                                 | 70*                                 |
| Participated in women’s club                       | 23                            | 57                            | 4                                  | 50*                                 |
| Used condom with spouse/lover, always/most of time | 28                            | 100                           | 29                                 | 46                                  |
| Used condom with spouse/lover, last sex            | 45                            | 100                           | 32                                 | 50                                  |

\*p<0.05

## Conclusions

- Despite small sample sizes, results show that participation in the interventions increased over time (participation at baseline probably reflects some spillover from the existing IDU interventions).
- Condom use among SPs also increased.
- As of 24 months, no surveyed SPs tested HIV-positive.
- The maintenance of HIV prevention interventions for SPs may be important to prevent HIV infection in this potentially important cross-over population.

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