

It is now well accepted that HIV/AIDS is a challenge for the world community as it transcends boundaries of nation, class, ethnicity and sexual preference.

Over the years, research has shown that HIV is not random in its spread or its impact. An intersection of several variables—poverty, urbanisation, gender inequality and stereotypical gender roles—impacts upon vulnerabilities. Significant factors—such as lack of autonomy for women and girls, discrimination against sexual minorities, abuse of power, lack of basic services, and violence against women—play a key role in determining the most vulnerable constituencies in society.

Human poverty reduces the ability of people to control their circumstances and make choices. Poor people are forced by economic imperatives into living conditions and occupations in which risks to life and health are endemic. In countries that are experiencing widespread impacts of HIV/AIDS, it has been found that prevention initiatives can work only if enabling environments are created for people to effect change in their lives that would help them practice safe behaviour consistently.

Linking HIV/AIDS-related indicators to human development parameters representing long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living, would support dialogue with policy-makers and stakeholders to set the course for considered action.

This report highlights South Asia's substantial challenge, both in terms of human deprivation and vulnerability to the epidemic. It argues for a comprehensive intersectoral response based on the recognition of the linkages between human development and HIV/AIDS.

This document has been prepared by the UNDP's Human Development Resource Centre and the Regional HIV and Development Programme in collaboration with UNAIDS.

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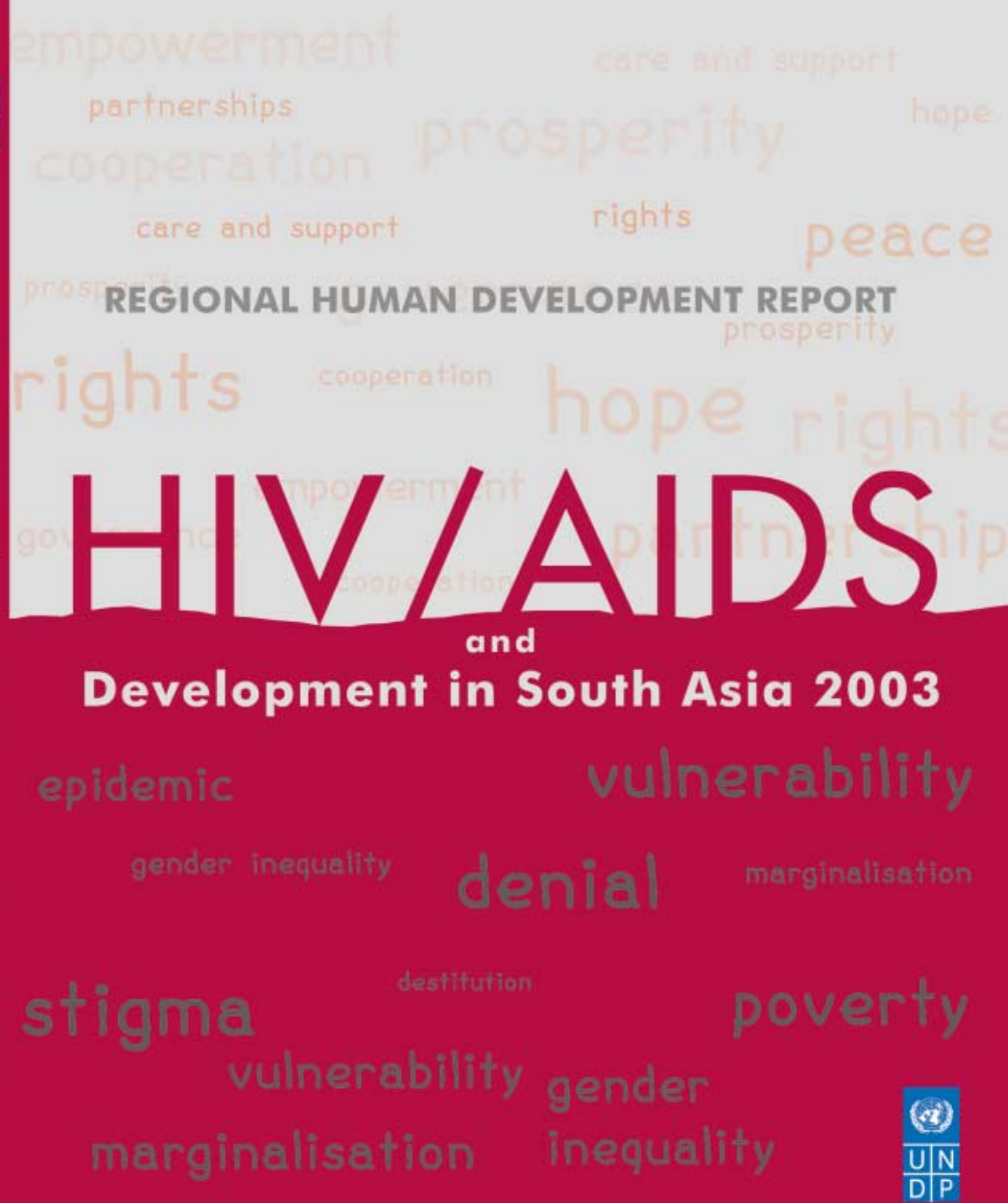
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ISBN 81-88788-03-1



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HIV/AIDS and Development in South Asia 2003



REGIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

HIV/AIDS

and

Development in South Asia 2003



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ISBN No. 81-88788-03-1

Price: INR 395.00

Designed and Printed by New Concept Information Systems Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

Foreword

The Regional Human Development Report on *“HIV/AIDS and Human Development in South Asia 2003”* is the first report prepared under the aegis of UNDP’s Asia Pacific Regional Initiative on Human Development Reports (HDRC) and the Regional Programme on HIV and Development (REACH Beyond Borders).

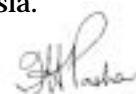
This Report builds upon an extensive corpus of research on human development in South Asia, pioneered by the late Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq and strengthened by successive national and sub-national HDRs. The challenge of HIV in South Asia has been examined in several documents prepared by UN organizations, national Governments, research institutions, NGOs, activists working with HIV programmes and positive people’s networks.

It is heartening that this complex and difficult issue is being addressed by a large number of people who recognise the pressing importance of fighting this epidemic before it reaches catastrophic proportions. We do not have the luxury of waiting for a crisis to be thrust upon us before we devise solutions for it.

The Report argues that just as HIV can reverse the gains of human development in the region, largely through the

vector of life expectancy, morbidity and prejudice, the lack of human development can also trump the fight against HIV. This Report is the first attempt to examine the dynamics of HIV and human development through a common lens, and suggests possible arenas for action that may lie outside a strictly epidemiological approach. It is also true that a classic public health response that focuses upon “disease control”, important as that is, may not be adequate given the fact that there is thus far no vaccine against HIV and the health care infrastructure in the region is in need of ever greater reform and rejuvenation.

The analysis in the Report indicates that the two-way relationship between ill-health and poverty holds particularly true in South Asia. In this context, human development concerns, particularly those of social security, livelihood and human dignity are required to be mainstreamed into efforts to combat the epidemic. As a corollary, it would be essential to include HIV concerns into policies and programmes for human development. A comprehensive response cannot be a mere catch-word or slogan, it needs to become a living reality — on this hinges the success of the struggle against human deprivation and the epidemic in South Asia.



Hafiz Pasha
UN Assistant Secretary General
UNDP Assistant Administrator
Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific

Overview

Globally, the Human Development Reports (HDRs) have placed people at the centre of development discourse and flagged the urgency of focused public action towards international development goals. Several regional, national, and indeed sub-national HDRs pioneered in India have contributed to a worldwide alliance to widen people's choices and meet the challenges of poverty, ill-health and ignorance.

The *Regional HDR on HIV/AIDS and Development in South Asia* examines the complex interplay between disease and deprivation in a scenario where major successes in human development are undermined by persistent challenges. The Report brings together for the first time an analysis of HIV and human development under a common lens in South Asia. The linkages between the two are mutually reinforcing in the sense that HIV can undo gains of human development, and the lack of human development can trump any strategy against HIV.

The Report assesses the adverse impact of HIV on the Human Development Index (HDI) and also the parameters of the HDI viz. literacy, school enrollment, life expectancy and per capita income. It also points out that successful human development in terms of improved literacy, a more functional health system and enhanced livelihoods make for a more effective response to the epidemic in South Asia.

It is vital that dialogue in the region, between statesmen, governments and civil society, be harnessed to focus upon cooperation in arenas such as affordable drugs and treatment through trade agreements, sharing best practices in harm reduction and an enabling policy environment where the struggle against the epidemic is an integral part of the road map for human development.

The Report documents the price of inertia in the fight against HIV and shows that the micro-level impacts at the level of individuals, households and communities are more significant than the macro-level impact, given the current rates of HIV prevalence. It points out that the impact of HIV on firms and businesses affects not only corporate profits but also the livelihoods of workers and the prospects of social security for organised and unorganised workers.

The case is made in the Report that successful outcomes for HIV may also require an enabling framework where rights of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) are guaranteed and stigma and discrimination are minimised. It analyses the legislative and judicial framework of HIV in South Asia and argues for a closer integration with mainstream constitutional and right to development mandates and institutions.

The Report examines the debate over prevention versus treatment and

overturns the argument that the former is the responsibility of the state and the latter is to be taken care of by private provisioning and market forces. It argues that the success of prevention efforts often depends on effective care and support especially in the light of the principles of Greater Involvement of People with AIDS (GIPA). It also shows the feasibility of access to Highly Active Anti-retroviral Therapy (HAART) in resource-poor settings. It examines the issues pertaining to provision of drugs at affordable prices through mechanisms such as compulsory licensing and parallel country importing, an issue which could be taken up for regional cooperation in South Asia.

The Report points out that the formidable challenge of HIV in the region can be met only when the credo of multi-sectoral responses is translated into reality by ensuring that the concerns of positive people are reflected not only in dedicated public health interventions but also in programmes and policies for livelihood

promotion, social security and access to basic services.

While this Report does not purport to convey the views of any of the national Governments in the region, it does signpost, however, the urgency of meeting the challenge of HIV and human deprivation in a region that is critical to the world's ability to meet the Millennium Development Goals. It is hoped that the findings of the Report could spark public debate and help build an enabling policy environment for more effective action.

We look forward to wider discussions in South Asia, within and across countries, which could provide policy options on practical modalities of a multi-sectoral response, access to treatment in resource-poor settings, demystifying the epidemic by building advocacy and information networks for advocacy and ensuring a high priority for HIV and human development in the political agenda.



Brenda Gael McSweeney
UNDP Resident Representative &
UN Resident Coordinator

Acknowledgements

Combating HIV/AIDS is a critical challenge for human development in South Asia, and as such one of the key Millennium Development Goals that the world community has set for itself. There is now a consensus that public policy is required to address not only the medical or public health issues, but also the socio-economic context, including issues pertaining to human dignity and elimination of stigma and discrimination.

This Report is an attempt to utilise UNDP's principal advocacy platform to make a compelling case for coherent, practical action across sectors and stakeholders, keeping in mind the ground realities of South Asia and the possibility of the epidemic reversing the gains of human development in the region. It marshalls relevant facts and evidence and analyses the two-way linkage between human development outcomes and the trajectory of the epidemic. It is hoped that this would help widen the current development debate on the subject and promote experience sharing across countries and contribute to the 'human development movement' worldwide.

The leadership of Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator and his vision of the new UNDP as a knowledge network has inspired the preparation of this Report in one of UNDP's key practice areas.

The encouragement by the Regional Bureau for Asia Pacific (RBAP), under the leadership of Hafiz Pasha was valuable.

This is the first Report funded under RBAP's Regional Initiative on HDRs in Asia and the Pacific. This Report has been prepared by the Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC), and Regional HIV and Development Programme (REACH Beyond Borders), New Delhi in collaboration with UNAIDS. Subinay Nandy, Joanna Merlin-Scholtes, Kanni Wignaraja and Arusha Stanislaus at the Bureau have extended useful support. Sarah Burd-Sharps and Sharmila Kurukulasuriya from the National HDR (NHDR) Unit at the Human Development Report Office (HDRO) have been our comrades-in-arms, not only facilitating a presentation on the Report at the XIV International HIV/AIDS Conference at Barcelona, but also in facilitating discussions on the NHDR network. We are grateful to members of the NHDR Network, particularly the Cambodia NHDR team and Hakan Bjorkman for their detailed comments, which helped improve the draft. Gillman Rebello and Barbara Lemoine at the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) were most helpful.

The support from the country offices of UNDP and UNAIDS in the region including the HIV/AIDS focal points for facilitating the sharing of the draft is acknowledged. David Miller, K. Pradeep, Pernilla Berlin from UNAIDS India Country Office, Vidya Ganesh from UNAIDS, South Asia Inter-Country Team (SAICT), Sunita Dhar from UNIFEM, South Asian Regional Office (SARO),

Jai Narain, Subhash Hira from WHO, South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) and Roma Bhattacharjea from UNDP, Sub-Regional Resource Facility (SURF), Kathmandu, deserve special thanks.

The Asia Pacific Regional Human Development Reports Initiative and REACH Beyond Borders Programme, both hosted by the Government of India, New Delhi, have in the course of preparation of this Report benefited from the continuous advice and support of Meenakshi Datta Ghosh and her team from National AIDS Control Organisation, India.

This Report would not have been possible without the contribution, support and encouragement from a large number of people and institutions. Their contribution is acknowledged without in any way making them responsible for the contents. The guidance of the members of the Advisory and Technical Committees is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks to all the resource persons and institutions who contributed background papers. Special thanks are due to Eileen Stillwaggon and Robert Cassen for their intellectual guidance that helped sharpen the perspectives in the Report.

The process of preparing this Report was as fruitful as the end product. The participants at the regional NGO consultation at Goa enriched the contents

U. Nobokishore Singh, Rohan Edrisinha, Gunjan Sharma, Shyamala Ashok, Bitra George, Elizabeth Sivakumar, Priya Dias, John Pinheiro, Prakash Nadkarni, Mariott Correa, Sangita Sonak, Ashwin Tombat and Sabina Martin. We wish to acknowledge the following groups and networks of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in South Asia for deepening our knowledge and analysis: Asia Pacific Network of PLWHA (APN+), Indian Network for PLWHA (INP+), Positive Women Network of South India (PWN+), En-Joy, Affected Infected Women's Association in Churachandpur (AIWAC), Nepal Plus, Makwanur Group of Infected and Affected women, Lanka+, Ashar Alo Society and New Light AIDS Control Action Awareness Group.

Draft versions of the Report were shared with several experts whose feedback is acknowledged. We would particularly like to mention Michael Hahn, P.L. Joshi, Rajiv Sadanandan, Julie Hamblin, Desmond Cohen, D.C.S. Reddy and Mukul Saxena. Readers including policy-makers and planners from across the region, helped in improving the presentation and sharpening the analysis. This process, though time consuming, helped in building a constituency for the perspectives and messages of the Report. A special thanks to our fellow travellers who have already initiated the process of sharing the human development concept and messages arising from

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