

Preface



This supplement to *Health Transition Review* provides a record of early behavioural research in West Africa on sexual networking (relations with multiple sexual partners) that has been catalysed by the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in parts of the region. Most of the authors belong to the West African Research Group on Sexual Networking (WARGSN) which brought together 20 researchers based in 15 institutions, mostly in Nigeria and Ghana, following the first experimental research projects in 1989. WARGSN was supported first by the Australian National University and then by the Rockefeller Foundation. It was needed because this was a new field where researchers and their universities or other institutions needed reassurance that this was a social science field which required incorporation into lecture courses and research programs. Those involved needed research precedents and standards, as well as forums to present their ideas and findings. I.O. Orubuloye was the first WARGSN Coordinator.

Many of the papers in this supplement were presented in preliminary form to a WARGSN Workshop held at NISER (the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research), Ibadan, in April 1991 and in a more complete form at another workshop there in September 1991. They are not written in a field with considerable existing literatures and methodologies. Most were written by people of the endangered countries working alone or in small groups trying to work out what was happening as the AIDS epidemic threatened or broke out, and endeavouring to establish why their societies were at risk of the disease. The authors also wished to be in a position to advise their communities and governments, and to establish baselines from which to measure the success of interventions.

Some papers have other origins. From 1989 a joint research program of the Faculty of the Social Sciences (and later its Centre for Social and Health Research), Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti (OSUA), and the Health Transition Centre, Australian National University, was based on OSUA. The papers by Renne and Erwin report on research carried out as part of this program, and other papers reported to WARGSN emerged from this program. From 1991 the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries supported a research program on the behavioural aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Uganda (Makerere University), Ghana (University of Ghana and University of Cape Coast) and Nigeria (Ondo State University). The first paper draws on experience from the three countries, and begins the task of relating social and behavioural research findings to intervention strategies. The Gambia paper originates from an unrelated research program, but addresses important questions raised by the other papers.

This volume has been produced through the very substantial efforts of Jennifer Braid, Wendy Cosford, Judith Littleton and Pat Goodall.

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