

Social and psychological aspects of information in HIV prevention in sub-Saharan Africa

The freedom and responsibility of individuals and their relationships should be supported, thereby helping to nurture the potential and capacities that favor sustained public health. UNAIDS in this regard affirms the need for the empowerment and active participation of intended beneficiaries so that prevention efforts really engage the affected communities and respond to the specific needs of particular audiences and modes of HIV transmission.

The public health community therefore has a responsibility to support local efforts by providing people with accurate and complete information about how HIV is spreading in their communities and, consequently, how to avoid it. Important epidemiological data or outcomes should not be withheld from potential beneficiaries. Prevention priorities and allocation of resources should be in accordance with transmission dynamics. The limited efficacy of epidemiological studies should be acknowledged and/or reflected in the intended response.

There is no reason to doubt that people are generally able to grasp the root problem with HIV transmission and to adopt the behavior that best fits their circumstances. A failure to encourage changes in societal norms where applicable, and instead to contradict or veil the truth of epidemiology and the behavioral sciences is unethical and undermines effective HIV prevention.

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