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**Brief Introduction of School HIV/AIDS Prevention
Education in China**

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has become more serious in China. By June 2003, the accumulated number of reported HIV cases in the whole country was 45,092, of which 3532 were AIDS patients with 1,800 deaths. According to estimates by experts from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the accumulated number of HIV infections and of AIDS patients has reached 840,000 and 80,000 respectively. The estimation process was supported by WHO, UNAIDS and US CDC in 2003.

2. National response

To prevent the epidemic from spreading and to mitigate the impact of AIDS, enhancement of HIV/AIDS prevention and control has been seen at national level in recent years following the guiding principles, namely focus on prevention, strengthen information and education for the general public and vulnerable groups, emphasize comprehensive prevention and care approaches.

2.1 Increased political recognition and commitment by the government

2.1.1 Formulation of policies by governments at different levels

- In 1995, the State Council authorized the Ministry of Health to issue the document Suggestions for Enhancing the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS;
- 1998, the State Council released China Long-and-medium-term Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (1998-2010);
- In 2001, China Plan of Action for Containment and Control of HIV/AIDS (2001-2005) was issued.

2.1.2 A dramatic increase in investment by the central government

2.2 Coordination of multi-sector cooperation and public participation

- In 1996, the State Council established the Coordination Mechanism on HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention and Control. This coordination mechanism includes Vice-ministers from 34 ministries and commissions as well as related departments.

- In 2004, the State Council Committee on HIV/AIDS Prevention was established based on the Coordination Mechanism. The vice premier of the State Council heads this committee;
- Increased involvement of NGOs and communities;
- Active participation of international agencies and NGOs.

2.3 Improvement in the safety of blood and blood products

2.4 Increased health education and public awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention

2.5 Interventions among populations with a high risk of HIV infection

- Pilot promotion of condom use at entertainment settings
- Pilot practices in social marketing of syringes and needles
- Education and intervention among men who have sex with men
- Pilot work on the prevention of mother-to-child-transmission

2.6 Pilot projects in comprehensive care and anti-retroviral therapy

2.7 Development of an HIV/AIDS surveillance system

2.8 Scientific research on HIV/AIDS

3. Background and rationale for school HIV/AIDS prevention education

In China, the enrollment of full-time students (including kindergarten students) is over 245.98 million that constitutes 19.1% of the whole population of 1.28453 billion (2002). Among the enrolled students, over 103.68 million are in their adolescent stage. Adolescence is a critical stage when physical, psychological and social changes take place. Adolescents are curious about and want to have a try at everything including drug and sex. This kind of curiosity in a way increases the adolescents' vulnerability to HIV infection. Therefore, it is urgent and elemental to give adolescents school HIV/AIDS prevention education to help them develop a healthy lifestyle. Children are the future of a country. To educate them on HIV/AIDS prevention is an efficient way to contain and control the spread of HIV/AIDS in China.

4. School HIV/AIDS prevention education in China

4.1 Formulation of policies on School HIV/AIDS prevention education

As early as in 1990 and 1993, the Education Ministry formulated the Basic Requirements for Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools and the Basic

Requirements for Health Education in High Education Institutes respectively. These documents state that sexual morality and self-discipline should be promoted in high education institutes for the prevention of HIV/AIDS/STDS.

To achieve the goals and meet the requirements for school HIV/AIDS prevention education stated in China Long-and-medium-term Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (1998-2010) and China Plan of Action for Containment and Control of HIV/AIDS (2001-2005), the Ministry of Education issued the *Guidelines on Enforcing the Implementation of "China Plan of Action for Containment and Control of HIV/AIDS (2001-2005)"* which underlines that each high education institute freshman should be given a leaflet on HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge, HIV/AIDS prevention education should be placed in a variety of ways in the school curriculum, education and communication materials should be available at the libraries or reading rooms in high schools, vocational schools and high education institutes,

To enforce pervasive HIV/AIDS prevention education in high schools, the Education Ministry issued Guideline on HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in High Schools in 2003 and school HIV/AIDS prevention education was introduced into the curriculum. The guideline states that 10 courses of HIV/AIDS prevention education in high schools should be arranged, namely 2 courses in each academic year. The goal is to raise students' awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention, equip students with the knowledge and skill to prevent HIV/AIDS, help students develop healthy lifestyle and encourage students to care for instead of discriminate and stigmatize people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

4.2 Development of training and teaching materials and handbooks on HIV/AIDS prevention education

To facilitate school HIV/AIDS prevention education, the Department of Physical, Health and Art Education of MOE has authorized related institutes to develop and produce a series of information and education materials on HIV/AIDS prevention, such as Training Material for School HIV/AIDS Educators, Multi-media Training Material for School HIV/AIDS Educators, How far is HIV/AIDS from you (Adolescent's Handbook on HIV/AIDS/STD prevention), Cartoon for Children on HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention, Collection of Teaching Plan on School HIV/AIDS/STD prevention Education, "Do You Know HIV/AIDS, Young Friends?", VCDs or posters on HIV/AIDS education and so on. Local education sectors, organizations or institutes

have also developed information, education and communication materials based on the Guideline on HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in High Schools.

4.3 Training of teachers for HIV/AIDS prevention education

The MOE established three training centers in three universities situated respectively in Northern, eastern and central China where thousands of teachers for HIV/AIDS prevention education have been trained. Many education administrators and school principals have also been trained at these training centers for the enhancement of their awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention. Some provincial and county level education bureaus have organized training of teachers for HIV/AIDS prevention education as well.

4.4 Implementation of school HIV/AIDS prevention education

Schools and universities have implemented HIV/AIDS prevention education by means of courses and student-oriented activities, for example peer education, writing or painting contests on HIV/AIDS, exhibitions of HIV/AIDS posters, drama performances and others. Comprehensive promotion activities on World AIDS Day are carried out every year and have become systemized.

In 1998, with the support of UNICEF, 1+N project (one student is educated on HIV/AIDS prevention and his/her parents and relatives benefit too) was implemented. Activities included parents meeting, letters to parents, street propaganda and so on.

In 2002, with the support of Department of International Development UK, a successful online competition on HIV/AIDS prevention was held, in which 280,000 people (high school and university students, teachers, parents etc) participated.

4.5 Surveys and studies on HIV/AIDS education

In 1997, with the support of UNDP, the Ministry of Education carried out a questionnaire survey on AIDS-related attitudes, knowledge and behaviors of students in about 50 junior and senior high schools in some provinces. Based on the survey results, we conducted pilot intervention, especially in HIV/AIDS education contents, teaching method and teaching instrument, which not only provided good experience for the implementation of AIDS prevention education, but also formulated recommendations for adapting the policy on school HIV/AIDS prevention education. We also revised the contents of the leaflet on HIV/AIDS prevention for university students. At present, the leaflet on HIV/AIDS prevention is still an important means for HIV/AIDS prevention education in high schools, vocational schools and

universities.

The MOE is now reviewing the HIV/AIDS prevention education in high education institutes with the financial support of UNICEF. The survey for reviewing primary and high school health education is also under progress.

4.6 Study on teaching methods of school AIDS prevention education

The MOE carried out pilot studies on life skill-based HIV/AIDS prevention education in Beijing, peer education in Guangdong, Sichuan and Yunnan province, and age-oriented teaching methods in Sichuan province. All these pilot studies provide some experience for improvement of HIV/AIDS education.

5. Challenges

5.1 Low awareness of some local education administrators and alike on HIV/AIDS prevention

Some local education administrators and school principals and teachers do not fully understand the strategy put forward by the State Council and the Education Ministry on HIV/AIDS prevention and control and not aware of the risk of generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic and its severe impact on the development of economy and society.

5.2 Lack of qualified teachers for HIV/AIDS prevention education, especially in rural area

Although thousands of teachers have been trained, there is still a severe lack of qualified teachers for HIV/AIDS prevention education.

5.3 Lack of appropriate teaching materials and student's books on HIV/AIDS prevention in minority languages

China is a large country with 56 nationalities. Each nationality has its own customs and culture background. Some even have their own languages. Lack of appropriate teaching materials and student's books in different languages on HIV/AIDS prevention made it difficult to effectively implement HIV/AIDS education.

6. Conclusion

The MOE has taken great efforts to implement school HIV/AIDS prevention education in China. But it is still facing a lot of challenges. What we should do is to

continue our efforts and do our best to ultimately achieve the goal of empowering students with knowledge and skill to prevent HIV infection.

References:

1. A Joint Assessment of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care in China;
2. China Long-and-medium-term Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control (1998-2010);
3. China Plan of Action for Containment and Control of HIV/AIDS (2001-2005);
4. Guidance on Enforcing the Implementation of China Plan of Action for Containment and Control of HIV/AIDS (2001-2005);
5. Guideline on HIV/AIDS Prevention Education in High Schools.