



IPPF SOUTH ASIA
REGION



PASSION & PORTRAITS

Young women raise HIV/AIDS
awareness in South Asia

access=life

Our Vision

IPPF envisages a world in which all women, men and young people have access to the information and services they need; a world in which sexuality is recognized both as a natural and precious aspect of life and as a fundamental human right; a world in which choices are fully respected and where stigma and discrimination have no place.

Our Mission

IPPF aims to improve the quality of life of individuals by campaigning for sexual and reproductive health and rights through advocacy and services, especially for poor and vulnerable people.

We defend the right of all young people to enjoy their sexual lives free from ill-health, unwanted pregnancy, violence and discrimination.

We support a woman's right to choose to terminate her pregnancy legally and safely.

We strive to eliminate STIs and reduce the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS.

Our Core Values

IPPF believes that sexual and reproductive rights should be guaranteed for everyone because they are internationally recognized basic human rights.

We are committed to gender equality, and to eliminating the discrimination which threatens individual well-being and leads to the widespread violation of health and human rights, particularly those of young women.

We value diversity and especially emphasize the participation of young people and people living with HIV/AIDS in our governance and in our programmes.

We consider the spirit of volunteerism to be central to achieving our mandate and advancing our cause.

We are committed to working in partnership with communities, governments, other organizations and donors.

*Family Planning Association of Pakistan, Family Planning Association of India, Family Planning Association of Islamic Republic of Iran, Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka, Society of Health Education Maldives.



We have learned to see our world differently

Tara H. Mokentari, 20 years old, Tehran, Iran

Young Women Raise HIV Awareness in South Asia

In 2005, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, South Asia Regional Office (IPPF SARO) invited 10 young women between the ages 16–20 (none of whom had previously travelled outside their own countries) to take part in an exciting new initiative that would ultimately combine HIV/AIDS awareness with photography. These 10 young women, in partnership with five IPPF Member Associations*, developed skills in HIV/AIDS peer education and photography over a four-day workshop that they could then put into practice in their respective countries at the community level.

The 'Passion and Portraits' initiative was developed in order to engage young women in the realities of HIV/AIDS, as well as to provide and empower them with the appropriate skills and knowledge with which they could apply to educating their respective communities.

The participating women were all from South Asian countries that demonstrated a particular vulnerability to HIV, as evident through societal, cultural and economic issues consequently reflected in high infection rates.

Young Women as HIV Peer Educators

The participants came to the HIV/AIDS sessions with many misconstrued ideas and beliefs surrounding HIV/AIDS. The workshop provided an arena in which these attitudes could be discussed and addressed in an open exchange of thought. The women's diverse

backgrounds – both religious and cultural – were often used to justify and reinforce their preconceived beliefs and myths on sexual diversity and other HIV/AIDS related issues. Active group discussion and sensitization by the facilitators brought about a breakdown of previously held beliefs and greater understanding of the facts surrounding HIV and AIDS.

The women were educated on the technical issues surrounding HIV/AIDS such as the basic modes of transmission, how to get tested and the implications of testing, how to stay negative, the complex issues around treatment and how anti-retroviral medication works.

The young women were able to apply this new knowledge and understanding to various modes of communication techniques. They were taught how to use paper dolls and puppets as an engaging peer education tool to increase HIV/AIDS awareness and address attitudes.

Photography as a Creative Educator

A strong feature of the workshop was on the use of photography as an effective tool for capturing the essence and diversity of life and culture throughout South Asia. By empowering the girls to use a camera they were able to document the work of their respective Member Associations at the grassroots level, as well as within their own communities.

In South Asia it is uncommon for women to be photographers by profession or even as a hobby. Therefore, many of the women had limited experience with photography and cameras (often, if owning one at all, there would only be one camera per household which the girls did not get the opportunity to regularly use). Due to these and other factors, the women were inherently shy about taking photographs of people. The young women were encouraged to discuss their feelings and attitudes towards photography, and embrace the empowerment opportunities within this creative field.

The participants were given technical training on photography and using a camera, as well as the history of the camera and photography, mechanics such as flash and film speed and, composure details such as lighting. Several field trips were organized for the women to put into practise what they had learnt from the workshop, enabling them to gain experience and confidence in taking photographs.

Throughout the workshop and the field trips, the women developed a greater understanding of how to use a camera and compose effective shots. Through building up their confidence, they overcame their shyness and inexperience to feel empowered and excited about photography.

Delivering peer education in the community

Each participant returned to their respective country with:

- a certificate of course completion
- a still film roll camera
- a set of paper dolls
- 6 rolls of film
- a large life-sized puppet



Before this training we thought that a someone with HIV is a bad person and that we shouldn't talk to them, touch them, eat anything from their hand, even stay with them. But after this training I know that these beliefs are totally wrong.

Gulshan Ara, 17 years old, India



In order for the women to maintain consistent usage of their cameras and application of their peer education knowledge and skills, they all agreed to a set of on-going initiatives. The participants were given a photography assignment to provide a collection of photographs representing:

- support and empowerment in the community
- contrasts in society
- status of girls and women in the community
- attitudes of adults in the community

The young girls did not only return to their respective countries trained as photographers, puppeteers and HIV/AIDS peer educators, but also feeling empowered and passionate about photography and their work with HIV/AIDS.

The workshop afforded the women a unique experience that will ultimately have developed their confidence as peer educators within their own communities, while also applying their new-found ability to use photography as a medium to communicate vital HIV-related messages.

Our sincere thanks goes to the South Asia Regional Office and its Member Associations and to Kodak India Inc

South Asia Regional Office
IPPF House, 66 Sunder Nagar
New Delhi, 110003, India

telephone +91 (11) 2435 9221
facsimile +91 (11) 2435 9220
email sar@ippf.org
web www.ippfsar.org



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Regent's College, Inner Circle,
Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS
United Kingdom

telephone +44 (0)20 7487 7900
facsimile +44 (0)20 7487 7950
email info@ippf.org
web www.ippf.org

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is a global network of 149 Member Associations working in 182 countries, and the world's foremost voluntary, non-governmental provider and advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

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