



# Tackling HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination in South Asia (Directions in Development)

*Anne Stangl, Dara Carr, Laura Brady, Traci Eckhaus, Mariam Claeson, Laura Nyblade*

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Although overall HIV prevalence in South Asia is low, the widespread stigma attached to HIV and AIDS impedes efforts to reach people most in need of prevention, care, and treatment services. To address this challenge, the 2008 South Asia Region Development Marketplace partnership, led by the World Bank, launched a competitive grants program to support innovative community approaches. 'Tackling HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination in South Asia' summarizes the monitoring, evaluation, and case study data and documents successful community innovations.

Twenty-six community groups in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka received funds. The initiatives involved a broad spectrum, including vulnerable groups as well as people living with HIV, the media, local government authorities, health workers, and religious leaders. The interventions used traditional cultural and media approaches to discuss taboo subjects. The reach of the initiatives was amplified by involving opinion leaders. The strategies engaged marginalized groups to design and lead the interventions and to facilitate contact between groups experiencing stigma and the general public to reduce fears and misconceptions about transmission. Projects that combined economic and stigma reduction interventions helped the marginalized populations to overcome the internalized stigma and become empowered to advocate for their rights.

'Tackling HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination in South Asia' identifies effective strategies to raise awareness and reports on shifts—albeit slow—of attitudes, norms, and behaviors. Through its recommendations for successful interventions to reduce barriers to effective HIV prevention, care, and treatment programs, the book provides a strong foundation on which to build stigma reduction efforts in the region and world.

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