

Editorial

Strengthening the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: Lessons learned from Community-based Operations

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The fight against HIV/AIDS has been one of the most challenging public health problems worldwide during the last two decades and developing countries such as Ethiopia were heavily challenged due to limited capacities to cope with such a devastating epidemic. Initially responses were delayed due to denial and ignorance of the scale of damage the epidemic could cause. Lack of experience and inadequate infrastructure coupled with socio-cultural and economic constraints have also curtailed sufficient progress in prevention and control of the infection afterwards. As a result, the epidemic spread fast within the urban communities and subsequently into the rural population.

At present the scale of the epidemic seems to have moved all segments of the society for the fight against HIV/AIDS. Varying interest groups have launched community-based activities targeting various population groups. Although some of the initiatives are new and remain to be evaluated it is useful to know and understand the mode of their operations. Such information will be invaluable in looking for alternative approaches in designing new initiatives and in capitalizing on the more successful programs. In this issue of the Ethiopian Journal of Health Development, Kloos *et al.* try to describe the community-based organizations in HIV/AIDS prevention and care. The paper provides information on the current situation of those organizations and contains recommendations for community-based initiatives in the future.

Operational research is an important component of good public health interventions. However, it has not been widely utilized in developing countries for various reasons. Limitations in generation and utilization of useful research are serious problems. Dissemination of research outputs have been also untargeted, many research works end up either in less accessible journals or remain unpublished. The extensive review of both published and unpublished research works and reports of major HIV/AIDS prevention activities in the bibliography compiled by Converse *et al.* in this issue provides an extensive literature base for those who are involved in research and policy making in the area of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia.

This special issue of the Journal on HIV/AIDS is believed to provide useful information for those involved in policy making to grass root level implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities to researchers. The Journal has earlier on published a special issue on HIV/AIDS that provided the first and extensive understanding of the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS and prevention strategies in Ethiopia in 1994. It will continue to support the fight against HIV/AIDS by publishing relevant information on the various aspects of the epidemic.