

Making AIDS policy sexy: Evaluation of AIDS policy training to engender a gendered and human rights response in Vietnam

Lisa Messersmith, Tran Huu Bich, Sofia Gruskin, Le Vu Anh, Truong Quang Tien, Khuat Thu Hong, Cao Duc Thai, Nguyen Thi Thanh Hai, Dominic Montagu, Hanh La, Kristin Eifler, Jordan Tuchman and Adriana Smith

Background:

Integration of gender and human rights into HIV/AIDS policies and programs has shown to improve national AIDS responses. Yet, these issues are often contested at the individual, community, programmatic and societal levels. Faculty from the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, Boston University, and Harvard University provided training to strengthen the ability of provincial leaders to design, implement and evaluate rights-based, gender-sensitive and multi-sectoral AIDS responses in Vietnam. Researchers from Boston University and the Hanoi School of Public Health conducted a qualitative cross-over comparison study to evaluate the impact of this training in six provinces.

Methods:

Evaluation objectives were to determine whether: training participants improved their knowledge about responses to AIDS based on human rights and gender equity; HIV/AIDS policies and programs at provincial levels improved; and people vulnerable to, infected and affected by HIV benefited from changes in HIV/AIDS programs subsequent to the training. Data were collected in three rounds between June 2006 and July 2007. Methods included 513 semi-structured qualitative interviews and 17 focus group discussions with cadres who were trained; provincial staff; peer educators working with sex workers, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men; people living with HIV/AIDS; and NGO program managers.

Results:

Data were coded for key themes and analyzed using domain analysis methods. Results of the three rounds of data are presented. Responses of trained vs. untrained policy makers were compared. Data show that after policy makers participated in the training, they showed a marked increase in attention to gender and human rights issues in their demonstration of knowledge, attitudes and actions to integrate these issues into policies and programs.

Conclusion:

AIDS policy training that integrates gender and human rights improves the knowledge and capacity of policy makers to design and implement effective AIDS response at provincial level.