

Report: Reproductive Health Service for three Switcher Partners in Shanghai area

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1. Summary

Nearly 20 years after my first visit to China I was able to come back in October 2004. The awareness, that China seems to copy our mistakes by accepting the harmful parts of the (global) economical system is frightening me (Suffering of nature and human beings will increase dramatically!). But Switcher did not ask me to merely analyse the economy. My duty was/ is, to develop the Aids-Prevention and Family Planning program in Chinese factories similar to the already developed program with our Indian partners, benefiting them since 2001. The program in China shall be part of the improvement of life-quality for workers and as many people as possible who are in contact with these companies (families, truck drivers, food-sellers, maintenance people, customers etc.)

As the Family Planning Offices of the Chinese Government were cooperative in all three areas I visited, the program developed very good and mutually we learned from each other.

In all three companies, Book-Stands "Where there is no Doctor" , Condom-Dispenser and dispenser with information about reproductive health were installed. Additionally all companies gather their workers at least once a year in order to improve the awareness /habits about HIV/AIDS and Family Planning. The 1.December 2004 (AIDS – day) the "Wonderful" company organized a great event for all workers together with the Government and Media. A difficult task, that still has to be developed, is, the dignified HIV-testing and treatment procedure for HIV/AIDS victims.

For the future it is important, to follow up and improve the running programs with our partners. A short report shall prove the benefit of the program twice a year.

2. Aims

The most important way to have a good quality of life is, to prevent harmful accidents. As in Chinese industries sometimes 80 % of staff are migrant workers form other provinces, it can be understood, why Chinese people have nearly twice as many sexual partners in their lives than Swiss¹. HIV/ AIDS is spreading dramatically, so the Chinese President shacked hands with a HIV- victim 1st of December 2004... This event makes it clear, how tragic the situation already is. I am happy, that Switcher – as a private company – is emphasizing prevention-work to their partners, because the Governments cannot do it alone. Following aims shall enhance a good quality of the program – also in the future:

- ❖ Women and men working in the company shall have dignified access to condoms (minimum) and information about reproductive health and general health (according to signed declaration²).

According to CHINA DAILY:

- Chinese Economy is growing with 9%
=> doubling time of pollution: 8 years
- Chinese HIV/AIDS is growing with 40%
=> doubling time of suffering: 2 years



Mr. Dick benefiting from Condom-Bag with Flyer-Dispenser

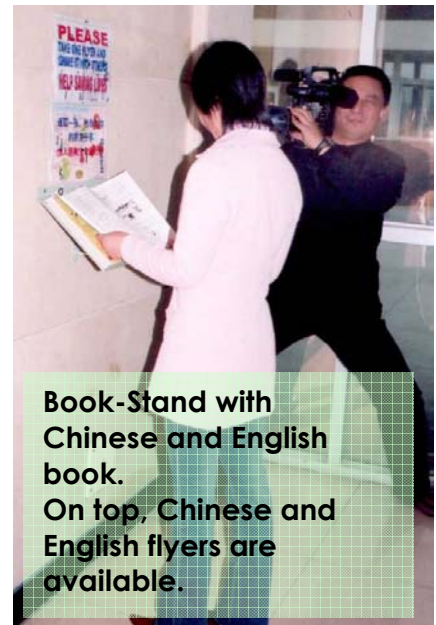
¹ According to a study of Durex Condom Company, Swiss have in average 10.5 sexual partners and Chinese more than 19 in their life time.

² Switcher was the first private sector company who signed the Reproductive Health Declaration for the benefit of their Indian partner 2001 (see enclosures).

- ❖ The doctor or health – responsible of each company is caring for further information and consultancy (family planning cafeteria approach; general health;)
- ❖ The possibility of offering dignified HIV -Tests must be improved (**Social compliance officer, SCO**)
- ❖ Minimal access (information and condoms) must be organized also for people who are only indirectly working for/ with the company (truck drivers, maintenance people form outside; people who serve workers with food outside the gate etc.)
- ❖ A monitoring system shall make sure, that the program is benefiting people in an efficient, qualitative good- and sustainable way

3. Actions

- ✓ The first 10 days I stayed in **Shanghai** in order to develop the networking with Government and other organizations (NGO's, foundations). It was also important to feel, the pulse of the 'modern' Chinese society. Thanks to the Swiss General Council (Mr. H.P. Willi) it became possible to have a meeting with the Shanghai Aids Office. Luckily I was also able to organize the highly valuable book "Where there is no doctor" from David Werner in Chinese language.
- ✓ In **Changzhou** Ms. Iris, Ms. Christina (SCO & English interpreter) and Mr. Dick (Human Recourses) introduced me to **Wonderful Garments company (1200 employees/ 80% migrant workers – most of them teenagers from Anhui(50%) and Henan³ (30%) province)**. During 12 days, Book-Stands and Condom-Bags got produced for all three companies and also as a gift to other interested people (Government; companies; NGO's). Dialogue was necessary with the doctor, the management and technical staff. We visited the family planning office and the AIDS Office. Mainly the Family Planning office was very helpful: They offered free condom supply and wished to co-organize the 1st December AIDS day event (great motivation). The Book-Stand and the Condom-Bag was highly appreciated. Eight (8) Book-Stands and 11 Condom-Bags got installed in different places in order to reach all people involved with Wonderful Garments (workers, dormitory-members, truck drivers, watch men, visitors of the shop/ canteen etc.).
- ✓ The 18. November 2004 Mr. Dick and Ms. Christina travelled with me by train to **Yuyao, Ningbo Long Jie Garments (200 people; mainly teenager migrants)**. The whole team was very helpful. The installations were soon in position and the management is caring to maintain the services. Mr. Fu (SCO) organized even a nice trekking to the nearby mountains with 2 beautiful lakes and little villages. In Yuyao we became aware, (sound in the hotel until the early morning) how young people from middle class families like to distract themselves: Try to become a music star by Karaoke. . .
- ✓ The 23. November 2004 we went back to **Shanghai suburb** and visited the small company of Ms. **Green-Field (80 workers – all are married, and from the nearby area)**. As a relative of Ms. Green-Field (Mr. James) interpreted in English, Ms. Christina and Mr. Dick happily were able to return to Changzhou. Ms. Green-Field's company is mainly producing light pullovers for Switcher. This company was the least 'modern' one, but I had a good feeling, observing the contentedness of many people at work (very important).
- ✓ In all three companies, we installed Condom-Bags and Flyer-Dispensers in Toilets (women and men) but also in staircases and corridors. It was an important point to install Condom



Book-Stand with Chinese and English book. On top, Chinese and English flyers are available.

³ Because of the blood plasma scandal of 1990 one village in Henan had a HIV-positive rate of 65%! The pooled blood was probably disseminated to large cities around the country...

Dispensers also to strategic places, where truck drivers from outside e.g. could benefit from the program. All the Book-Stands were installed, where people have some time to read (canteen; place, where they drink tea; entrance of company; entrance to fashion shop in canteen building).

- ✓ The Flyer-Dispensers were always combined either with the Book-Stand or the Condom-Bag. As the people are quite shy to talk about sex (taboo), it is essential, to offer a good possibility, to get information in a 'mechanical' way (→dispenser = not receiving the information directly from an other person). The flyer -translated by Ms. Christina- can prevent a lot of harmful views and deeds because it gives answers to questions of young people – without hiding natural phenomenon that are taboos in society! Also the STOP AIDS stickers proved the shyness of people. Except some members of the management none was eager to stick them on a car, on a bike or somewhere else...
- ✓ For the 1st of December I came once again to Changzhou. Wonderful and the Family Planning ladies organized a gathering with nearly all workers of Wonderful Garments. A lot was discussed, but the important practical demonstration, how to use condoms, none of the experts were ready to teach. So a foreigner had to do this demonstration which probably once again influenced the wrong image of 'westerners', who make nearly nothing but love all day long (see the official condom package of the Government supply)...



A difficult, but important part was able to take place that day: Ms. Ruan – a very courageous lady - explained to ca. 1000 listeners about her and her boyfriend's experience: Both of them did the HIV test in a Government hospital. I hope, that this effort gave strength to many of the listeners, **to be able to say "NO" in risky situations. It must be repeated again and again, how important it is, to make a mutual AIDS-test after couples have been separated for a long time!!!** Ms. Ruan became deputy- responsible of the **Reproductive Health (RH)** program in Wonderful Garments.

- ✓ After 1st December my visits to the three companies were completed and I had one more week to visit **Beijing**. As I already had contacts with UNAIDS, UNFPA and some HIV-interested companies -before leaving to China- it was a good chance to exchange ideas: **Bayer** and **Lafarge** just started an AIDS program. The mutual exchange was beneficial to all of us.



4. Challenges

If the responsible of the three companies maintain the RH- installations properly, then the prevention installations are exemplary. To be sure, a **monitoring system is recommended**.

See enclosures (declaration).

HIV/AIDS tests shall now be free – according to media reports. But the shyness of people remains: To go to a clinic for testing their blood needs courage. If the company wants to support HIV testing, it is very important to follow the UNAIDS guidelines ('3 Cs' : Confidential; Counselling, Consent). **The first 'C' is not assured in China!**

See enclosures (pdf-file).

5. Further steps (Sustainability)

- Wonderful – Ms. Christina: The Awareness Papers “stop to spoil food” and about “switching off- if not needed” shall be re-posted in the canteen and other appropriated places
- Wonderful – Ms. Christina: Send me the file of the flyer about RH you translated
- Wonderful – Ms. Christina: Ask the two factories (Long Jie and Green-Field) for a Report twice a year. The first one until end of February 2005
- Wonderful – Ms. Christina: Write 2 short reports per year about Reproductive Health from Wonderful and the other two companies. The first one until end of March 2005
- Wonderful – Mr. Dick: Two 4.5 m² / 300 l solar hot water heaters shall be installed on top of the dormitory roof in order to make people aware, how to live with the sun (warm water for washing cloths and body). Switcher (Daniel Rüfenacht) agreed to pay half of the investment (7'000 Y RMB = ca. Fr. 1'100.- = participation of Switcher)
- All: Improving the Program (HIV testing etc.)

6. Conclusions

HIV/AIDS is one of the problems that shall be tackled (also) in China. A great advantage, China has, are the Family Planning offices all over the country. These offices care also about HIV/AIDS. It is clear, that all the problems will not find a solution, unless HIV/AIDS & Family Planning services are offered to the people. Only then people can chose. Family Planning access is part of the Human Rights Charter. It is clear, that Family Planning shall not be forced to anyone. On the other side, if Family Planning & AIDS-prevention are ignored, then unnecessary harm will increase dramatically!

I am very grateful, that private sector companies –like Switcher and its partners– agreed since 2001 to combine HIV/AIDS with Family Planning. Let's hope, that other companies and Organizations will follow the “Sustainable Development” efforts of Switcher - **before it is to late!**

Thank you for caring – thank you for feedback.

Brugg, January 19. 2005

Alec Gagneux.

Enclosures:

- DeclarationPreventionSwitcher[2].doc
- AIDS tests China UNFPA.pdf

According to the AIDS office in Yuyao, **6%** of all recruits who want to join the PLA (Peoples Liberation Army) are HIV+ !!!

China's Population is still growing with 0.6%: 2025, there will be 1.4 billion Chinese people who want food, shelter, security, luxury...

→ **Reproductive Health is reducing a lot of accidents. Let us intensify our efforts – but in a non-violent way.**

Experts call for sex education to curb AIDS

By Wu Chong

CHINA DAILY
12-8-04

SANYA: Chinese experts are calling for additional safe sex education based on the family unit to curb the country's growing AIDS crisis.

The effects of AIDS are being felt more and more throughout families, said Jin Jun, a professor from Tsinghua University yesterday at the World Family Summit.

From a worldwide perspective, nearly half of the 39.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS are women, and at least 25 million children and young adults are severely affected by the disease, said Jin.

In China, the proportion of infected women has increased from 10 per cent in the 1980s to the current 41 per cent, he added.

These women, many of whom are infected by their husbands, usually transmit the virus to their children, creating a vicious circle.

Gender inequality results in poor education among women, scarce possibilities to practice safe sex, and little access to treatment, which in turn have fueled the spread of HIV infections, said Jin.

While in China the spotlight is on educating high-risk groups including intravenous drug users,

prostitutes, gays and blood-sellers, the professor said those high-risk groups are made of individuals who still have families or had families in the past.

In this sense, he said it is a must to educate families to become self-protective when dealing with AIDS.

It is much more difficult to stop sexual transmission between husband and wife than mother to child, so people's notions about safe sex must be changed through education, said Jin.

We also need to create mechanisms to train families to cope with the impact of the disease, especially in the realm of home-based care, he said.

Considering that 7.4 per cent of HIV carriers in China are below 19 years of age, Wang Zhenyu, a professor from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said parents should give their children a diaper-to-dating sex education rather than dodging the topic.

Current sex education in China focuses on physiological changes but ignores safe sex, said Wang.

Basic knowledge on contraception and self-protection from sexual abuse is seldom taught to children by their parents and even schools.

