

The purpose of the HIV and AIDS Programme is to reduce the vulnerability to and impact of HIV and AIDS among the people most at risk in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. There is a special focus on women and children through a selection of high impact interventions for a low prevalence HIV epidemic, including the integration of Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) services in maternal and child health services, and prevention initiatives for most at risk and especially vulnerable adolescents and youth.

Looking back

In 2008, UNICEF contributed to the development of the Pacific Regional Strategy, which Pacific Island leaders endorsed and which provides an overarching framework for the delivery of services in the area of HIV and AIDS to countries in the region.

UNICEF participates in several working groups in the Pacific with many partners. One of these partnerships (SPC, UNFPA and UNICEF) coordinates the Adolescent Health and Development Programme. Activities undertaken by this programme in 2008 included establishing a system to reach most at risk adolescents and youth in the five countries with HIV prevention information and skills. Further achievements were:

- a Trainers' Resource Package was developed and national training was run for ten master trainers. In Kiribati and Solomon Islands, 40 trainers were trained.
- training for 200 groups of adolescents in Solomon Islands and Kiribati.
- training for teachers and youth leaders in new curricula and delivery methods in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and, in the same countries, life skills training by peer educators for 3,000 adolescents.
- in schools, curricula for life skills were developed, tested and integrated in the main curriculum, and teachers and youth leaders in Fiji, Solomon islands and Vanuatu received training and orientation in the new curriculum.

Other activities implemented by the countries themselves included:

- training of 90 adolescents, youth, women and community leaders in reproductive health issues in Solomon Islands. This resulted in an increase in attendance to reproductive health care services.
- training of peer educators, health care providers and community leaders in HIV prevention in Tuvalu. Also in Tuvalu, radio sessions with HIV prevention messages for youths were produced.

UNICEF's HIV and AIDS Programme also assisted the five countries to implement activities as per their national strategic plans. For example, UNICEF supported countries to conduct campaigns to combat the stigma and discrimination faced by many people living with HIV and AIDS. In Fiji, UNICEF provided assistance to Fiji Network for People Living with HIV and AIDS (FJN+), an organization that helps people living with AIDS.

In the area of Prevention of Mother-to-child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), PMTCT has been strengthened by:

- the development of national guidelines and standards in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati
- the integration of PMTCT services in selected health facilities with attempts of reaching the agreed standards by:
 - renovation and refurbishment of the selected facilities in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, and
 - training of 75 health care providers in delivery of PMTCT services in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Mothers and their partners attending antenatal clinics in the five countries have now started to use PMTCT services, and women and children who are either HIV positive or exposed to the risk of becoming so are also benefiting from PMTCT activities.

Moving forward

In 2009, the HIV and AIDS Programme will focus on activities recommended by the review of work completed in 2008. The Programme expects to:

- support countries in conducting vulnerability mapping and selecting interventions that will make a difference
- increase its focus on prevention activities among those most at risk, and increase their involvement in programme activities
- continue to integrate PMTCT services in health facilities where the need is greatest
- strengthen adolescent friendly services in reproductive health centres
- support capacity development of youth as partners in HIV prevention and increase their engagement in HIV responses
- support the introduction of rapid HIV testing
- assist in capacity development of HIV and AIDS committees at national and provincial levels in selected provinces in Vanuatu, Kiribati and Solomon Islands.