

# Primary Prevention of HIV in the Pre-Pregnancy Period

**Accelerating Efforts towards Universal Access of HIV/STI Prevention, Treatment and Care in Women and Children in Asia and the Pacific**

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**For every child**  
**Health, Education, Equality, Protection**  
**ADVANCE HUMANITY**



# Purpose of the session

**To present the rationale for routine testing of HIV status in the pre-pregnancy period as part of an integrated package for maternal and child survival and nutrition.**

# Context

- **Markers of Women's Status in the Region**
  - **Maternal health and undernutrition**
  - **Maternal health and safe motherhood**
  - **Women's access to basic services**
  - **High fertility rates**
  - **High rates of STDs**
  - **Maternal Mortality and HIV**

# Definitions

- **Pre-pregnancy defined:**

- *the period of weeks or months between a couple's decision to become pregnant and conception.*

- **Pre-pregnancy and adolescence:**

- *adolescence not synonymous with Pre-pregnancy.*
- *An adolescent should not become pregnant.*
- *Adolescence and 1<sup>st</sup> pregnancy may be separated by many years*

# Why Target Pre-pregnant Women?

- Current ANC seldom reaches women before the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester
- Conception and first trimester are periods of crucial and sensitive growth and development
- Gives government a more manageable and affordable alternative than targeting all women of reproductive age.

# Evidence for targeting pre-pregnancy

- Reduction of low-birthweight
- Reduction of childhood stunting
- Improved maternal survival
- Reduction of birth defects

# Package for Pre-Pregnant Woman (services)

- Micronutrient supplementation
- Insecticide treated bed net in malarious areas
- Tetanus toxoid vaccination
- Birth spacing services and counseling
- Health and nutrition education\* (optimal diet, hygiene practices, use of health services, birth spacing etc.)
- BMI assessment of women of reproductive age
- Fortified food to woman in communities meeting the criteria

# Package for Pre-Pregnant Woman (diagnostics)

- Vouchers/Coupons to offer diagnostic tests (and treatment where indicated):
  - STD = VDRL (both partners)
  - HIV = blood test or saliva (both partners)
  - TB = sputum or skin test (both partners)
  - Malaria = thick smear
  - Hemoglobin = hemocue
  - Urinary tract infection = urinalysis / culture

# “Wedding Gift”

Bar of soap

Deworming  
tablet

Coupons to go  
to health for  
tests and  
immunization

Package of  
iodized salt

Micronutrient  
supplements

Coupon to  
receive  
fortified food  
eg. noodles

Insecticide-  
treated bednet

Color-coded  
educational  
guide book



# Argument for a routine package of pre-pregnancy tests

1. Allows a woman to be tested for HIV status without having to ask – right of refusal always applies – reduces stigma
2. Provides ‘return cover’ for any positive test in the overall package without having to specify
3. Offers a woman a choice *before* she becomes pregnant.
4. Gives both members of a couple a chance to discuss before becoming pregnant.
5. Increase understanding of epidemiology of HIV problem in a given population.
6. If woman is HIV+: therapy can be started, including micronutrients; if HIV-: efforts to protect during pregnancy can be enhanced.

# Identifying the pre-pregnant couple.

## • Ideal:

- Marriage: *the 'wedding gift'*
- Premarital counselling sessions: *state representative, village headman, Imam*

## • Alternatives:

- Target according to sociology / demography of first pregnancy
- Link with Adolescent Health Programmes if sustainable beyond adolescence.

In either case, decide after discussions with the community

# Application in the field

- Presently being started in Indonesia, Philippines
- Evaluation strategy being developed by Tulane University / SCN team.
- Focussed on a cohort of primagravid women
- Linked to maternal survival, maternal and child nutrition, child survival.

# EAP Regional Strategies



# Joint WHO/UNICEF Strategy



