

Aids survey starts in Dec.

Titus Filio

AGENCIES are tapping into youth power in an intensified campaign against HIV-Aids.

A three-month national survey to combat the disease will begin in December.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bahrain Family Planning Association (BFPA) yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding to implement the project.

About 2,300 students from different socio-economic groups, will be interviewed in schools, universities and social clubs.

UNDP resident representative, Dr Khalid Alloush, and BFPA president, Dr Tawfeeq Naseeb, signed the MoU. "Educating the younger generation is the best antidote to prevent the spread of the HIV-Aids epidemic in the GCC



Biju Haridas

Dr Alloush and Dr Naseeb exchange copies of the agreement in the presence of other UNDP and health officials yesterday.

states," Dr Alloush said.

The incidence of the disease is low in Bahrain but officials say there is a pressing need to "create a safe and proper environment to increase aware-

ness." The head of the National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease Programme, Dr Somaya Al Jowder, said youth's involvement was key to any anti-Aids cam-

campaign due to the changing lifestyles and social behaviours.

More than 50 volunteers, BFPA members and specialists are undergoing training to conduct inter-

views.

Two other HIV-Aids surveys under the UNDP will cover women in the child-bearing age and drug users.

The survey is part of a three-year \$300,000 pro-

gramme by the UNDP and the Ministry of Health to increase awareness about the disease.

Bahrain has listed 23 full-blown Aids and 97 HIV cases.

لرفع مستوى الوعي «بالإيدز» وتشمل 2300 طالب

توقيع مذكرة التفاهم بين برنامج الأمم المتحدة والصحة

✽ كتبت - بدور المالكي

بحضور الممثل المقيم لأنشطة الأمم المتحدة والممثل المقيم لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة ورئيس جمعية تنظيم الأسرة د. توفيق نصيب والدكتور أمل الجودر تم اليوم توقيع مذكرة تفاهم بين برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي وجمعية تنظيم الأسرة في حفل توقيع تم في بيت الأمم المتحدة بالمنامة، وتم توقيع مذكرة التفاهم من قبل د. خالد علوش المنسق المقيم لأنشطة الأمم المتحدة والممثل المقيم لبرنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي والدكتور توفيق نصيب رئيس جمعية تنظيم الأسرة، وذلك بهدف تقوية العلاقات بين برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي ومؤسسات المجتمع المدني ودعم توفير المعلومات والاتجاهات والممارسات المتعلقة بالسلوك الصحي الخطر للشباب في الفئة العمرية بين 15 - 24 سنة وتحت أشراف جمعية تنظيم الأسرة البحرينية سوف تتم مقابلة حوالي 2300 من الطلبة يمثلون فئات اجتماعية واقتصادية متنوعة في المدارس والجامعات والنوادي الاجتماعية، والتي سوف تبدأ في شهر ديسمبر 2005م، وتستمر لمدة ثلاثة

شهور تقريبا. إن تعليم الجيل الجديد هو أفضل وقاية للحد من انتشار خطر وباء فيروس نقص المناعة المكتسب مرض الإيدز في دول مجلس التعاون الخليجي حيث لا تزال نسبة شيوخ المشكلة فيها بمستويات منخفضة، وذلك عن طريق خلق البيئة الآمنة والصحية لنشر الرسالة التي تهدف الى بث الوعي بفيروس نقص المناعة المكتسب ومرض الإيدز، وهذه الجهود هي جزء من مبادرة أكثر شمولية قامت بها وزارة الصحة بدعم من برنامج مكتب الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي في محاولة لرفع مستوى الوعي بأضرار فيروس نقص المناعة المكتسب ومرض الإيدز، وتوفير سلسلة من البرامج لاحتواء هذا الوباء في مستواه المنخفض حاليا، وللحيلولة دون انتشاره الى مدى أبعد، ولضمان نجاح النتائج من جمع البيانات، يعول القائمون على المشروع على دعم وزارة التربية والتعليم التي أبدت تعاونها في الماضي لمبادرات مماثلة من قبل وزارة الصحة، بينما يساهم الجهاز المعلوماتي المركزي بجدولة وتحليل البيانات التي سوف يتم جمعها من خلال ثلاثة استبيانات، وجدير بالذكر انه بالإضافة لاستبيانة الشباب هناك

استبيانة أخرى موجهة للنساء الحوامل في المراكز الصحية وأخرى لمتعاطي المخدرات والتي سوف توفر بيانات هامة تتعلق بالمستوى الراهن للمعلومات المتعلقة بفيروس نقص المناعة المكتسب والإيدز في المجتمع البحريني. إن التدريب المتلائم واختيار الأشخاص الذين سوف يتسومون بالمقابلات هما المفتاح الرئيسي للحصول على بيانات على مستوى عالٍ من الجودة، وذلك فإن الشريك الذي تم اختياره لهذا المشروع متمتلا في جمعية تنظيم الأسرة البحرينية التي أولت اهتماما ونشاطا ملحوظا في وضع استبيانات مماثلة وتولت حملات توعية وطنية في مجال تنظيم الأسرة، وإن استراتيجيته الخطة الخمسية للجمعية تتضمن الاهتمام بموضوع الإيدز، وأن الشراكة بين الجمعية وبرنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي لجمع المعلومات حول فيروس نقص المناعة المكتسب ومرض الإيدز وما يرتبط به من معارف وعادات واتجاهات وممارسات ما هو إلا جهد مكمل للجهود الحالية للجمعية في هذا المجال.

Aids drive to raise awareness

By KANWAL HAMEED

Published: 27th October 2005

A NATIONWIDE campaign against HIV and Aids will get underway next week when the first of three surveys is launched among "high-risk" members of the community. Experts will be visiting private and public pregnancy clinics on Saturday - marking the start of the first phase of the pioneering programme.

The first survey will collect data from 300 pregnant women, said United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative and UN resident co-ordinator Dr Khalid Alloush.

It will be followed by two more - one in December targeting 600 Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), as well as another next year targeting 2,300 youngsters aged 15 to 24.

The three surveys will then form the basis of a massive awareness drive and media campaign.

The \$300,000 project is being carried out by the UNDP in co-ordination with the Health Ministry and the Bahrain Family Planning Association (BFPA).

Each study will take up to three months to finalise, but participants will not be asked to provide their names to ensure confidentiality.

News that the campaign would start on Saturday was announced at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNDP and the Bahrain Family Planning Association at UN House, Manama, yesterday.

It was signed by Dr Alloush and association president Dr Tawfeeq Naseeb, while National Aids Committee head Dr Somaya Al Jowder, UNDP consultant May Al Deeb, UNDP programme advisor Ela Chirileanu and programme associate Bana Alumran were also present.

The surveys are designed to collect information in three key areas, said UNDP resident representative and UN resident co-ordinator Dr Khalid Alloush.

"They are K A B," he said. "Knowledge about HIV and AIDS, attitudes towards people carrying the virus or infected with the disease and behaviour that could put people at risk.

"This will allow them to adopt protective measures."

The survey is the first step in a three-year project and is expected to provide essential information for a national preventative programme and a UNDP awareness campaign.

"It is crucial for the authorities at the Health Ministry to know what they have in Bahrain - and who is most vulnerable," added Dr Alloush.

"Currently, the rate of prevalence is low, but we need to provide information. We also need to find out how much people in Bahrain know.

"The national action plan has to be built on how much people know and what they practice."

Interviewers trained in conducting such surveys will visit six public ante natal clinics and one private clinic on Saturday.

Preliminary results are expected to be available by December, which is when the second survey will start.

It will collect information on the prevalence of HIV and Aids among injecting drug users and interviews will be arranged at the Psychiatric Hospital by a team from the Health Ministry.

Officials estimate that two thirds of those in Bahrain infected with HIV are drug addicts, said Dr Al Jowder.

"The environment in drug-abusing communities is very conducive to unsafe practices, such as sharing needles," Dr Alloush added.

"The two are very much interrelated."

The third survey, which will collect data from Bahraini youth, will be conducted by the BFPA and is scheduled to begin between February and March next year.

The UN estimates that 50 per cent of people infected with HIV or carrying Aids are aged 15 to 24.

Official figures show that 23 Bahrainis are living with Aids and 79 are infected with the HIV virus, but health officials say the actual figures could be up to eight times higher.

"There is no national database with figures available about the number of people infected with the virus or carrying the disease," said Dr Al Jowder.

"We also do not know about people's knowledge in Bahrain or the stigmas that might exist against people with HIV or Aids."

She added that although the number of cases in Bahrain is comparatively low, many countries have experienced a sudden explosion in the number of Aids and HIV patients.

Meanwhile, Dr Naseeb hoped the campaign would form the basis of an educational and preventative programme for the future.

"Aids awareness is one fifth of our strategy that tackles access, advocacy, Aids, safe abortion and adolescence," he said.

"The final aim of the survey is for a joint effort between NGOs and representatives from ministries in Bahrain - including the Interior Ministry, Education Ministry and Information Ministry - to tackle the HIV/Aids problem," added Ms Al Deeb.