

# **HIV, Empowerment, and How Concerned People Can Help**

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# Thanks and Acknowledgements

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**Three exemplary organizations in India  
working with sex workers**

# A macro view of global population

2 billion in 21<sup>st</sup> century

Health  
Education  
Energy  
Water  
Job Skills



1.5B  
people  
in  
Transition

3 billion in 18<sup>th</sup> century  
with less than \$2 ppp/day  
*(Additional 2.5B will start here)*

# HIV/AIDS is exceptional

- Long asymptomatic infectious period (~10 years)
- Almost always fatal
- No cure or vaccine
- Sex and IV drug use – major transmission routes
- Stigma keeps risky sex and drug use underground
- Young adults most vulnerable
- Kills the most productive; creating orphans
- Poor/marginalized populations most vulnerable

The issue is not just HIV positive people,  
access to AR drugs, violence to women,  
feminism, LGT rights, drug users, MSM,  
sex workers, poverty, or ...

**It is about all of them and much more.**

**It is about accelerating the development  
of the 3+ billion poor and marginalized**

# Within Poor/marginalized communities women are particularly vulnerable

I will focus on a very at risk sub-community - Sex Workers



**GOAL: To eradicate ALL Sexually Transmitted Infections whose only hosts are human beings**

**Blood Borne**

- **Gonorrhea**
  - **Chlamydia**
  - **Trichomonas**
  - **Syphilis**
  - **Herpes (cold sores, genital blisters)**
  - **Human Papilloma Virus (warts)**
  - **Hepatitis B**
  - **Hepatitis C**
  - **HIV/AIDS**
-

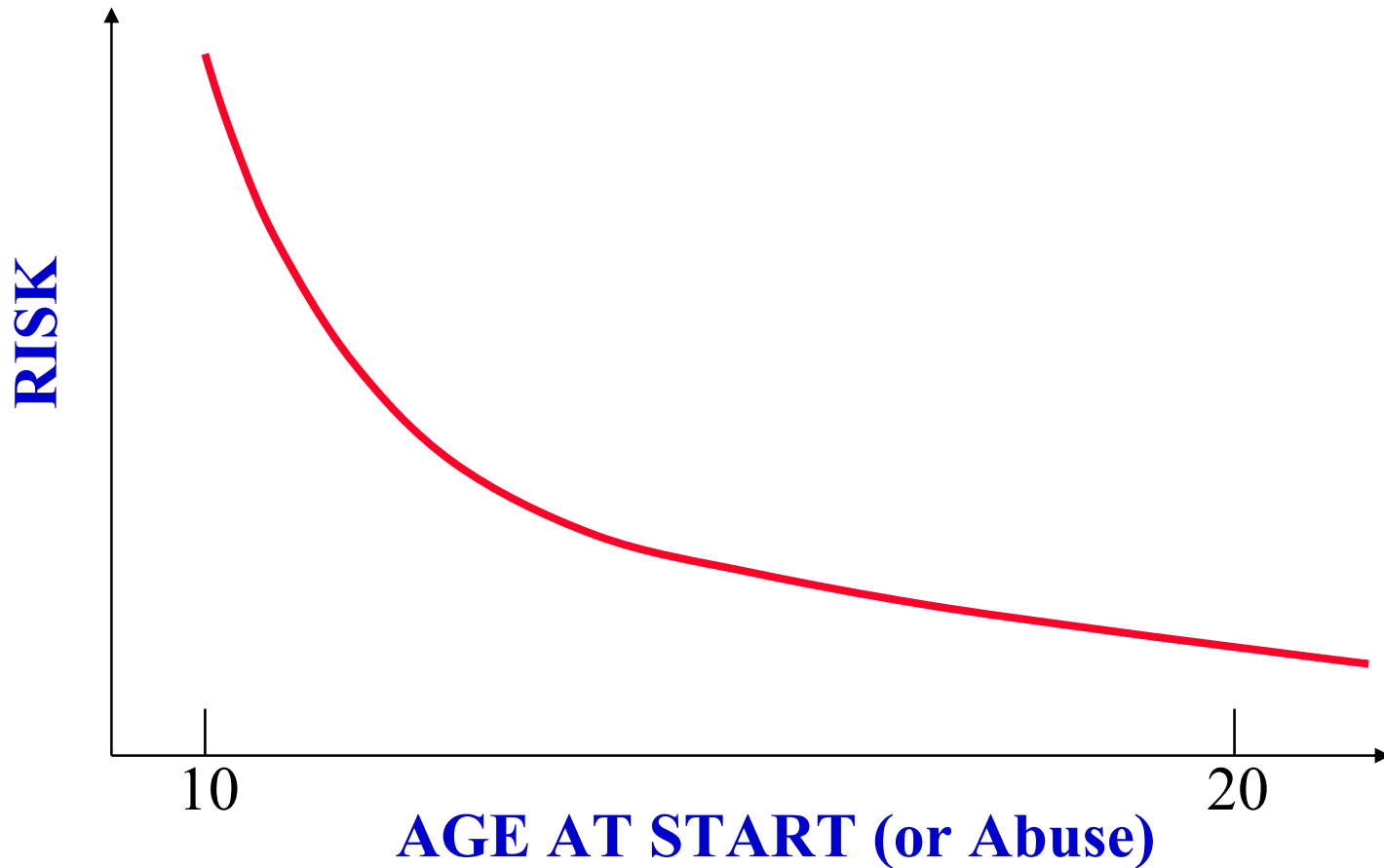
# HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- 1) **Delay start of sexual activity**
  - 2) **Reduce number of different sexual partners**
  - 3) **Don't have risky sex**
    - × **With sex workers**
    - × **With IV drug users**
    - × **One night stands**
  - 4) **Don't reuse or share needles**
- **Lifestyle Change:** If you are sexually active use a condom during all sexual activity until ready to start a family with a steady partner

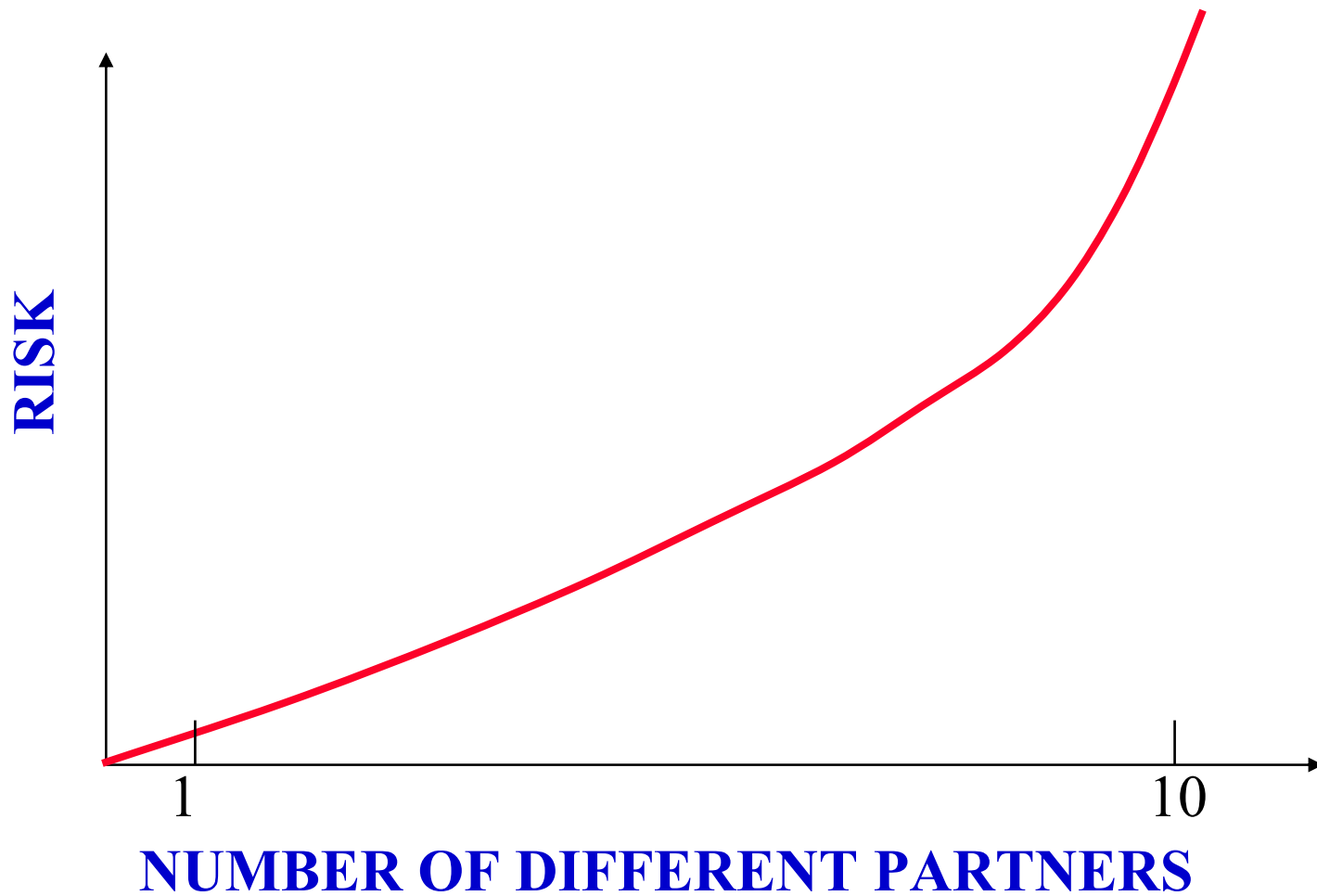
**Mature and responsible behavior**



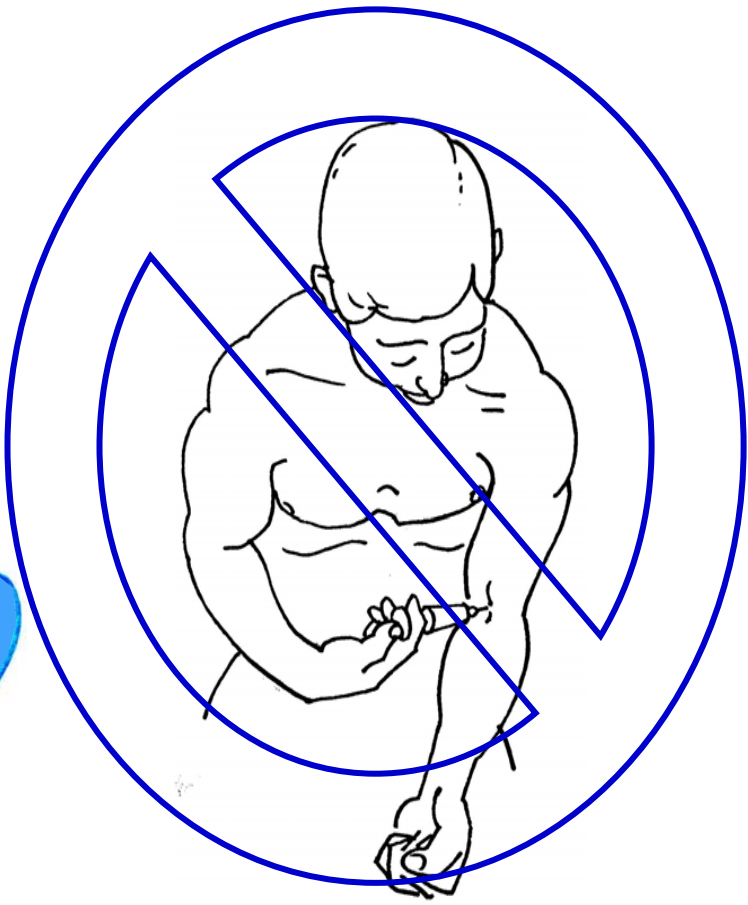
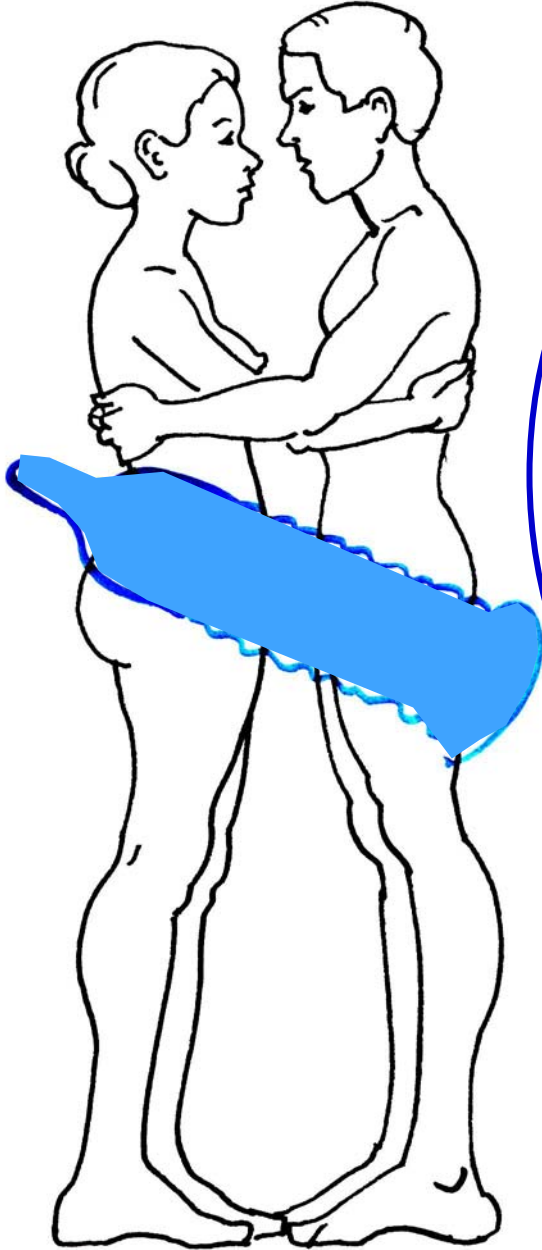
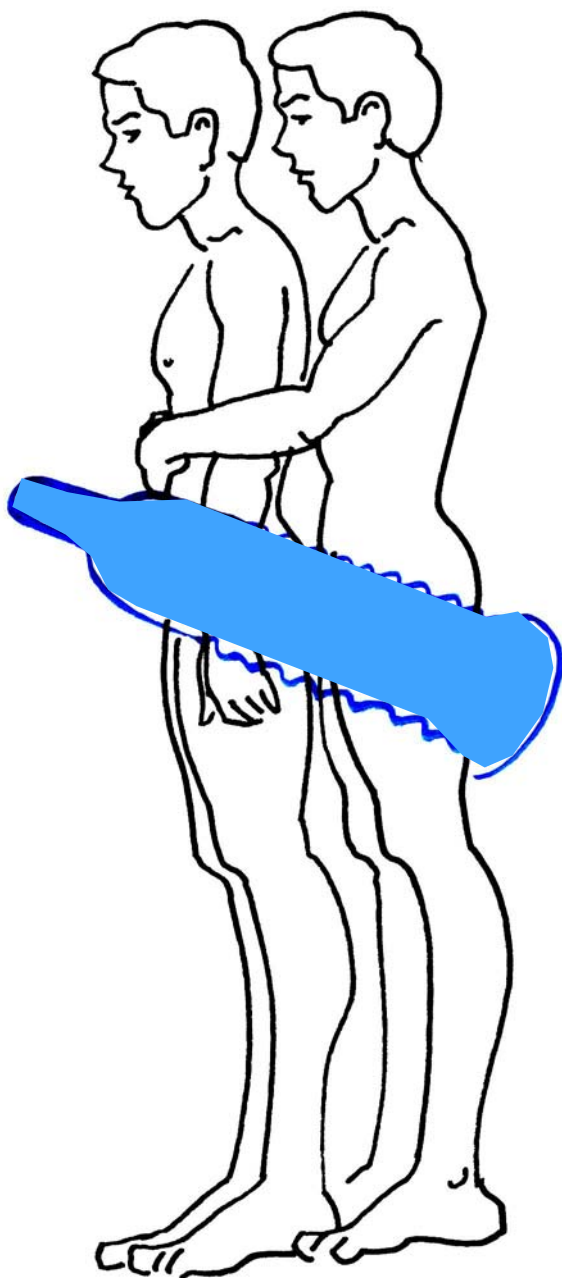
# 1) Delay start of sexual activity



## 2) FEWER PARTNERS



# 3,4) Changes to Lifestyle to Reduce Risk



# What is risky?

# What is normal?



# What is part of growing up?

# RISKY BEHAVIORS

**VIOLENCE,  
CRIME**

**EXTREME  
SPORTS**

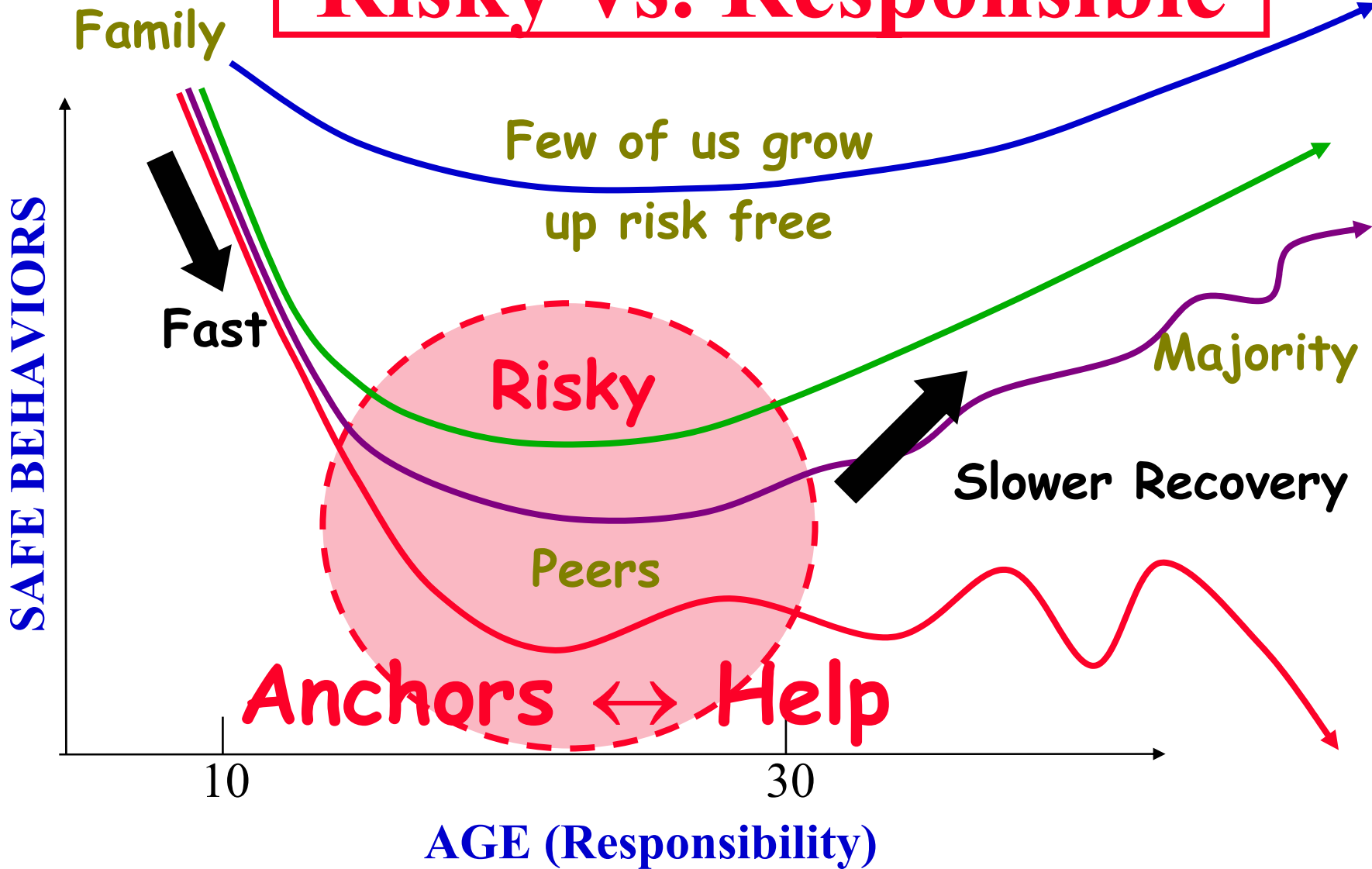
**DRUGS**

**LIVING  
BEYOND  
MEANS**


***RISKY SEX***

**Risky Behavior: No control over the magnitude of the consequences of your actions**

# Risky vs. Responsible



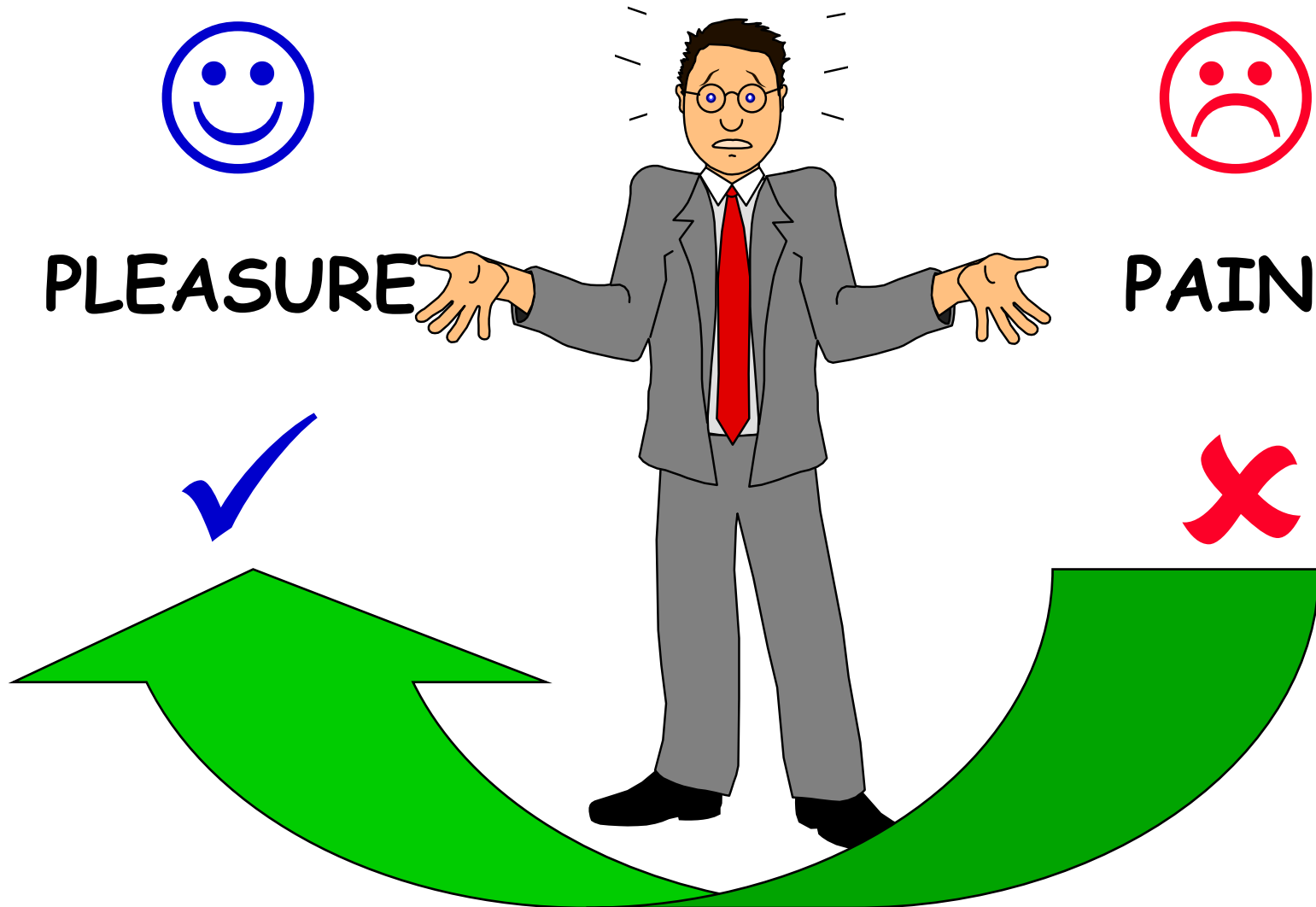
**In the absence of healthy  
leisure time activities  
people gravitate towards**

- **Shallow television**
  - **Gambling**
  - **Alcohol and drugs**
  - **Risky Sex** → **HIV/AIDS**
- 

**Develop love for life-long learning and  
meaningful jobs to keep people engaged**

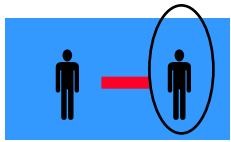
# What is safe SEX?

(When, with Whom, and How)

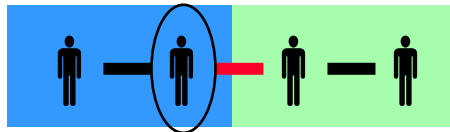




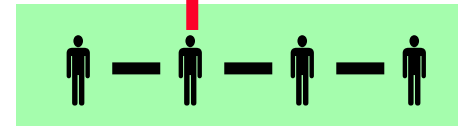
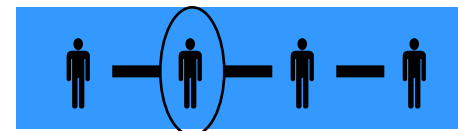
# Building risk chains



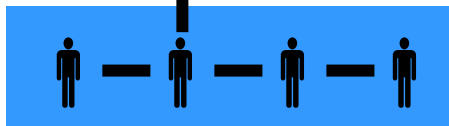
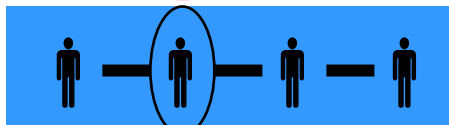
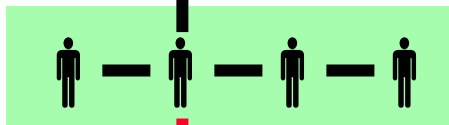
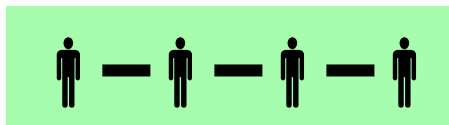
Yr 1 = 1



Yr 2 = 3



Yr 3 = 7



Yr 4 = 15

A group of 15 year olds start having SEX.  
Each person has 1 new partner per year

At age 16 your chain = 3

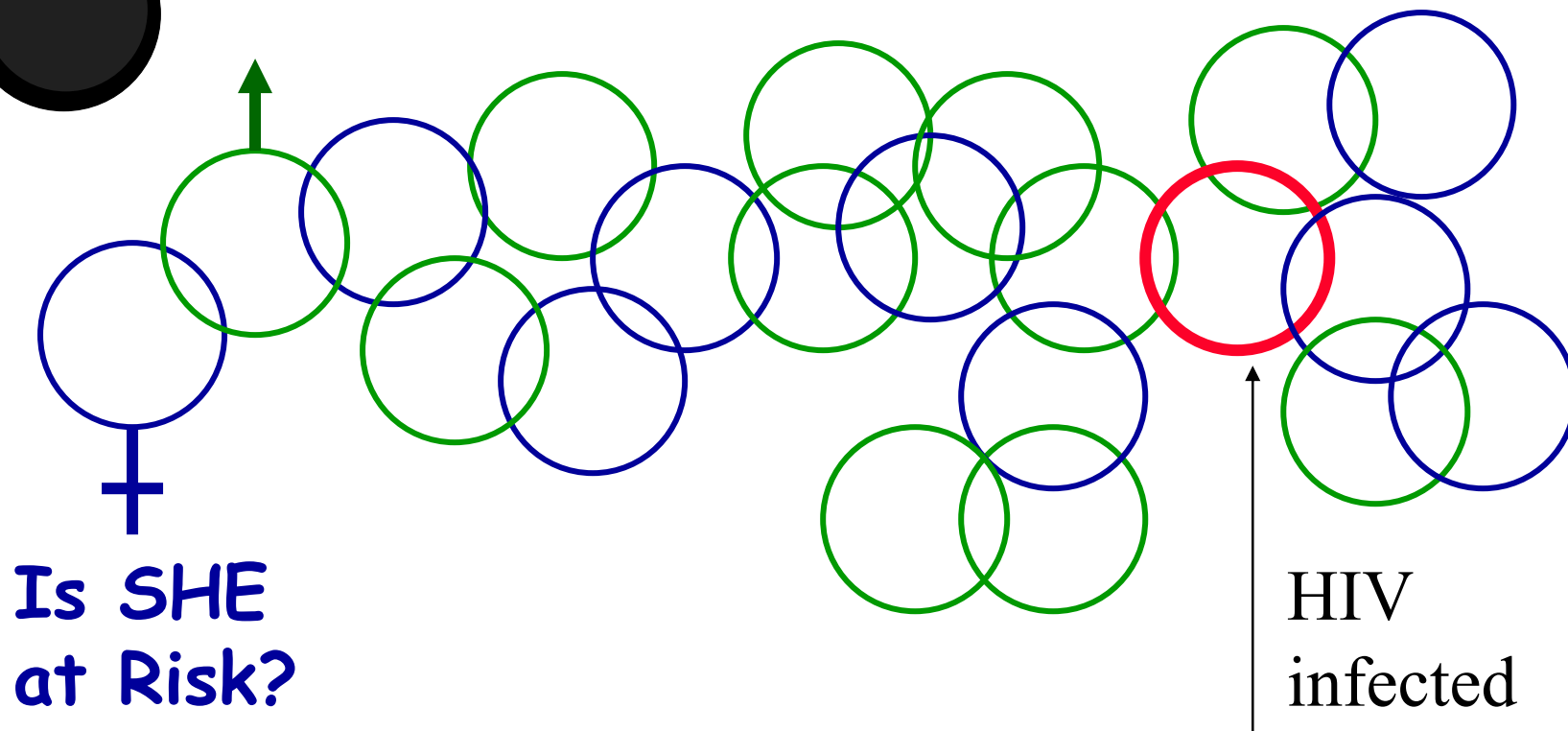
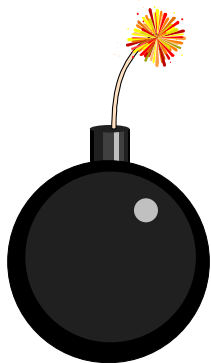
At age 17 your chain = 7

At age 18 your chain = 15

At age 25 the chain is =  $2^{10}-1=1023$

Getting tested  $\oplus$  one-with-one  
relationship breaks the chain

# RISKY SEX



**Qt: what is size of the risk chain  
of a prostitute after 10 years?**

# **Sex Work and HIV— a Molotov Cocktail**

**What can we do to help reduce risk  
to sex workers and to the public?**

**Why is HIV/AIDS diabolic?**

# Risky Sex with Sex Workers is the dominant cause for the spread of HIV in South and South-East Asia

Worldwide,  
a growing phenomena  
of sex tourism!



© Kay Chemush for the  
US Dept of State 2005

A young girl and her elderly "child sex tourist" client captured on film on the beach at Pattaya, Thailand. "Child sex tourism" draws men from wealthy countries to less developed countries where they take advantage of economically vulnerable women and children and weak criminal justice systems

# Challenges

# Sex Workers

- **Sex work is a contradiction**
  - Few want their children to be sex workers
- **They exist**
  - Society creates them and uses them
  - They provide sexual services anonymously
- **HIV and sex workers**
  - Victims or most vulnerable or culprits?
- **Empowerment – key to harm reduction**
- **Exit strategy (for SWs and their children)**
  - Money management
  - Job skills
  - Supportive, caring, responsible partners

# Coerced into Sex Work

- **Estimates suggest ~80% are coerced into sex work**
  - False promises of jobs
  - Abducted / Sold
  - Alcohol, Drugs, Debts
  - Husbands/Relatives/Gangs force them into sex work
- **Last recourse for the poor and hungry**
- **Last recourse for the abused**
- **Children of sex-workers**
- **Marginalized populations (transgenders, Hijras, Men-having-sex-with-men (MSM))**

**Abused by pimps, madams, police, public**

# Voluntary Sex Work

- Lured by **easy, quick money**
  - Want to buy expensive clothes, jewelry
  - Vanity items
  - Financial crisis
- Many people think they can get away with doing it occasionally and for limited time
- Alcohol and drugs
- Best of bad options

I do not discuss very important moral or legal issues



# **Sex Workers: Warm caring people – *But***

- **Emotionally very fragile**
    - **Explode (verbally and physically) when stressed**
  - **Open display of sexuality**
    - **Considered vulgar**
  - **Inability to form stable relationships**
  - **Substance abuse**
  - **Abused by lovers**
  - **Marginalized and stigmatized**
- Have problems with Integrating and Work Ethics**

**Hard to rehabilitate them?**

# Empowerment

# Using a condom every time

- **Awareness / Denial**
- **Cost – a big factor for poor SW**
  - Government supply sporadic
  - Problems with distribution
  - Quality
- **SW don't see need to use them with lovers**

**Customers willing to pay 10X for sex without condom for fear of losing libido (erection, performance, pleasure)**

# Need supportive, caring, responsible partners for love & emotional support



# Money Management

- **Banks refuse to give SW accounts**
- **Lovers coax / threaten / steal money**
- **Form cooperatives and Saving schemes**
  - ✓ **Ability to take time off (vacation, sick leave)**
  - ✓ **Buy property/business**
  - ✓ **Security for old age**

**Being able to build equity is  
Empowerment & Exit Strategy**

# Alcohol and Drug abuse

- **A very common and serious problem**
  - Pimps/madams use it to exercise control
  - Dulling their shame, inhibitions
  - Customers pay more if they share drinks
- **Winding down with lovers**
- **Children grow up in an environment of easy access and where abuse is common**

**Alcohol Abuse is a major impediment to development in Rural India**

# **Enlightened (Peer) Organizations**

- **Health Care**
- **Education**
- **Job Skills, small businesses, Cooperatives**
- **Money Management**
- **Exit strategies for children**
- **Provide protection from**
  - **Police**
  - **Gangs and mafia**
  - **Violent, abusive customers**

**Essential for Empowerment**

**STD/HIV INTERVENTION PROGRAMME**  
(SONAGACHI PROJECT)  
A MODEL PROJECT OF WHO  
**"PALATAK CLUB"** 7/A, MONIRUPPIN LANE, KOL-6  
173 by SOCIETY FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL ACTION  
SUPPORTED BY:  
WEST BENGAL STATE AIDS PREVENTION & CONTROL SOCIETY  
N.A.C.O. /PALATAK CLUB.



Sonagachi: DMSC Peer Health Workers



# **Even Enlightened Peer Organizations (like Sonagachi)**

- **Have hierarchy & rigid control (Coercion?)**
  - Do girls have rights to choose customers?
  - Can girls define their own work conditions?
  - How much do they pay for board & facilities?
- **Require/enforce that girls have 5-10 customers per day – a good day's work**
- **Madams want girls to have children (stock for future SW)**
- **Exit Strategy for SW and their children?**

# How do they exercise control?



# Exit Strategy for Children?

- **Stay with mothers or go away starting at age ~5?**
  - Health care
  - Education
  - Stigma
  - Constant exposure to violence, alcohol, abusive sex
  - Incest / rape
- **Avoiding Abuse**
- **Resisting giving in to easy money**
- **Develop job skills and work ethics**



Do parents have multiple identities children can hide behind

# For **KIDS** development has to be holistic

- **Nurturing & Safe environment**
- **Health Care**
- **Access to modern energy**
- **Potable water**
- **Education**
- **Job skills**
- **Jobs**



**Micro loans  
+  
Training**



**Help to share and support causes**

# **Role of the Government**

- **Empowering laws (equal justice for all)**
- **Providing protection from criminals and mafias**
- **Prosecuting traffickers**
- **Prosecuting handlers and customers of underage children**
- **Providing condoms, health care, education**
- **Running vocational schools**

**Govt. Should Encourage and Support Peer Groups**

# Non-Government/Peer group organizations are essential

- **Government officials in India are unlikely agents of change**
  - Soliciting is illegal
  - Homosexuality is a criminal offence
  - Corruption
- **Peers groups gain trust much faster**



**Need exceptional people to lead NGOs that work with the marginalized**

# Resume of Leaders

- **Genuine empathy**
- **Tireless**
- **Optimists**
- **Resourceful**
- **Tenacious**
- **Articulate**
- **Patient & Encouraging**
- **Willing to face stigma of working with prostitutes**



**Greatest need and vacuum: Leaders on the ground**

# Issues and challenges for educators

**Intervention is not easy**



# When working with organizations

- Study & immerse to understand the issues
- Learn to walk outside your comfort zone
- Don't waste their time to satisfy your ego
- Integrate rather than expecting them to follow
- They must own the programs
- Patience – these are not easy problems to solve

**They will follow if you “grow” with them  
and develop programs with them**

# What Can We Do From a Distance?

## 1) Collect money and sponsor good organizations

- India has many excellent organizations

## 2) Work with good organizations

- Become a helping hand
- Create communication & teaching modules
- Metrics for evaluation and transparency

**NO substitute for actual involvement**

# What Can We Do From a Distance?

## 3) Understand relationships between Issues

- Promote synergy between different social issues / challenges – shared fate
- Any intervention done right helps all causes

## 4) Be a role model

- There is a tremendous need for role models
- Individuals can change the world

Use IT for low overhead collaborations  
and for sharing information

# Key Recommendations

- **Empowerment:** Every person must have free and easy access to modern, good quality contraceptives (pills, condoms, ...) (global cost ~\$10B/year)
- **Need Leaders:** Support, encourage, develop peer groups to work with the poor and marginalized.
- **Provide access to affordable health care & medicines**
- **Keep parents alive to take care of children (ART)**
- **Development has to be holistic – support synergy between different aspects of development**
- **Global Rights:** health care, education, potable water, affordable clean energy, Job Skills

# At very minimum: Be a Role Model

- **Live / behave as you preach**
- **Don't become a link in a harmful chain**

**A not so trivial example:**

- ❖ **Western world has declared smoking a health hazard**
- ❖ **We have banned smoking in public places**
- ❖ **Yet – NO restrictions on exporting to the poor**

**Carry your values and vision  
where ever you live, work or travel**

**TOGETHER**  
**We can change the world**

**Let every child grow up  
in a safe and nurturing  
environment and blossom**