

Rapid Assessment and Response: The Context of HIV/AIDS and Adolescents in Bangkok *

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate the Rapid Assessment and Response (RAR) method of assessing HIV/AIDS risk-taking behaviors among adolescents in Thailand.

Design: This community-based participatory research was designed in partnership with a community working group (CWG) consisting of local leaders, public health and social services providers.

Methods: Findings described here are derived from a larger study in which data were collected using five methods: focus groups, cultural expert interviews, mapping, observation, and surveys. Only findings from the survey, developed for this study, are reported here. The survey comprised: demographic data (16 items); HIV/AIDS knowledge (5 items), beliefs and values regarding HIV/AIDS and condom use (17 items); perceived risk (2 items); and HIV/AIDS risk-taking behaviors (22 items).

Main findings: The survey was administered to 100 adolescents aged 12 - 22 years. Findings revealed that adolescents are at an elevated risk of early, unprotected sex. Observed high risk behaviors included: unsafe sex, sex exchanges (for example, for drugs and money), substance abuse, and drug-dealing. There were also strong links between alcohol consumption and unprotected sexual encounters. Due to the observed lack of HIV/AIDS knowledge among adolescents, communities expressed a need for school-based or community-based prevention programs. Survey results were presented to the CWG to develop targeted action plans and research-based recommendations.

Conclusion and recommendations: RAR appears to be an effective assessment tool to develop population-specific HIV/AIDS prevention interventions. The findings of this study provide information that could enable local health providers and policy makers in developing and implementing community-specific interventions to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people.

Keywords: rapid assessment and response, community-based participatory research, adolescents, HIV/AIDS, risk-taking behaviors

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