

Role of Mass Communication in prevention and control of AIDS: *Mass media strategies in India*

A study of AIDS awareness and mass media reach amongst school going adolescents in Delhi and Ghaziabad

Author

Archana Rakesh Singh

Supervisor

Prof. HR Kidwai and Dr. Gita Bamezai

A J Kidwai Mass Communication
Research Centre
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-
110025

Introduction and Rationale

Communication and development are the major domains of human endeavour which are intimately linked with each other. The process of development calls for a strategy of communication which is aimed at altering the targeted persons from mere recipients of information to seekers of information. The main function or purpose of communication is to change or guide other people's behaviour. (Mcquail Denis, 1994) Communicators have to develop an understanding of the mass audiences. In such instances, audiences are usually grouped according to various characteristics— for example, language, art, culture, economic class, educational level and so on. Understanding of these audiences is usually built up over time through research and experience. There is always a need to study the role that was being played by the mass media in the process of development in general and in the various aspects of development such as, agriculture, housing, education, trade, commerce, science and technology, defence, health etc. in particular. Media persons and media organisations are in the center of development and health communication. Trakroo and Jagatdeb (1992) suggest that the overall health communication should be such that it not only empowers people but also enables them to make informed decisions on personal and delicate questions. Communication in that sense is the product of the society and also the moulder of society.

For the purpose of this study, only the mass approach of communication has been studied. This media reaches a large audience in a short time. Uniformity in message is maintained. Although selective perception and retention are hurdles in the effectiveness of this method but mass media certainly has proven value in spreading information. Mass media can create an environment, make issues out of topics, help to create a favourable social climate, counter hostile propaganda, dispel rumours and clarify doubts and misunderstandings.

Why AIDS?

Developing countries the world over are facing several deadly diseases , chief among them is Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS. one of the biggest public health and developmental problems of this century, which started from mere smoke signals and swept across the globe like wildfire. AIDS is now the fourth leading cause of death globally .(Newsweek, June 11, 2001). It is important to recognize that AIDS is not just a health problem. It has major social and economic consequences. It also has political and ethical implications. Prevention and control of this deadly pandemic which has very serious medical, social, behavioural, economic and developmental implications has now become imperative.

The increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the country necessitated the launch of a second phase of NACO's National AIDS Control Program in 1999 (NACP-II) . A national baseline Behavioral Surveillance Survey among the general population, was conducted in all 32 States and Union Territories of the country in March- August 2001. The findings of this baseline survey show that there are significant differences in awareness levels regarding HIV/AIDS/STDs. Significant differences were generally observed in relation to gender and to place of residence. In most instances females and rural residents were more disadvantaged compared to their counterparts in the cities. However, lack of awareness about AIDS only goes to prove that Indians are still in the denial stage of the syndrome, while the truth is that India has more than 20 million HIV infected people , the largest number in any country. It appears that India is sitting on a time bomb which has already begun exploding.

Use of Mass media in AIDS awareness:

The mass media represents the most readily available and potentially most economical means of imparting information about HIV/AIDS. Along with other forms of communication the mass media can effectively raise public awareness and concern about HIV/AIDS. Communication experts have called for the mass education of the general public, and argued that this large scale education has the potential for not only correcting misinformation, but also for creating and maintaining a more favourable environment for AIDS prevention.(Hornik R., Romer D. 1991).

Strategies have to be devised by which public is made aware and not alarmed. What is needed, therefore, is not just planned campaigns, as opposed to regular media programming, but well planned campaigns which utilize the full potential of mass media and entertainment Research has established that mass media are most likely to change behaviour when the information is targeted at specific audiences, comes from a credible source, provides a personally relevant and engaging message. Effective use of mass media requires careful planning , audience research, message development, pre testing, dissemination strategy, evaluation, coordination with existing services, and linking mass media with interpersonal communication. (Brown WJ, Singhal A, Rogers EM, 1989)So far, the media in India have treated AIDS more as news than as a growing menace and scourge threatening both human lives and dignity.(Norms for journalistic conduct : Press Council of India, 1998)

The purpose of this study

This study aims at finding out the role played by mass communication in AIDS prevention and control. Different research methods have been used to fulfill this aim.

- * Content analysis of print media to find out the AIDS related news content in Indian newspapers.
- * Study of AIDS related messages on audio visual media.
- * AIDS awareness and mass media reach survey of a selected target group.
- * Focus Group Discussion with the sample used for the survey.

Adolescence : period of high information needs

As early as in 1992, it was estimated that about 20– 25% of all the HIV infections occur among young persons. Recent studies have shown that maximum people with AIDS are young adults who are in the most productive age group. This would imply that they have acquired the disease in their teenage years considering the time span of about 10 years required for the AIDS related complexes to turn into full blown disease. The infection rates in young people appear to be increasing every where. (Faustin K. Yao, 1992) Further, in many countries it is likely that the rates will increase faster amongst girls than the boys because of cultural and social norms which subject girls to sexual experience at an earlier age. Adolescence is a crucial time of life, not only for health education and health promotion in general but also for HIV prevention and AIDS education specifically. In order to explore the readiness of the students to learn about sex, sexuality , AIDS, it is important to conduct both qualitative as well as quantitative research. It is important to find out the appropriate message format and the medium to be used. AIDS affects in terms of social and psychological development , the most vital segment of the population, the young adults. This study therefore concentrates on the target group of adolescents between the ages 13 years and 17 years.

Research Design

This study has been designed, keeping in mind the methodology being followed the world over in researches involving sensitive subjects. This procedure is known as Triangulation Method .Triangulation has been defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. (Cohen and Manion , 1989). In the recent years it has been felt that any one method of data collection is insufficient. As Carley (1981) has pointed out, neither type of research, when used alone can give us an accurate window to the world. They are best developed when used in conjunction. While quantitative research leads us to generalise on particular phenomenon, qualitative research helps us to understand the specifics. Feilding and Feilding (1986) suggested ` there are possible points of convergence' in different approaches. It has now become more acceptable in recent years to combine quantitative and qualitative research, and the process is triangulation of data to substantiate the hypothesis. Since the topic of the study was sensitive and dealt with a target group that was impressionable and very young, the triangulation method was used.

This study concentrates on all the elements of the communication process such as the sender, the message, the channel and the receiver. In order to study the various elements , qualitative as well as quantitative tools of data collection have been used.

- 1) Content Analysis

- 2) Survey
- 3) Focus Group Discussions.

In the first method: A time series content analysis was conducted on the AIDS related messages that appear in the print and electronic media in India. Taking a sample of 5 newspapers, the AIDS messages appearing in them were studied during the years 1993,94,95 and 2000. This process has been described in detail in the following paragraphs. Similarly a study of audio visual media was conducted through Observation method. The AIDS messages broadcast or telecast by the electronic media during the same time period have been observed. .This aspect of the study gave the researcher an insight into the involvement of the media with the AIDS issue.

In the second method : A survey was conducted amongst the school going adolescents in Delhi and Ghaziabad. . This method was utilised to assess the extent of AIDS awareness in the target population and what role the mass media had played in enhancing this awareness A multi stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for this study.A sample of 443 questionnaires was finally drawn through this sampling procedure.

Survey

This study is based on a correlational descriptive survey. This type of survey is best suited for collecting information on audiences and readership also for the purpose of gauging the knowledge levels of a particular target groups. Since the hypotheses did not venture into finding out causal relationships, this type of survey was best suited for this research work. Being correlational in nature its purpose extends beyond merely describing the data. It tries to establish whether or not statistically significant relationship or correlation exists between variables.

In the third method : Focus Group Discussions were conducted with the same population to understand the needs of the group and their expectations from the mass media.

The purpose of using focus groups in this research was to interpret the previously obtained quantitative results. After a gap of two years, in the month of February in the year 2000, the process of conducting focus group discussions among the adolescents from the same sample area was begun. Since the groups used by the researcher had already passed out of their respective classes, VIII, IX X and XI , the students who were presently studying in these classes were interviewed. A structured format was used for the purpose of this research. A pre planned set of agenda topics were covered as the issue is relatively well understood and the previous study had already been conducted by the researcher.

This study has been conducted in three stages. Each stage, is complete in itself while also contributing to the overall analysis of the research questions. The tools of content analysis , survey and focus group discussions were used one by one and not simultaneously, so that the findings of each could be used in the inquiry . The method proved fruitful as the findings of the content analysis helped in designing the questionnaire and the findings of the survey helped in designing the schedule for the

focus group discussions.

Findings :

Study of the AIDS news published during the month of November – December, reveals initially a spurt of concern for the subject which gradually changed into a more meaningful understanding. As, is evident from the figures, AIDS news enjoyed maximum coverage in the year 1994 as compared to the years 1993 and 1995 and after a gap of five years, there was not much difference in the amount of reporting although the situation of HIV in the country was turning grim by the day.

The year, 1993 saw a total of 36 news items measuring 5658.75 cms, sq., in the year 1994 the number more than doubled itself(85 news items) and the total space occupied by AIDS related material was 18461.6 cms.sq. (Refer Figure 1) However, in the year 1995 ,the number fell to 41 and the space covered by the AIDS related material was 14282.55 cms. sq. In the year 2000, the number of AIDS related articles was 50 with 16871.96 sq. cms coverage.

The news regarding AIDS does not increase year after year although there is an overall increase in the news coverage. This increase in AIDS reporting can be attributed to growing awareness and serious concern about the subject. The media has acquired a more open stance in discussing sensitive issues such as sex, sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. However, the press is not consistent in its coverage. With passing time AIDS as an issue had to compete with so many other important events for coverage in our dailies. This is evident in our finding about the extent of coverage given to the issue in 2000. Despite the mounting concern for the issue displayed by the articles, the coverage in terms of space occupied still could not beat the then newfound issue in the year 1994.

The Indian media , with its market orientation covers the HIV related news in a very casual manner.

Newspaper wise coverage

The maximum number of articles appeared in the Times of India followed by the Hindu and the Hindustan Times. The articles were mostly news reports and news analysis in the form of editorials. The Hindu published more analysis and discussions. The Times of India published the only article related to the economic aspect of AIDS. Maximum number of public health messages appeared in the Indian Express, some of them covered the entire page of the newspaper. Maximum number of human interest stories appeared in the Statesman. (Refer figure 6,7,8)

During the period Nov. – Dec, 2000 the maximum number of articles appeared in The Hindu. This newspaper has given serious thought to the issue and a number of thought provoking articles on various aspects of the disease have appeared . News value of this issue was recognised by The Statesman as it had maximum number of photographs along with its stories.(Refer figure 15)

In the final analysis , the Times of India, was found to be the only newspaper which covered a range of subjects on AIDS. It has shown a consistent concern for the issue as it has maintained an interest in the subject during all the three years.

Analysis of audio video media

The earliest television messages appeared in the early 90s, when a socially conscious actress Shabana Azmi was chosen to deliver the message. These public service messages were designed by the National AIDS Control Organisation. Lately, film star Madhuri Dixit has appeared on endorsements messages about the inherent strength of women in not only protecting themselves from unsafe sexual practices but also taking on the responsibility of educating their teenage children about safe sex. On the similar lines of celebrity recommendations there are spots with Shah Rukh Khan, Aparna Sen, Kabir Bedi, Sarika, Jaspal Bhatti and many more.

The latest spots sponsored by Cipla for social causes, shows endorsements by people with AIDS. On radio too jingles have used celebrity recommendations as the favourite method of message dissemination. However, despite the shortcomings, these jingles are the earliest attempt being made to reach the large population of people that relies on radio as a medium of information either because of illiteracy or because of its easy availability.

As is evident from the above review that more research is needed before Television starts to telecast AIDS related messages in a big way and radio produces more professional jingles and hotlines that actually work.

Discussion

This study provides an analysis of AIDS related news material which appear in the 5 prominent newspapers of the country. Further it provides an analysis of audio visual messages that have been presented to the audiences since the last decade. The analysis is both qualitative as well as quantitative. It was found that the society as well as the media has yet to accept that AIDS is an issue of each person's concern. Moralistic stands, denial, prejudice, lack of research and follow up has been seen in the news reports. Some of the reports do reel out baffling statistics of people who have been infected by HIV, but on the whole AIDS is still a disease which happens to other people.

The year 2000, had always been cited as a landmark year by the experts on AIDS. All predictions were targetted at year 2000. Whenever the seriousness of the AIDS scenario had to be depicted, the year 2000 situation would form the basis of the message. By the time one arrived at the year 2000, AIDS was not an issue on the top priority list. The figures which are repeated year after year on World AIDS Day were repeated once again and they certainly painted a grim picture. All the predictions for the year 2000 have come true. India now has 3.7 million HIV positive people, the highest in the world. 80% of these cases are from 18 –40 years age group. (The Statesman, December 4, 2000) While countries like Holland , Thailand, Uganda and Australia have managed to control the epidemic, India with its special brand of moral hypocrisy did not invest sufficiently into the prevention programmes. However, despite the growing seriousness of the situation, it does not get reflected in the columns of our newspapers, who awaken to the issue of AIDS only when the AIDS Day approaches.

Survey : Findings

The impact of media coverage of any subject depends on the interaction of several factors, including the previous knowledge of the readers or the audiences, the content of the message, the credibility or otherwise of the journalist, the reaction of the people with whom the reader or viewer goes on to discuss what they believe they have read, seen or heard. The aims of the mass media should be to set the agenda for the development of public policy and influence the actions of those who have the power in our society. In approaching the role of mass media in relation to AIDS, the media need an idea, of where the public interest lies, of how the public policy should evolve. Such an idea must clearly be founded on the best available medical knowledge and on social research. The main aim behind this survey was to find out the mass media access and reach status and the AIDS awareness level of adolescents from two different settings. The analysis of data has been structured according to these variables. The findings are divided into 5 different sections for clear and thorough discussion.

The sections are :

- 1) Demographic Profile
- 2) Mass Media Profile
- 3) AIDS Awareness profile
- 4) Knowledge about AIDS
- 5) Sex Education

Demographic Profile:

The respondents came from four different schools from two different cities. Both girls and boys were administered the questionnaires. The total population of students was 443. 04 questionnaires were disqualified at the time of analysis. A total of 439 questionnaires were analysed. Boys were more in number as compared to the girls but since all the schools visited offered co-education, the difference is not intentional(Boys 243, girls 196).

Most of the students were Hindi speaking , which was rather obvious . Most of them had educated parents. The most common qualification for fathers was found to be a professional degree (33.3%) and the mothers in most cases were graduates (33.4%). The majority of students were from nuclear families (79.2%) with average income of the majority being Rs. 5001 to Rs.10,000 .(37.4%) (Refer Figures 1.3, 1.4, 1.5) More number of fathers were in government service as compared to any other category (65.4%). The reason could be that two schools out of four were government schools. Most of the mothers were housewives (81.3%) and some of them were school teachers. (Refer Figures 1.6, 1.7)

Media Profile :

The media access study was interesting as the data showed that more students own Television sets (97.2%) than those that subscribe to any newspaper (82.9%). Radio ownership varied as 98.2% of the metropolitan public school students owned a radio, only 79% of the satellite town public school owned radios. Even amongst the government schools, 90.2% students in the metropolis owned radios whereas 88.8% of the students from satellite town owned radio sets. (Refer Figure 2.1)

The media exposure findings reveal that maximum number of students are exposed to the television and only half the number read their newspaper daily. (98.8% watch television and only 40% read the paper everyday) Even when studied independently it was found that amongst the government schools, 99% students in the metropolis and 98.3% students in the satellite town watched television regularly whereas 43% in the metropolis and 38% of the government school in the satellite town read daily newspapers. From amongst the public school students 48% in the metropolis and 46% in the satellite town read the newspaper everyday. (Refer Figure 2.2)

Demographic data and AIDS awareness

It was found that the AIDS awareness profile of the metropolitan students (69.5%) was better than the satellite town students (53.25%). The girls in the metropolis scored the best with 75.9%. The metropolis boys stood next with 63.6%. The satellite town girls had a higher figure (59.8%) as compared to the satellite town boys (46.7%). This clearly shows that metropolitan students are better aware than the satellite town students although both of them exhibit similar media profile. The girls in the metropolis have scored the best and even the girls in the satellite town have scored better than their male counterparts proving better health consciousness amongst the girls.

The public school boys had the best awareness score with 66.9% and the public school girls stood next with 63.44%. The government school boys scored 57.8% and girls 54.98%. This goes to prove that boys and girls in public schools are certainly better informed than the boys and girls in the government schools. (Refer Figure 3.1)

In the age wise analysis of AIDS awareness scores one finds that maximum awareness is with the maximum age. Students who were 13 years had an awareness score of 57.27% amongst boys and 48.1% amongst girls. Among 14 year olds, the boys has 58.68% and girls 57.2%. Among the 15 year olds boys scored 67.26% and girls scored 66.1%. If one observes closely one finds that the girls although, initially, rather unaware, slowly catch up with the boys as they grow older. Amongst the 16 year olds boys scored 72.47% and girls 69.7%. The 17 year boys are left behind with 77.31% score by the 17 year old girls who scored 78.2%.

Correlational Analysis

Correlational analysis between variables was conducted to find out the relationships between, AIDS awareness scores, socio economic status and mass media reach and access among the target population.

It has already been observed that the media profile of this group is very high. However, neither age of the respondent nor the sex of the respondent has any direct correlation with media profile. This would mean that the mass media reach and exposure is not affected by the age and sex of the respondent. Media profile does effect the AIDS awareness scores. Since the group has a very high media profile it can be safely assumed that much of their awareness is through the mass media. We have already seen that they rate TV as the provider of maximum information about AIDS. There is no relationship between first source of information and subsequent AIDS awareness. Since in this case the first source of information happens to be television in maximum number of cases, this finding only points out towards the short term effect of the medium. This would also mean that television cannot lead to sustained behavior change or even to behavior modification. However, a definite relationship has been found between recall of message on radio and television and the AIDS awareness profile. This clearly shows that consistent messages by the mass media do have some retention in the minds of the audiences. Since our target group is of a very impressionable age messages have a high retention value and they do add to the overall increase in knowledge. It was also found that mass media has contributed largely to the AIDS awareness levels of the respondents.?

Some salient findings from the above survey are :

1. Television has emerged as the most powerful medium
 - a. Maximum number of students own it.
 - b. Most have got their AIDS related information from TV.
 - c. Most of the respondents could recall the AIDS related message appearing on TV.
2. Newspaper reading was found to lag behind TV and cinema. Students from the satellite town were found to have yet to develop the habit of newspaper reading.
3. Music programmes on radio and TV wins hands down as most popular programme.
4. Cinema is the most popular medium and most films are watched on TV.
5. AIDS awareness profile of metropolitan students was better than satellite town. girls in metropolis as well as in the satellite town have better AIDS awareness profile.
6. In the overall analysis, boys from the Public Schools had the best awareness profile and the girls from the public schools followed a close second.
7. Music programmes on television were the most watched , followed by serials and feature films.

8. The AIDS awareness profile of metropolitan students was better than the satellite town students. Although the media access profile was similar the metropolitan students certainly had more information.
9. Girls exhibited better awareness profile as compared to boys in both the categories.
10. While comparing public schools and government schools, public school boys and girls scored better than government schools.
11. Media availability or access could not be the sole cause of high or low AIDS awareness.
12. 97.7% students had heard about AIDS, but they did not count it as a health problem. Polio and leprosy were most frequently counted as health issues.
13. Television was cited as the most efficient source of AIDS related information . Most students could recall messages from TV. 67.7% were aware of the cause of AIDS, however they were ignorant about the tests needed for HIV detection.
14. Condom was cited as a method of preventing AIDS but only 26.6% were aware of its use as a contraceptive.
15. More girls had discussed AIDS in school yet boys have better awareness.
16. Most students had never attended any seminar , workshop or lecture regarding AIDS awareness but more than half the number of students were keen to attend a programme related to AIDS.
17. Most preferred source of information regarding AIDS was medical professionals. Although the students receive all their information from TV, they would like to receive it from qualified medical professional.

Focus Group discussions were conducted in order to substantiate the findings of the survey.

Findings of the FGD were as follows:

Radio

- 1) Boys and girls belonging to Public school in Delhi listen to the radio more than any other counterparts only for music.
- 2) They like to play the radio while doing something else. Active listener ship was minimal.

- 3) Some of them could recall AIDS related messages on radio.
- 5) They knew that there was a help line for AIDS where their questions could be answered.
- 5) They had no difficulty in comprehending the message but since they were not radio enthusiasts, they were indifferent to the idea of more messages being presented on the radio.
- 6) Not a single candidate could recall any advertisement or message broadcast on the radio.

Television

- 1) They can vividly recall AIDS related messages appearing on television.
- 2) The celebrity endorsement messages (Madhuri Dixit, Shahrukh Khan) had a high recall rate.
- 3) They could understand the message but some of them were embarrassed while watching them
- 4) Boys and girls in Delhi felt that the condoms advertisements appearing on television were so blatant that AIDS awareness messages were not at all embarrassing. They suggested that condom manufacturers should include AIDS protection as one of the advantages of condom use !
- 6) Most of them would not mind more advertisements about AIDS on television but boys in Public school at Delhi wanted to watch English feature films with AIDS as a theme.

Newspapers

- 1) Not many of the members could recall reading about AIDS. Actually , cognitive dissonance plays a major role in interaction with media. AIDS as an issue is not a part of the audience agenda and so when they come face to face with AIDS related messages they just look through them. Messages will have to be designed not only to set the AIDS awareness agenda but also to find a place in the audience agenda.
- 2) The full page AIDS messages inserted by NACO every year seemed to have missed this target group altogether.
- 3) Human interest stories had high recall with girl students especially when a child was somehow involved.

- 4) However, no one could particularly recall any specific message
- 5) Some were aware of a body called NACO, but were not sure where and how they had heard about it.
- 6) The target group would prefer to read more about AIDS in the newspapers. Some girls said that since newspaper reading is a solitary activity and not public activity, they could read articles about AIDS without feeling embarrassed.

Internet

- 1) Boys and girls in Delhi surfed the net more than the students in Ghaziabad.
- 2) The number of net savvy boys was more than the girls
- 3) Those students who owned computers at home and had Internet connections were obviously more net savvy.
- 4) Some even mentioned going to one of the cybercafes for using the net.
- 5) Some boys mentioned having visited the pornographic sites on the Internet.
- 6) Some even mentioned the word cyber sex but were shy to elaborate on it.
- 7) No one had hit any AIDS related web site on the Internet.

Discussion

The media profile also revealed certain interesting factors – newspaper readership is very low while television viewership is reasonably high. This is a startling finding as all the students come from educated families. The respect that the daily newspaper commands in urban homes across the country seems threatened with this behaviour of future citizens. With the inclusion of children section in the newspapers, perhaps there must have been some improvement in the readership percentage, but the point to worry about is that the sample population is not children population. These are young people who should be reading the regular newspaper. If the status quo is maintained, newspapers will have to work harder to cultivate a generation of readers who are as loyal to the medium as their grandfathers had been.

Another medium that seems to be losing ground is the radio. Two decades ago radio listeners could be found across the country with transistors glued to their ears for cricket commentaries or a family collected around the radio set for Binaca Geetmala or Inspector Eagle. Only 79% of the population in the satellite town owns radio sets, while Delhi with the onset of FM radio has a better percentage. The popularity of the radio although on a downhill can be improved with better programming. Nothing can

beat this medium with its special quality of mobility. As for the AIDS awareness messages, youngsters of today rate television as the medium that has given them some information. Television with its visuals can provide a clear picture and hence an effective message. Moreover with its extensive reach in this particular group it can spread the message really far. Cinema although popular as a medium has not contributed to AIDS awareness at all.

Media profile of a group as such was quite high and this implies that there is a lot of scope for mass media to use its potential with the target group. Definite relationships have been found between the media profile and socio economic status and AIDS awareness profile and the city of residence. Keeping in mind these findings messages can be designed for different locations and for various classes of audience. Television messages hold special significance as they have shown highest recall in this study., with the best received messages being the celebrity endorsements.

Whatever they have imbibed from various media does not seem enough to give them a clear picture of the situation. While 97.7% students in the metropolis and 84.5% students in the satellite town have heard about AIDS, only 80.8% in the metropolis and 76.9% in the satellite town seemed to have heard any health related message. It is rather puzzling to see that our youngsters do not consider AIDS a health problem. For them the implications of sex and sexual matters related to AIDS stand out. Other implications of AIDS have not yet registered in their minds. The denial stage is very evident in this group. They seem almost certain that they are not at all susceptible to this disease.

The obvious finding here is that metropolitan students have better AIDS awareness profile. Since most interpersonal programmes are carried out in these cities, students hear a lot about AIDS from sundry other sources and not just from television. More discussions in schools, well publicized health melas, international conferences, more hoardings on the main roads, transit messages, messages on bus stops, all this has had an impact on the group, whereas the students in the satellite town are deprived of this type of message onslaught. They seldom discuss AIDS in schools, are wary of talking about AIDS to their parents, are embarrassed when AIDS messages appear on television. This difference in the reach of the messages can prove to be disastrous for the country. India does not reside in the metropolitan cities alone. For all those who live in the far flung areas, away from any capital cities the situation can be worse. One can safely assume this, just looking at the AIDS awareness profile of the satellite town students (53.25%), who are only a stone's throw away from the capital of India.

Students belonging to public schools and higher socio economic strata with educated parents have a better AIDS awareness profile. AIDS, however does not discriminate. HIV can infect anybody and the uninformed are more susceptible. These findings reiterate the need for the messages to be taken to smaller towns, among the lower economic groups and among the uneducated.

The myth of a moralistic Indian society already lies shattered and cases of sexual abuse of young girls are on the rise. In such a scenario, this group of young people should be armed with enough knowledge to be able to tackle any unforeseen circumstances. An additional benefit of sex education classes that have been started lately, is that the mysterious changes in the body at puberty can be explained to these confused teenagers by an expert whom they can trust. They have revealed in the survey that they want to get more AIDS related information from medical professionals. The girls as they grow show better awareness levels, so much so that they surpass the boys in awareness. This fact has been proved in Delhi as well as Ghaziabad. The young boys, who are going to grow up to be husbands and fathers, need to be shown a direction which they can follow. Young people are gregarious by nature, the need of the hour is to channelise their energies towards the direction of safe sex and no use of drugs. This is not an easy task. Besides, any one agency cannot take up a responsibility as serious as this one. The ambience of information created by the mass media can be supplemented with more focussed inter personal communication.

The students have exhibited a desire to attend seminars, workshops or lectures regarding AIDS. This is a group that is keen to get information. They have been oscillating between peer and porn to get their sex education. The time is ripe to target this group.