

BACKGROUND

The study was conducted within the framework of the program “Educational Campaign on HIV/AIDS Preventive Measures” funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-ACT)

Aim

- The aim of the study was to describe the needs of people with HIV in Cyprus in such a way that description of need was disentangled, as far as possible, from description of service use.

Objectives

- **The creation of an Educational Data Bank**
 - The publication of Booklets, Leaflets and Posters, which will aim at raising awareness of the Cypriot population (both Greek & Turkish) around HIV/AIDS.
 - The organization of Seminars and Music Festivals.
 - The set-up of a Website (www.HIVincyprus.org) which would contain information on HIV/AIDS

Identity of the Research

- **Funding:**
 - United Nations Development Programme –Action for Cooperation and Trust (UNDP-ACT)
- **Period:**
 - April 2007 to Aug 2008 (28 months)
- **Host Organisation/Main Applicant:**
 - RUBSI (Research Unit in Behaviour & Social Issues)
 - University of Nicosia
- **Research Partners**
 - **Greek-Cypriots**
 - Gregorios HIV/AIDS Clinic, Larnaca Hospital, Ministry of Health, Cyprus
 - Cyprus Family Planning Association

- KENTHEA
- **Turkish-Cypriots**
 - Cultural & Scientific Research Society (CSRS)

METHODOLOGY

The Methodology was based on the following:

- **10 HIV people** were recruited in order to take part in a *self-completed questionnaire* examining their (i) experience of living with HIV, (ii) needs and how they had addressed those needs (The questionnaire used was initially used by the Project SIGMA, UK in a similar type of research).
- **5 Semi-structured face-to-face interviews** were conducted with experts in the field of HIV/AIDS here in Cyprus.
- **Two seminars/workshops**

The project focuses on **18 “need areas”** on the needs of people with HIV. These are described below:

- **The 18 Need Areas:**
 - HOUSING
 - EATING/DRINKING
 - SLEEP
 - HOUSEHOLD CHORES & LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF
 - MOBILITY – GETTING ABOUT
 - MONEY – GETTING ENOUGH TO LIVE ON
 - MANAGING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
 - PROBLEMS WITH DRUGS OR ALCOHOL
 - RELATIONSHIPS WITH REGULAR PARTNERS
 - LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN
 - FRIENDSHIPS
 - SEX
 - DISCRIMINATION
 - SELF-CONFIDENCE
 - KNOWLEDGE OF HIV TREATMENTS
 - ABILITY TO TAKE HIV TREATMENTS REGULARLY
 - DEALING WITH (HEALTH) PROFESSIONALS

■ TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITIES

- These need areas are not comprehensive but provide insight across the range of physical, psychological, social and medical needs of the HIV participants. All 18 “Need Areas” were examined through the following three thematic categories:
 - Dissatisfaction with current state
 - Experience of problems in the last 12 months
 - Personal perception of capacity to benefit from further help or support
- In the following paragraphs the findings from two “Need Areas” namely Discrimination & Stress/Depression are presented. The reader may contact RUBSI’s main office for the description of full report.

RESULTS

DISCRIMINATION

In the last 12 months have you faced any form of discrimination?

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Not accepted in jobs	40
Social rejection	30
Family	30
Total	100

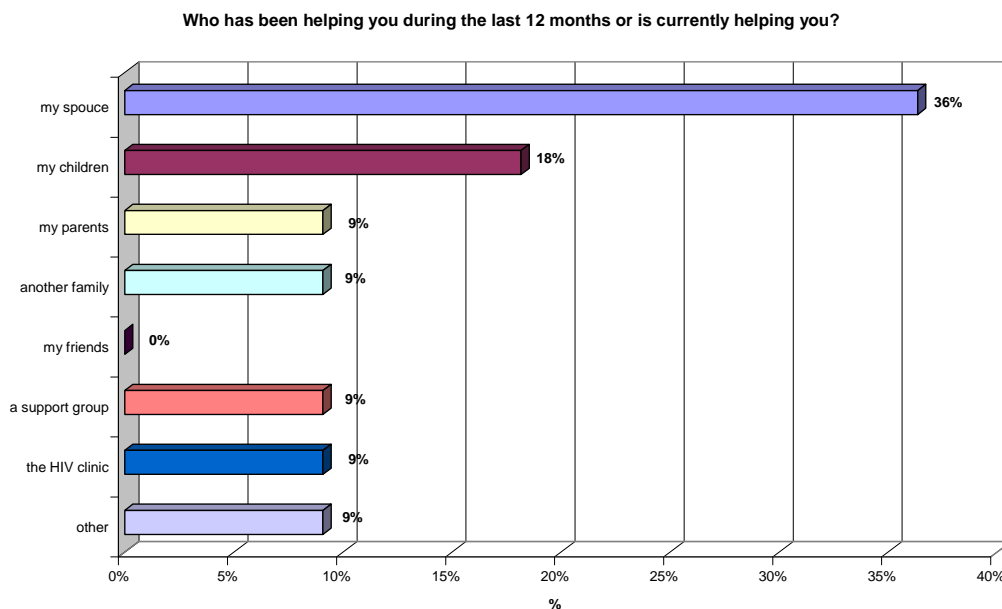
The above table shows that, because of their situation, 8 out of 20 respondents were refused employment, while 6 out of 20 had faced social discrimination. Also 6 out of 20 had problems with their families because of their HIV condition.

In the last 12 months did you get any assistance in dealing with these problems?

	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
No	84
Yes	16
	100

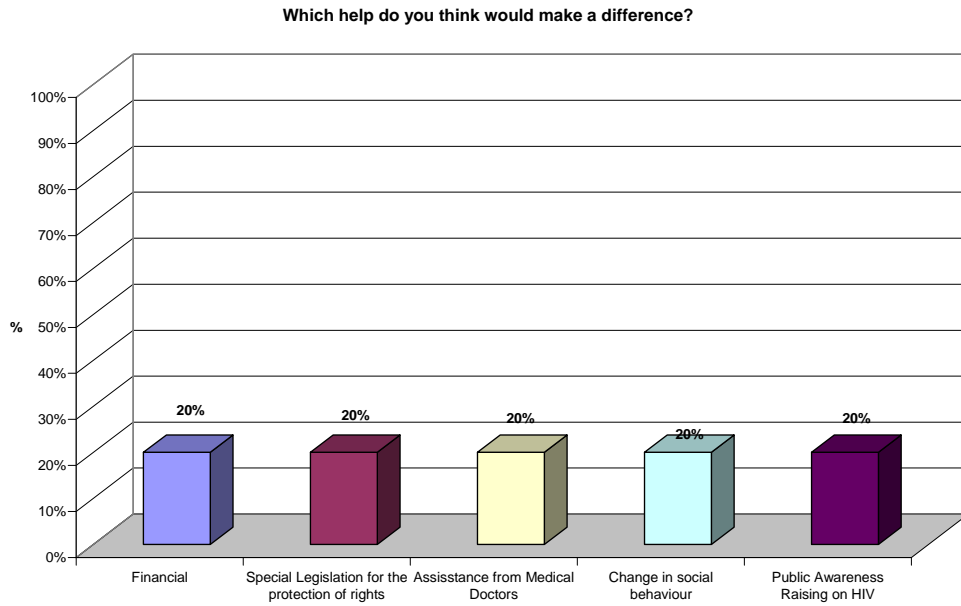
Only 16% of the respondents got assistance in dealing with problems relating to discrimination regarding employment, discrimination by the social environment or their families.

The following table shows that the main source of support is the spouse (36%), the children (18%) and to a much smaller degree the parents, friends, support groups or the HIV/AIDS clinic.

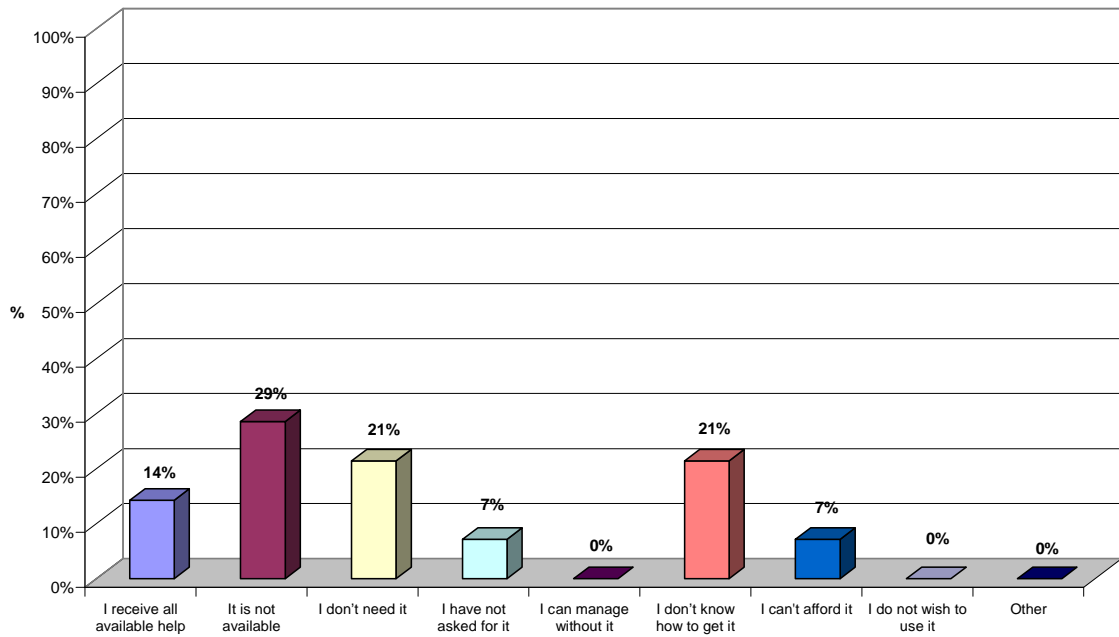


Further to the above people were asked which form of help they think would make a difference in improving their conditions. The following table shows that equally financial help, legislation protecting their rights, more help by medical

doctors, change in the mentality of the social environment and raising public awareness on HIV could be important factors towards minimizing discrimination.



Why have you not received this help so far?



Conclusions

Out of all respondents:

- 22% were not happy with their ability to combat discrimination
- 37,5% had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months with regard to employers
- 30% had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months from their social environment
- 30% had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months in relation to their family environment

DEALING WITH STRESS AND DEPRESSION

In the last 12 months did you face any problems with combating stress and/or depression?

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Transport	10
Financial/Lack of employment	45
Isolation/Social exclusion	45
Total	100

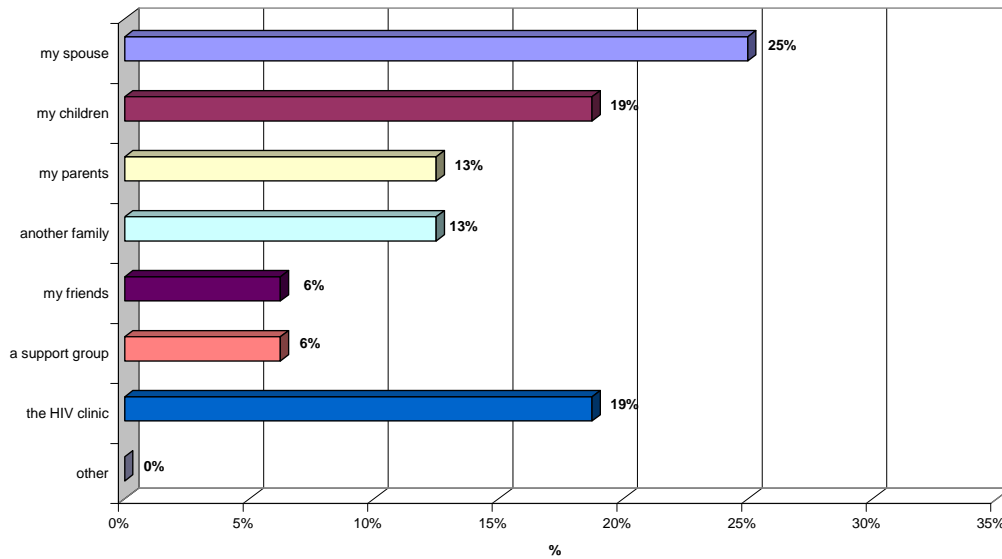
Financial problems, lack of employment, isolation and social exclusion are the main sources of stress for the respondents according to the above results. However the majority of the people (81,8%) who have reported stress and depression have not been able to get any help in order to combat these problems (see table below).

In the last 12 months did you get any assistance in dealing with these problems?

	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
No	81,8
Yes	18,2
	100,0

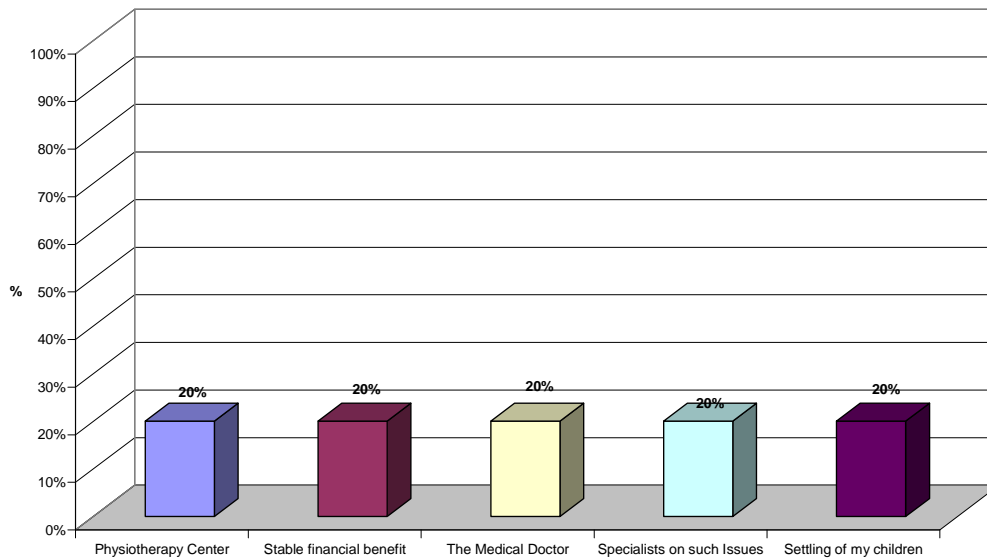
The major source of support for the people who do get assistance is the spouse, the children and the HIV clinic and to a lesser degree the parents, another family, friends and support groups.

Who has helped you in the last 12 months or is currently helping you?



The respondents feel that good treatment, stable financial aid, help from the medical doctors and the settling of their children would help them deal with stress and depression.

Which kind of help do you think would make a difference?



Conclusions:

Out of all respondents:

- 18% were not satisfied with their ability to combat problems related to stress and depression

- 36% had experienced problems related to stress and depression in the last 12 months
- 45% experienced continuous problems related to stress or depression and felt that additional assistance or support would be very useful, or did not exclude such a possibility.

FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus groups were conducted that covered the following themes:

- MEDICAL CARE
- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
- DISCRIMINATION

Medical Care

■ **88% of the respondents indicated the need for the following:**

- More attention by the doctors
- Increase in the number of doctors
- Establishment of other HIV Clinics in other towns
- Continuous Training of Doctors on HIV/AIDS
- Educational Seminars/Courses offered to PLWA on the latest developments on HIV/AIDS

Financial assistance / welfare

■ **75% of the respondents stressed the need for**

- Employment opportunities
- Better benefits offered by employers
- Increase in the state monthly benefit allowances
- Training and Education of Employers on HIV/AIDS

Discrimination/Prejudice

- **75% of the respondents said that they faced discrimination:**
 - Due to Ignorance/Lack of Information with regard to issues of transmission
 - From the Media
 - From the Medical Personnel
 - Due to Homophobia

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- Service providers need to respond sensitively, flexibly and creatively to the variety of needs of people with HIV.
- Medicine may have shifted the pattern of need, but it has not transformed it.
- Lots of people remain constrained by their immediate circumstances – by poor housing, illness and disability, immigration problems, treatment side effects, discrimination and poverty.
- Full participation of people with HIV in communities and society as a whole should be promoted.
- Service providers and commissioners have to attend to overall shifts in demand if their services are to be effective and efficient in the long term.
- A service which respects the individuality and complexity of need will succeed and be cherished.