



**HIV/AIDS
MEDIA MANUAL
India 2007**

While HIV/AIDS has huge social and emotional ramifications, it also has aspects that are intensely technical. Thus, it is important to not only try and understand the technical issues involved, but also to ensure that the information conveyed through our reports is not technically flawed. What is appropriate language in the context of reporting on HIV/AIDS?

- Appropriate language is constructive.
- It avoids sensationalism of all kinds.
- It does not fuel stereotypes.

- It does not cause prejudice or fuel stigma.
- It is suitable to the intended audience. This requires journalists to be familiar with our audience as well as fluent in HIV/AIDS terminology.
- It is non-judgemental and non-discriminatory.
- It is positive and empowering, rather than victimizing.
- It is neutral and gender sensitive.
- It is technically accurate, but distils technicalities into an easily understood form. ●



Writing with sensitivity

AVOID X	BECAUSE ?	USE ✓
Aids	Aids already means many things. AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	AIDS
HIV and AIDS HIV or AIDS	HIV and AIDS are linked. HIV leads to AIDS	HIV/AIDS
AIDS virus HIV virus	Can cause confusion between HIV and AIDS. HIV is an acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, so virus is already included in the term	HIV
AIDS scourge/plague	Sensationalist; implies that HIV/AIDS cannot be controlled; may fuel panic, discrimination and hopelessness	HIV epidemic
The disease of AIDS	AIDS is not a disease. It is a syndrome (group of illnesses) that results from a weakening of the immune system by HIV. This opens the body to 'opportunistic' diseases (illnesses that take advantage of weak immunity)	AIDS-related illness. Name the specific illness, such as TB or cancer
Full-blown AIDS	No need to use if correct distinction is always made between HIV and AIDS; there is no half-blown AIDS	AIDS
AIDS test	There is no test for AIDS, but there are tests for HIV	HIV (antibody) test
Catch HIV	No one can catch HIV; people can become infected. Transmission of HIV is also correct, but it emphasizes 'who' and how the virus is transmitted, which, often, HIV+ people do not know	Contract HIV; Become HIV positive
Catch AIDS	AIDS can't be 'caught'	Develop AIDS; Person living with AIDS



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Carrying AIDS AIDS carrier AIDS positive	This confuses the two distinct phases of being infected with HIV and having AIDS. A person can have AIDS, but can't carry it	HIV positive person; People living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA)
Safe sex	No sex with a partner is ever completely risk free, even when using a condom, which can greatly reduce, but never fully eliminate, the risk	Safer sex
Bodily fluids	Not all bodily fluids transmit HIV	Semen; breast milk; blood; vaginal fluids
HIV victim/sufferer	Victim connotes powerlessness — PLHA are definitely not victims	Person/people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA); HIV positive
AIDS sufferer	Many people with HIV/AIDS can enjoy relatively good health for years and lead happy lives	HIV positive person
AIDS patient	Only appropriate when someone is ill. Care is needed to distinguish this from HIV infection, when 'patient' is not appropriate. The word patient should be used when referring to the clinical setting only	People living with HIV/AIDS; person living with AIDS
Innocent	It implies someone else is guilty. No one chooses or deserves to contract HIV	AVOID USING THIS AT ALL
Prostitute	Considered value laden and derogatory	Sex worker
Promiscuous	Accusatory and derogatory	Having multiple partners
Drug abuser/addict	Many people who use drugs consider that they are in control of their use of drugs, that they are not addicted to them. Calling them abusers/addicts alienates them, which serves no good purpose. It is the act of injecting with a contaminated needle, not the drug use itself, that transmits HIV	Intravenous drug user (IDU)
Homosexual	This is a Western idea of one's identity. In different regions of the world, men who have sex with men do not necessarily consider themselves to have a gay or homosexual identity	Males who have sex with males (MSM)
High risk	There is high risk behaviour, but no high risk group. Regardless of the group he belongs to, it is what a person does that exposes him to HIV	High risk behaviour

