Populations at risk...

- China’s 450 million rural women lack the economic and social power to protect their rights. Moreover, social support systems for this segment of the population are frequently not available.
- There are approximately 120 million migrants—mainly unskilled peasants—working in urban areas.
- Minorities represent less than 9% of the population, but account for more than 30% of the reported HIV/AIDS cases.
- In China, most men who have sex with men are married, but less than 10% regularly use condoms with their male partners or spouses. In fact, one-third of AIDS patients in a Beijing hospital were from this high-risk group.
- There were an estimated 2 million injecting drug users in 2001, with 20–60% sharing needles. As a result, up to 80% of injecting drug users were HIV-positive in some areas.
- Less than 20% of China’s estimated 6 million sex workers regularly used condoms with their clients in 2001. In some areas, up to 10% were HIV-positive.

What can be done...

Groups often affected by discrimination include women and children, ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, those with different sexual orientations, sex workers, drug users and prisoners. Effective interventions and wide-ranging educational campaigns, which include the participation of these vulnerable groups, must be made more available nationwide.

Make it happen...

Educational materials for the young and vulnerable

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has worked to prevent HIV transmission through drug abuse in China since 2001. The organization currently distributes awareness-raising materials on demand reduction and drug-related health risks in Yunnan province. The Xinjiang Red Cross offers psychological support to young drug users, as well as providing HIV/AIDS information through youth peer education on topics such as healthy living.

- US$15 000 would pay for 13 000 vulnerable people to learn about drug-related health risks.
- US$20 000 would allow the Xinjiang Red Cross project to hold 50 youth peer education workshops, training 750 participants. These participants would, in turn, reach more than 3600 young people.

In-kind contributions: training facilities, and the design, printing and distribution of educational materials would be welcome.

For more information, contact: Dr Sandro Calvani, Regional Representative for South-East Asia, UNDCP. E-mail: sandro.calvani@undcp.un.or.th. Ms Muhadas Aizez, Project Officer, Xinjiang Red Cross. E-mail: xjrc@fm365.com.

Combating poverty in high-prevalence communities

In high-prevalence villages, people living with HIV/AIDS are often unable to sell their produce or find jobs because of stigma and discrimination. This loss of income, as well as rising health-care costs, can have a devastating effect on a family’s financial situation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Health, Agriculture and Poverty Alleviation offices, helps local communities combat poverty by providing small loans to encourage innovative farm techniques or initiate small businesses.

- US$10 000 would provide low-interest loans to 50 low-income rural families in impoverished villages.

For more information, contact: Ms Jia Lusheng, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP. E-mail: lusheng.jia@undp.org.

Agricultural extension training

Chinese farmers can be difficult to reach with HIV/AIDS information. With this in mind, the World Food Programme (WFP) integrated information on the virus into its agricultural training programmes.

- US$5000 would pay for 1000 farmers to be trained in HIV/AIDS prevention, as well as new planting techniques.

For more information, contact: Mr Douglas Broderick, Representative, WFP. E-mail: Douglas.Broderick@wfp.org.

Promoting women’s rights

UNIFEM promotes policy dialogue and legislation to change the attitudes and practices of men and women around sex—for example, empowering females to negotiate safer sex. To this end, UNIFEM has started a pilot project targeting government leaders and stakeholders in Guangdong province.

- US$20 000 would enable the programme to reach government leaders and stakeholders in an additional province.

For more information, contact: Ms Zhang Hongman, Executive Assistant, UNIFEM. E-mail: Hongman.zhang@public.un.org.cn