

The PLACE method for HIV prevention



MEASURE Evaluation Fact sheet PLACE: Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts

MEASURE Evaluation is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through Cooperative Agreement GPO-A-00-03-00003-00 and is implemented by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina in partnership with Constella Futures, John Snow, Inc., Macro International Inc., and Tulane University.

To learn more about MEASURE Evaluation and our current activities, visit us on the Web at www.cpc.unc.edu/measure.



Overview: The reach of the HIV epidemic is global. Every new infection, however, occurs within a local transmission network. Local sexual and injecting drug user networks vary considerably between continents, cultures, and contexts. After more than 25 years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, epidemiologic evidence suggests that prevention strategies increase their likelihood of being effective when prevention strategies are tailored to the local transmission networks most likely to spread new infections.

The Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE) method is a protocol to identify geographic areas most likely to contain high transmission networks. These areas have been dubbed “high transmission areas” or, more recently, “priority prevention areas (PPAs),” reflecting the high priority these areas should have for prevention programming. No two PPAs are identical. Frequently, PPAs are in areas with a high concentration of sex workers, men who have sex with men, or injecting drug users, but can be areas such as migrant

worker camps, urban slums, prisons, military bases, secondary schools, or tourist centers where few people, if any, self-identify into typical and often stigmatized risk groups.

The PLACE protocol is a pragmatic intervention-driven protocol designed for use in resource poor settings. The protocol begins with stakeholder meetings and identification of PPAs in a district or country, depending on the scope of the assessment, and ends approximately six weeks later with the dissemination of action plans written by members of

the PPA community to address the gaps in their local prevention programs, as revealed by the PLACE method. The PLACE method has evolved over time, since it was first implemented in South Africa in 1999, into a five-step process. The specific objectives are:

Step 1 — Determine PPAs, identify key populations of interest relevant to each PPA (e.g., sex workers, mobile populations, youth, injection drug users, men who have sex with men), and finalize a PLACE protocol.

Step 2 — Within each PPA, identify all local public venues (such as hotels, hostels, parks, and bars) where people meet new sexual partners and if appropriate, where injection drug users socialize. The focus is on identifying venues where people meet new sexual partners or socialize with drug users because persons with a high rate of new sexual or needle-sharing partnerships have a disproportionate role in determining the size and shape of a local HIV epidemic.

Step 3 — Visit, map, and characterize each venue identified in Step 2 in terms of the type of venue, the type and number of people who visit the venue, the likelihood that people with a high rate of new sexual partnerships could be reached at the venue, the existence of any current HIV/AIDS prevention programs at the venue, and the feasibility of future on-site prevention efforts.

Step 4 — Describe a systematically selected sample of persons socializing at these venues regarding behaviors that place them at risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV and their exposure to HIV prevention programs, including HIV testing and condom promotion.

Step 5 — Locally analyze and interpret the findings and disseminate an action plan based on the findings, including maps showing prevention program coverage.

MEASURE Evaluation has prepared a PLACE manual that provides a complete protocol for implementing the method, including training materials, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, questionnaires, data entry templates, and Epi Info software programs for producing tables for a final report.

Where in the World

The PLACE method was developed in 1999 and piloted tested in South Africa in collaboration with the University of Cape Town. Since then, the protocol has been implemented in Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Madagascar, India, Mexico, Ja-

maica, Russia, St. Lucia, Haiti, Zimbabwe, and the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Reports from each of these studies are available at the MEASURE Evaluation Web site.

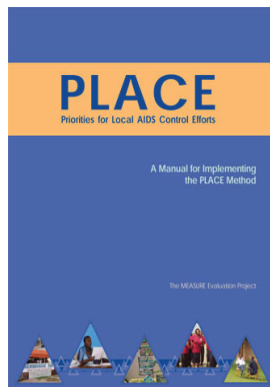
Recent Experience

MEASURE Evaluation facilitated a PLACE assessment in five areas in the Russian city of Samara. (The Samara Oblast has reported HIV prevalence of over 1% among pregnant women.) A total of 400 community informants were asked to identify places where people met new sexual partners or when injecting drug users could be reached. Of the 320 venues identified, 248 were successfully located and characterized. Of these, 48% were sites where injecting drug users reportedly socialized and 92% were sites where people met new sexual partners. Researchers found syringes on the ground at approximately 40% of the venues and condoms onsite only at 11% of sites. Interviews conducted with a probability sample of 960 patrons socializing at 42 of the 248 venues confirmed that a significant portion of respondents engaged in risky behaviors. Approximately 74% of the men and 68% of the women surveyed reported a new sexual partner in the past year; more than one-third reported two or more partners in the past four weeks; and about 10% of young people admitted occasional use of intravenous drugs. Based on the findings of this study, the steering committee recommended that prevention efforts be broadened to include venues where youth and other individuals at risk of acquiring and

transmitting HIV socialize.

Publications

Electronic versions of the manual and other materials are posted at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/leadership/place.html>. The printed manual, which includes a CD-ROM with electronic versions of the manual, questionnaires, and other materials, can also be ordered.



For more information

■ Sharon Weir (sweir@unc.edu)

MEASURE Evaluation, Carolina Population Center
206 W. Franklin St., CB 8120
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Telephone: 919-966-7482

<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure>