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HIV and AIDS REPORTER: SEXUAL RIGHTS AND HIV 18 April 2006

produced by the [IDS Health and Development Information](#) team in collaboration with [Eldis](#) and the [DFID Health Resource Centre](#)

This is our monthly email bulletin, bringing together research to inform policy debates on health in developing countries.

The HIV and AIDS Reporter aims to provide readers with a more in-depth look at a particular area of HIV and AIDS policy. This month's theme is [sexual rights and HIV](#). The bulletin also features summaries of new documents and other additions to the [HIV and AIDS Resource Guide](#).

All documents listed below are available free on the web. If you are unable to access any of these materials online and would like to receive a copy of a document as an email attachment, please contact i.young@ids.ac.uk.

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Feature: sexual rights, pleasure and HIV

Should we be promoting the right to sexual pleasure, in addition to health and security, as a means to prevent HIV and AIDS? Some argue that a rights-based approach that focuses on sexual rights and pleasure could provide one way of addressing both risk of and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. It could also provide a stronger basis for HIV prevention strategies. Rights-based approaches can help orient programmes and policies to support people's mobilisation against the structures that deny them their rights. Where risks may be motivated in part by pleasure seeking, safe sex strategies could use pleasure seeking and endorse the right to pleasure as a means to motivate safer behaviour.

Hierarchies of priorities vary and for many, access to health services and information, safety and security may be their main concern. Yet many argue that pleasure is a relevant and motivating factor in many cases and it needs to be addressed in HIV strategies. Moreover, lack of sexual rights means that access to health services and information is difficult or impossible. This violation of rights prevents many women, men and transgender people from accessing necessary HIV prevention, treatment and care. Using positive health messages, and supporting sexual rights is integral to good public health and effective HIV prevention and treatment.

Many thanks to Susie Jolly, [Bridge](#), for advice on this feature.

For more information see:

- Resources from the IDS Participation group on [Realising Sexual Rights](#)
- The Health Key Issues guide on [sexual and reproductive health and rights](#)
- IDS policy briefing on [Sexuality and development](#)
- The [Pleasure Project](#)

Recommended readings

1. [Vulnerability, risk and sexual rights](#)
2. [Sexual and reproductive health and rights: a cornerstone of development](#)
3. [Re-sexualising the epidemic](#)
4. [Sex for pleasure, rights to participation, and alternatives to AIDS: placing sexual minorities and/or dissidents in development](#)

Vulnerability, risk and sexual rights

Authors: Jolly, S.

Produced by: HIV and AIDS Resource Guide (2005)

This think piece, prepared for a UNAIDS workshop on Vulnerability and AIDS, suggests how sexual rights and sexual pleasure could play a role in bridging the gaps in HIV strategies. The author outlines how the UNAIDS strategy framework for intensifying HIV prevention is based on three interrelated factors: risk reduction, vulnerability and impact reduction. The author argues that the division between risk and vulnerability in this strategy does not match experience: most people face a mixture of individual risks and structural vulnerabilities. Moreover, the risk paradigm downplays structural constraints and the vulnerability paradigm downplays individual agency.

The author suggests that a rights based approach, in particular a sexual rights and sexual pleasure framework, could provide the answer to the above mentioned limitations. The right to seek pleasure and an enabling environment in which to do so are needed not just to improve the quality of life, but also for two practical reasons. Firstly, where the vulnerability discourse denies the possibility that women might act on desire, a focus on pleasure can make women less vulnerable to unsafe sex. Secondly, risks are motivated in part by pleasure-seeking. Safe sex strategies could use pleasure-seeking and endorse the right to pleasure as a means to motivate safer behaviour. [adapted from authors]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC20710>

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Sexual and reproductive health and rights: a cornerstone of development

Authors: Sida

Produced by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), 2005

In this paper, the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) sets out its policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It argues that violations of the right to sexual and reproductive health both cause and are caused by poverty. Therefore, realising SRHR is not only a goal in itself, but a means to fight poverty, underpinning all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The paper considers sexual and reproductive health from the perspective of human rights and of the poor, emphasising the need to address power structures and their impacts.

Sida states its support for culturally sensitive, youth-friendly services, and sexuality and sex education programmes aimed at eliminating prejudice and discrimination for reasons of sex, sexual

orientation, gender identity, age or ethnic background. It also advocates integration of sexual and reproductive health services with HIV and AIDS programmes; and the introduction of public financing systems to ensure equal access to high quality sexual and reproductive health care for all. Sida's priorities in SRHR include contraception, safe abortion, HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence and abuse, harmful traditional practices, and maternal and newborn health. Key strategies include working with the education sector and the field of legislation, and incorporating a gender perspective into all cooperation. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC19698>

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Re-sexualising the epidemic

Authors: Berger, J.

Produced by: Interfund (2004)

This article, from Development Update, argues that there is a need to pay more attention to sex and desire in the design of HIV prevention programmes. The paper highlights how perceived 'dirty' issues, such as sex between men and anal intercourse between men and women, are often overlooked by HIV prevention programmes. It also explores how reasons why people may 'choose' not to place themselves in safety by engaging in sexual conduct with a high risk of HIV infection are often not explored by researchers. By ignoring these factors, HIV prevention work can have only a limited impact on behaviour change.

The author calls for effective programmes that enable behaviour change. This means dealing openly and honestly with the lives that people actually lead and the sex they actually have. Instead of programmes that tell people what to do, which many are unwilling or unable to follow, the author calls for prevention interventions that focus on reducing risk. The author outlines the need to hold governments to account and demand that they develop reasonable prevention plans based on high quality, appropriate research. The need to ensure that researchers do not avoid asking difficult questions is also emphasised. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC18515>

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Sex for pleasure, rights to participation, and alternatives to AIDS: placing sexual minorities and/or dissidents in development

Authors: Gosine, A.

Produced by: Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (2004)

This IDS working paper highlights some of the contradictions between rights and participation by examining the ways in which participation of sexual minorities and/or dissidents is framed in the development industry. It focuses on the placement of sexual minority rights and well-being struggles within an HIV/AIDS framework. The author identifies and considers alternative strategies for realising sexual rights, particularly through the adoption of a rights-based approach to development (RBA), and including the affirmation of sexual pleasure as a basic human right.

Given the importance currently placed on the rights of the individual and being inclusive of marginalised groups, the author concludes that a rights-based and participatory approach would provide not only the basis for recognising sexual and sexuality rights, but also be the most appropriate method for doing so. However, this approach would require a major shift in the dominant discourses on sex. This would involve identifying and questioning the assumption and promotion of heterosexuality in development policy and programmes. It would also require a respect for sexual and cultural diversity and the affirmation of sexual pleasure as a right. The author argues that sexual rights are about social justice and human rights, and are therefore a development issue in every

respect. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC15942>

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Summaries of other documents in the HIV and AIDS Resource Guide

1. [Synergising HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights: a manual for NGOs](#)
2. [Evidence for action: special edition of the International Journal of Drug Policy](#)
3. [Desperately seeking targets: the ethics of routine HIV testing in low-income countries](#)
4. [HIV/AIDS: what about very young children?](#)

Synergising HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights: a manual for NGOs

Authors: Liljestrand, J.; Bryld, J.; Lazarus, J.; Ostergaard, L.
Produced by: AIDSnet (2006)

This manual, commissioned by a network for Danish NGOs (non-governmental organisations), provides guidance on how to integrate HIV and AIDS issues with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The manual is divided into five sections. The first section provides an introduction to key terms and issues. The second section deals with the arguments and rationale for integration of HIV and AIDS with SRHR, and emphasises important societal aspects of the framework for HIV, AIDS and SRHR activities. The third section covers health systems factors and the fourth section addresses how NGOs can integrate HIV, AIDS and SRHR.

The authors highlight the need to identify entry points in which HIV and AIDS can be integrated into SRHR services. They also highlight the importance of participatory approaches in developing programmes. The manual outlines how people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) need to be involved at all stages of the process, in accordance with "GIPA" (Greater involvement of People living with AIDS). Other significant components include: increased advocacy; capacity building and development; and thorough monitoring and evaluation of the activities. The authors argue that NGOs have a vital role to play in integrating their approaches and ensuring better services. [adapted from author]

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Evidence for action: special edition of the International Journal of Drug Policy

Produced by: The International Journal of Drug Policy, 2005

This special edition of the International Journal of Drug Policy, produced in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), features a range of articles on the evidence base for HIV treatment, prevention and care among injecting drug users (IDUs). There are chapters on: assessing HIV risk and evaluating interventions; IEC (Information, Education, Communication) interventions for IDUs; the effectiveness of needle exchange programmes; the effectiveness of community-based programmes for IDUs; interventions to reduce the sexual risk behaviour of IDUs; and the effectiveness of drug dependence treatment in HIV prevention.

The editorial argues that, although there are a number of areas which require further research, the evidence clearly indicates that a wide variety of cost effective harm reduction measures are available to prevent or curtail HIV epidemics among IDUs. It also argues that it is critically important to document and disseminate evidence from all interventions, including those that are ineffective as well as effective. It is not only the knowledge of these interventions, but the political will to implement what are sometimes unpopular but effective measures that is necessary. Policymakers need to implement these findings not only for the health of IDUs, but for the health of the society at large. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21301>

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Desperately seeking targets: the ethics of routine HIV testing in low-income countries

Authors: Rennie, S.; Behets, F.

Produced by: Bulletin of the World Health Organization (WHO) (2006)

This article, from the Bulletin of the World Health Organization (WHO), considers the ethical challenges of massive scale-up of HIV testing required in order to achieve ART (antiretroviral therapy) targets. The article outlines how the success of increasing access to ART is dependent on the identification of people who need treatment. Poor uptake of VCT (voluntary counselling and testing) means that the vast majority of people living in low income countries do not know they are HIV positive. The WHO and UNAIDS have recommended an "opt-out" testing policy, where routine HIV testing is justified and ethical if certain conditions are met.

The authors suggest that in settings marked by poverty, weak health-care and civil society infrastructures, gender inequalities, and persistent stigmatisation of people with HIV and AIDS, opt-out HIV-testing policies may become disconnected from the human rights ideals that first motivated calls for universal access to AIDS treatment. They leave open the ethical question of whether opt-out policies should be implemented. However, they do recommend that whenever routine HIV-testing policies are introduced in resource-poor countries, that their effect on individuals and communities should be the subject of empirical research, human-rights monitoring and ethical scrutiny. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21303>

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HIV/AIDS: what about very young children?

Authors: Dunn, A.

Produced by: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2005

This paper responds to the fact that young children impacted by HIV and AIDS often seem to be almost invisible in the wider HIV and AIDS field. With a few notable exceptions, if they are mentioned at all, it is as minor footnotes in the general discourse on children and HIV and AIDS. The aim of the research which this paper presents was to review the literature and identify current responses taking place to meet the needs of very young children (age 0–8) in HIV and AIDS-affected communities.

The overall results show that at local, national and international levels, there are gaps in programming and policy to engage ideas and mobilise resources to address the needs and experiences of very young children infected/affected by HIV and AIDS. The question is then raised: What can we actually do to include very young children in programming and policy responses in HIV and AIDS affected communities? The paper makes recommendations which focus on meeting the needs of very young children.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21314>

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- Health Resource Guide - www.eldis.org/health
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- HIV and AIDS Resource Guide - www.eldis.org/hivaids

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