

Peer volunteers outreaching to commercial sex networks for HIV prevention

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Issues

Feasibility of conducting a district level intervention through outreaching by volunteers to commercial sex workers and clients (CSWS) in Hong Kong has not been tested.

Project

Sunny Project is an outreach project jointly organized by Red Ribbon Centre and CHOICE, an NGO experienced in CSWC outreach. We developed seven core messages to be delivered by peer educators to achieve three education goals: promote HIV and STI testing, enhance knowledge on safer sex and introduce existing services to CSWC. Volunteers were identified through contacts of CSWC and recruited after interview and assessment. After initial training, they conveyed core messages with information booklets and distributed condoms to CSWC at hotspots for commercial sex activities. Ongoing support with information and training were provided.

Results

Ten volunteers were trained and actively involved in the project. Between April and December 2004, we conducted 275 outreach sessions in 21 different spots throughout the territory, approached 298 CSW and 10,883 clients, distributed 32,066 condoms and 15,626 booklets and delivered 13,556 core messages. Ninety-five percent indicated 'will use condom for subsequent sex' after communicating with volunteers.

Lessons learnt

Outreaching to CSWC through collaborative efforts of government and NGO is feasible and acceptable. It assists in mapping the pattern of commercial sex in the locality.

