

# MEETING THE HIV PREVENTION NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ASIA:

*Drawing lessons from epidemiology for the education  
sector*

*Jan W de Lind van Wijngaarden, UNESCO*

*UNESCO HIV focal point workshop*

*Chiang Mai, Thailand*

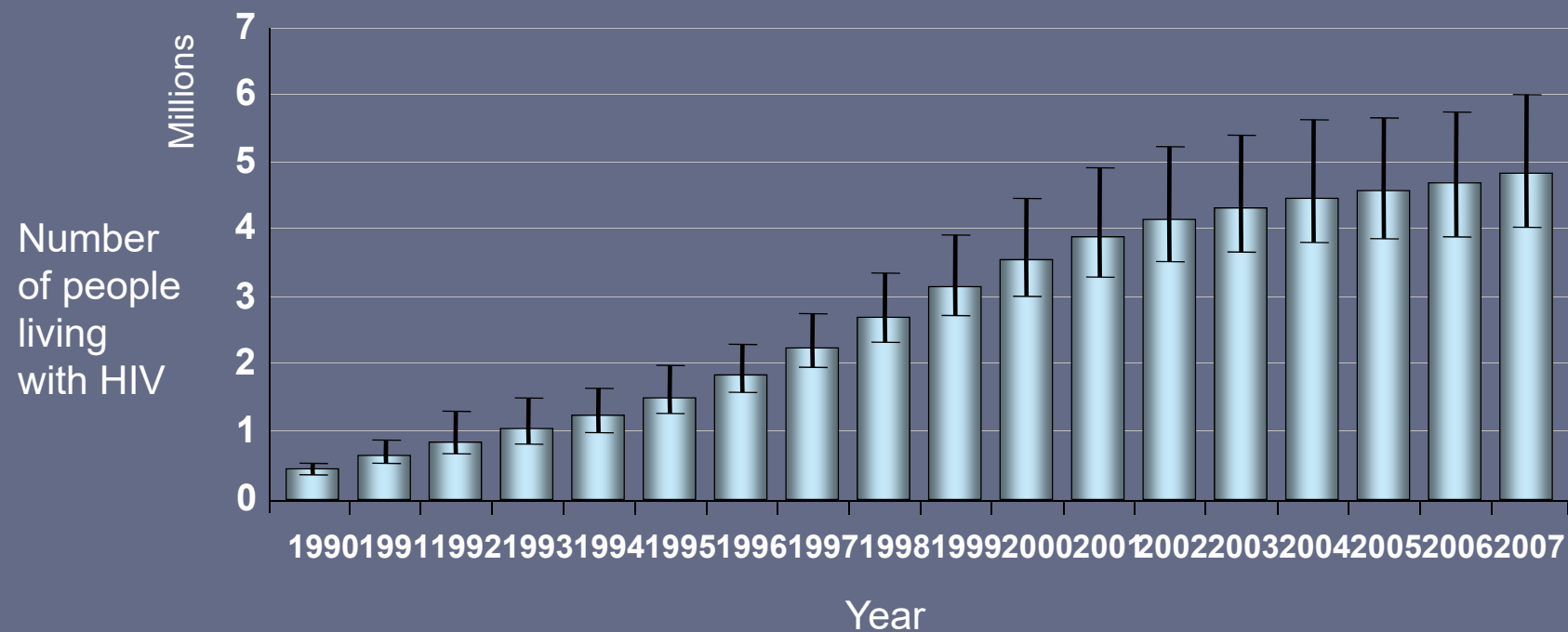
*11 May 2009*

# This presentation is about...



- Epidemiology of HIV among young people in Asia
- The 'window of opportunity' - mostly HIV negative young people in schools in Asia
- One size fits who? The need to let data direct tailored strategies, policies and programs
- General policy and programming implications
- Implications for education sector responses

# Estimated number of people living with HIV in Asia, 1990–2007



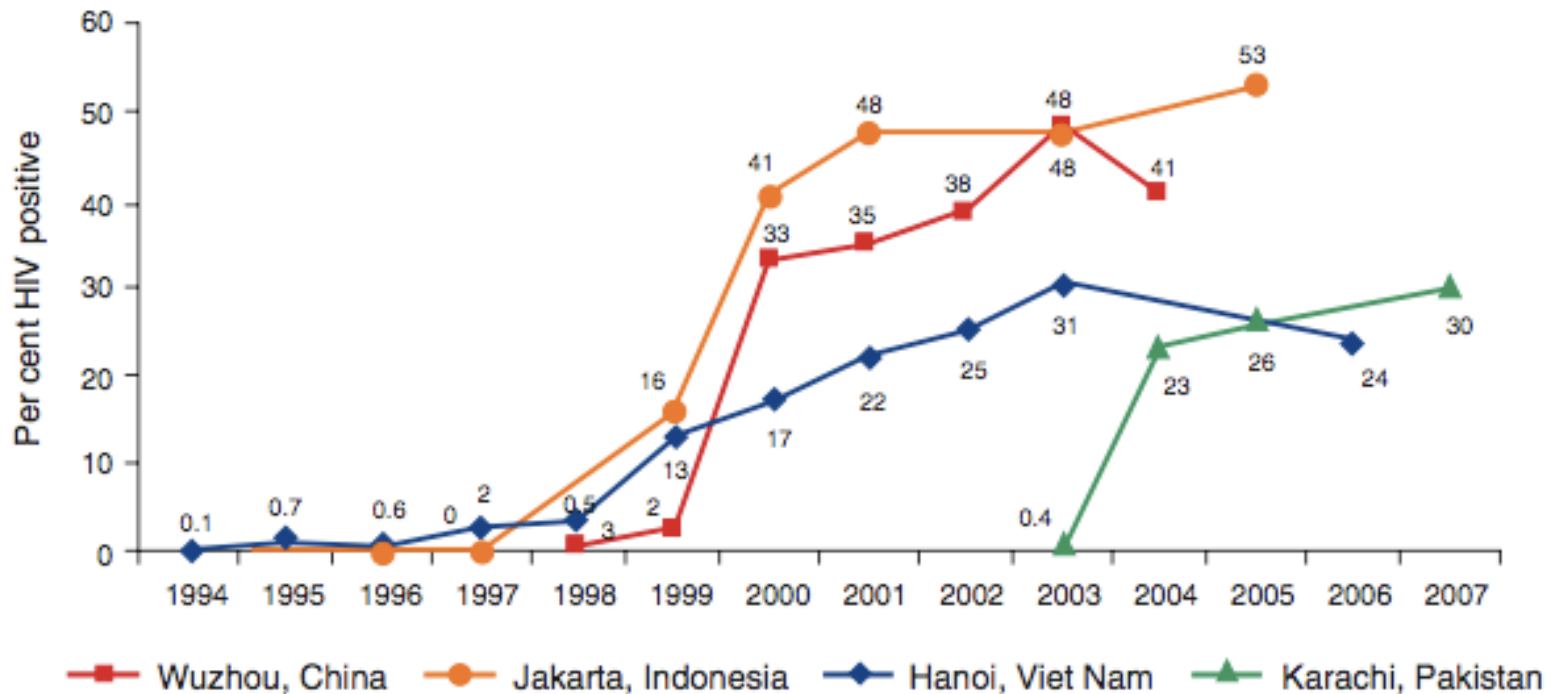
 This bar indicates the range

# The HIV epidemic in Asia...

- Concentrated epidemics, with a few exceptions
- Driven primarily by unsafe injecting drug use, unprotected male to male sex and unprotected sex in the context of sex work (10 mln FSW and 75 mln clients; 20 mln MSM and IDU)
- An estimated at least 75% of all adult HIV transmissions is directly or indirectly caused by these behaviors
- For adolescents, this percentage is estimated

Source: Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia 2008  
to be a staggering **95%**

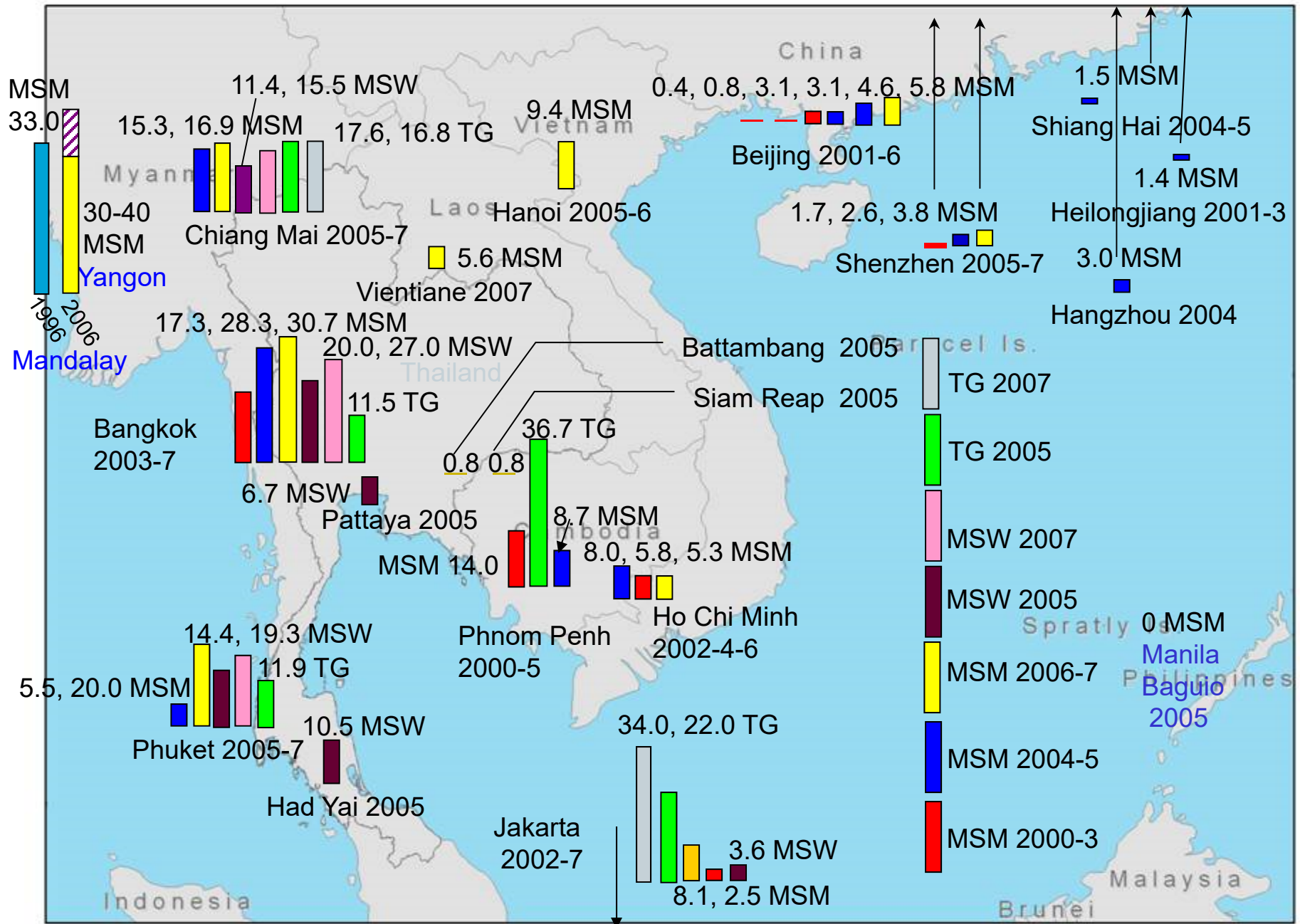
# Injecting drug use epidemics



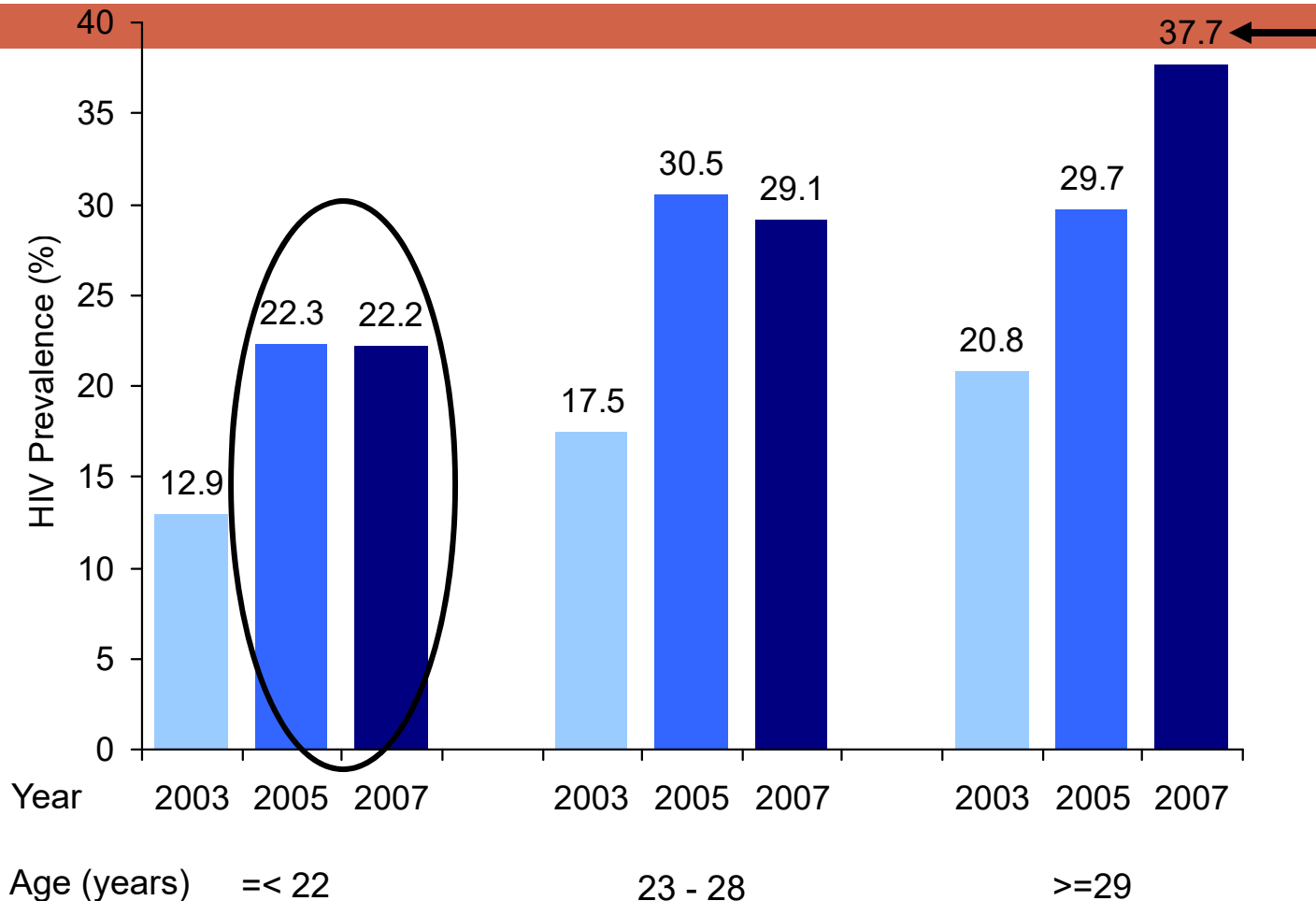
**Figure 2.7: HIV can rise very quickly among drug injectors, and reach very high levels**

Source: Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia 2008

# HIV prevalence among MSM in South East Asia and China 2000 till 2008



# HIV prevalence by age group, among Men who Sex Men Bangkok, Thailand 2003 – 2007



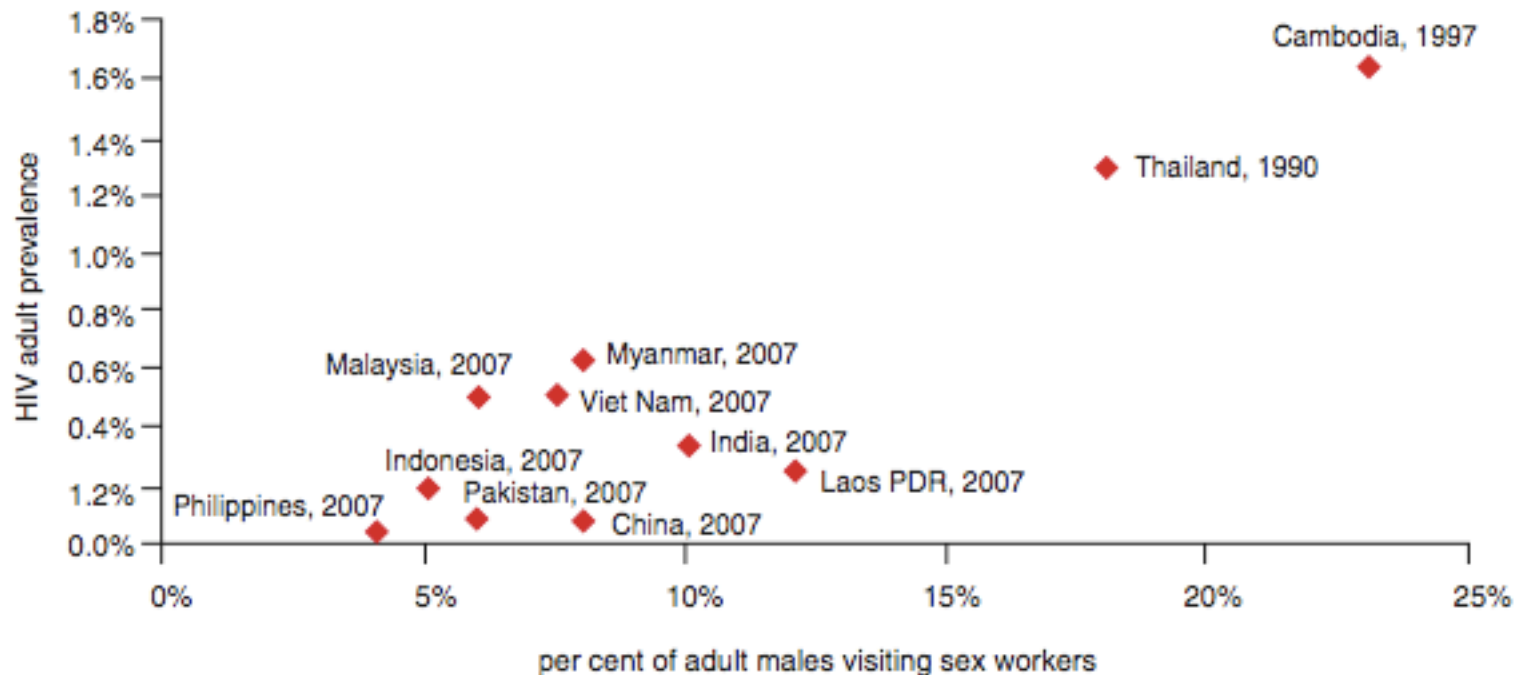
Source: Thai MOPH & CDC-TUC, courtesy of F van Griensven

# Are epidemics among MSM important on a national scale?

- At least 3% of men are generally believed to have predominantly homosexual sex
- If 1/3 of these 3% are infected (already the case in Bangkok), this means 1% of men are infected nation-wide
- I.e. MSM can theoretically contribute as much as 0.5% to national adult prevalence!
- Many MSM are married → spousal transmission, MTCT
- In Thailand, currently it is estimated that 20% of all HIV infections are (directly) caused by male to male sex; in Bangkok and other cities likely much more



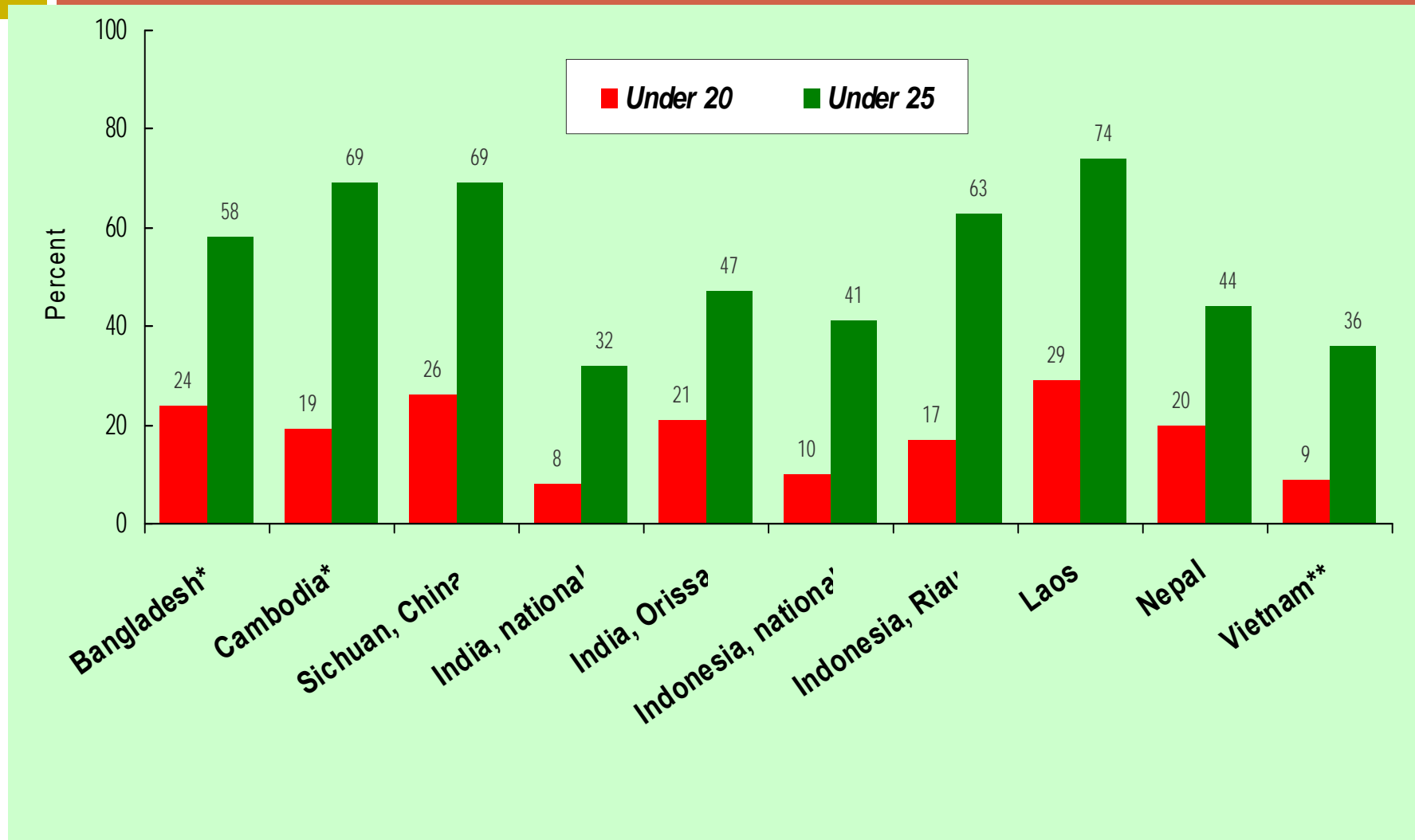
# Importance of male demand for sex work



**Figure 2.5: In the absence of large scale interventions, levels of HIV prevalence depend on the number of men who buy sex**

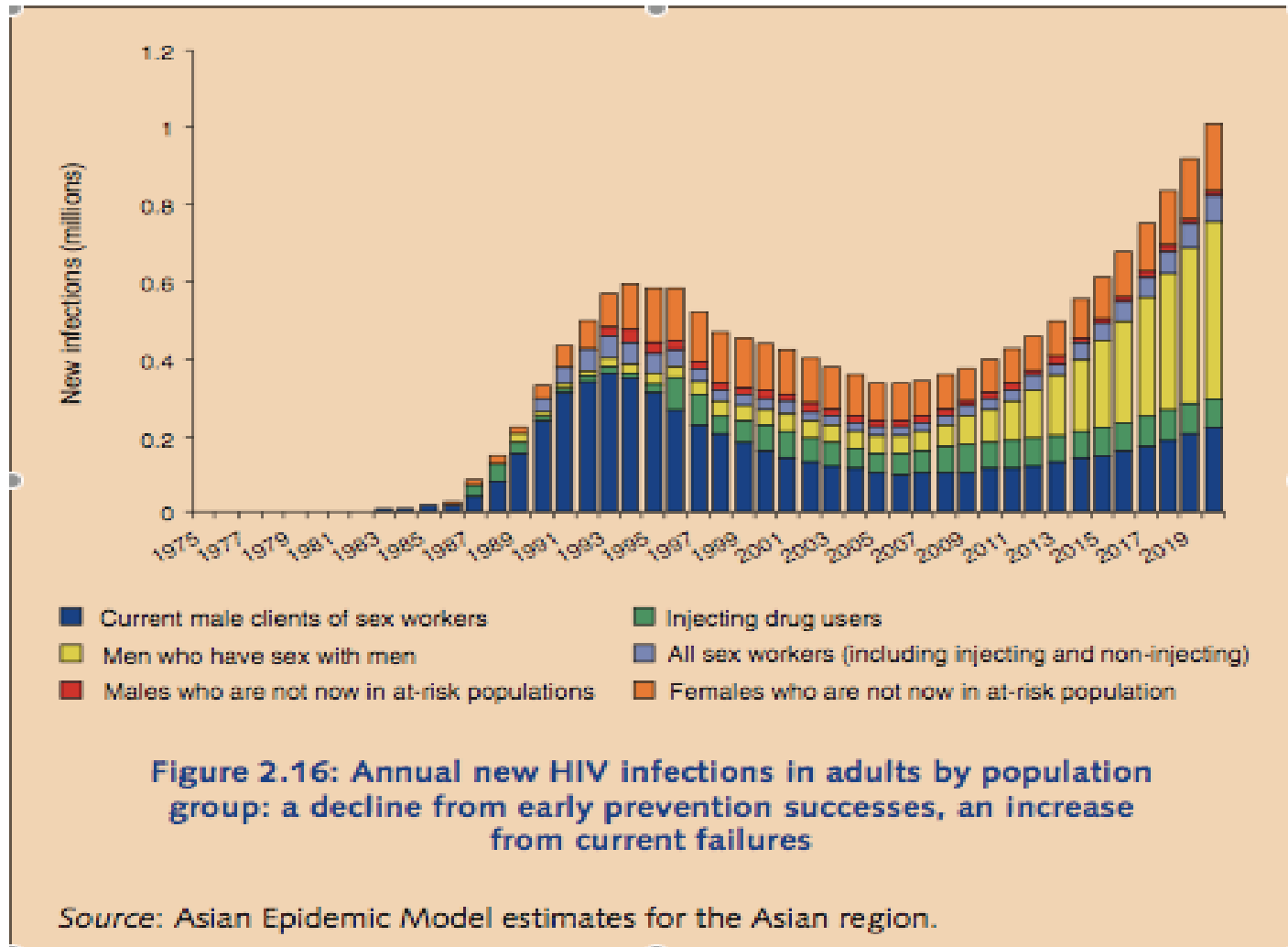
Source: Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia 2008

# Percent of female sex workers who are under 25 and under 20 in various Asian countries

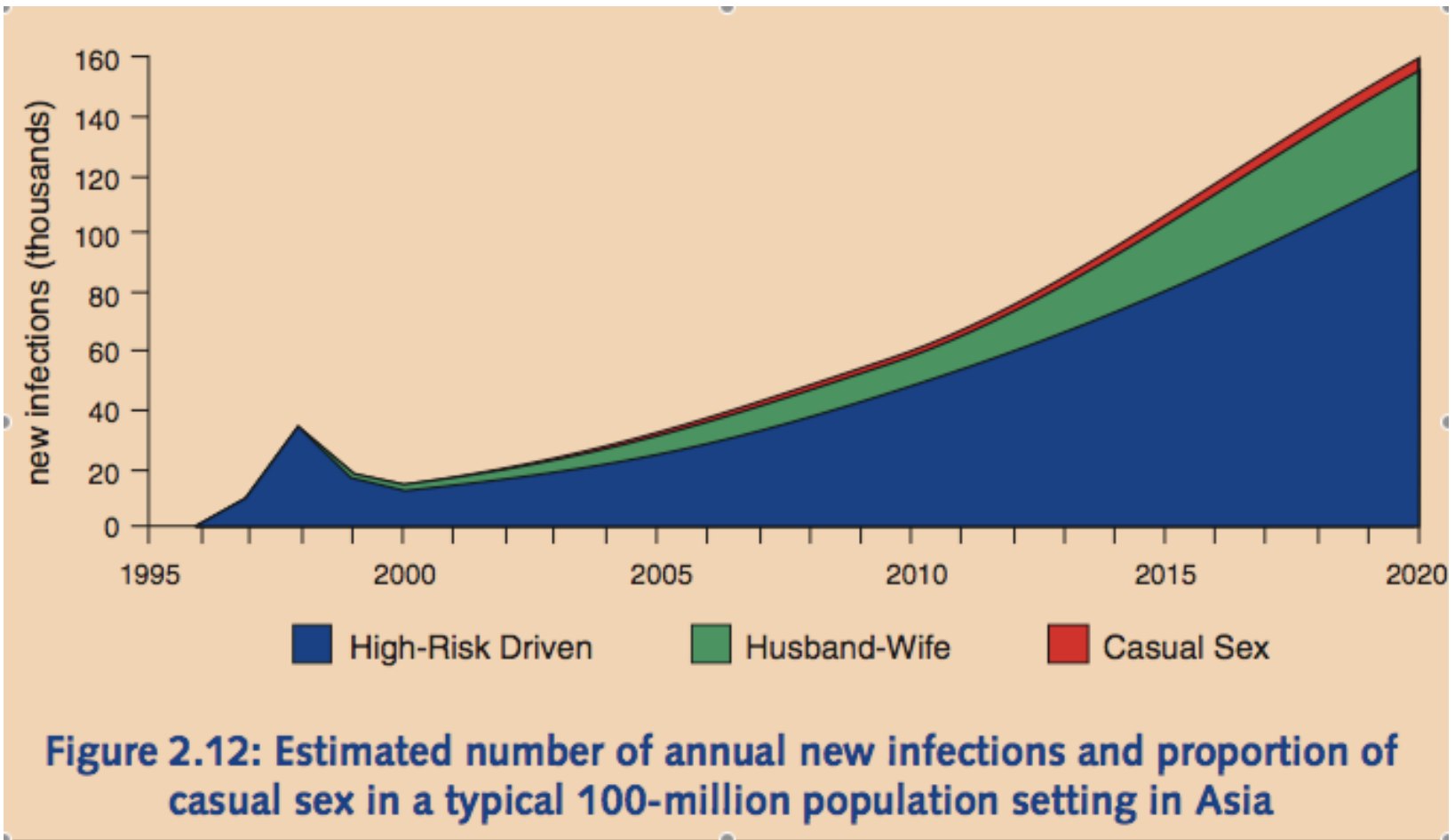


Source: WHO SEARO

# Projection of a new HIV wave



# HIV in Asia: continued link to the three key risk behaviors



Source: Report of the Commission on AIDS in Asia 2008

# Key conclusion so far:

- Because of the fact that most countries face concentrated epidemics, not all adolescents and young people in Asia and the Pacific are at the same level of risk or vulnerability to HIV

# Sex, Relationships and HIVSTI education

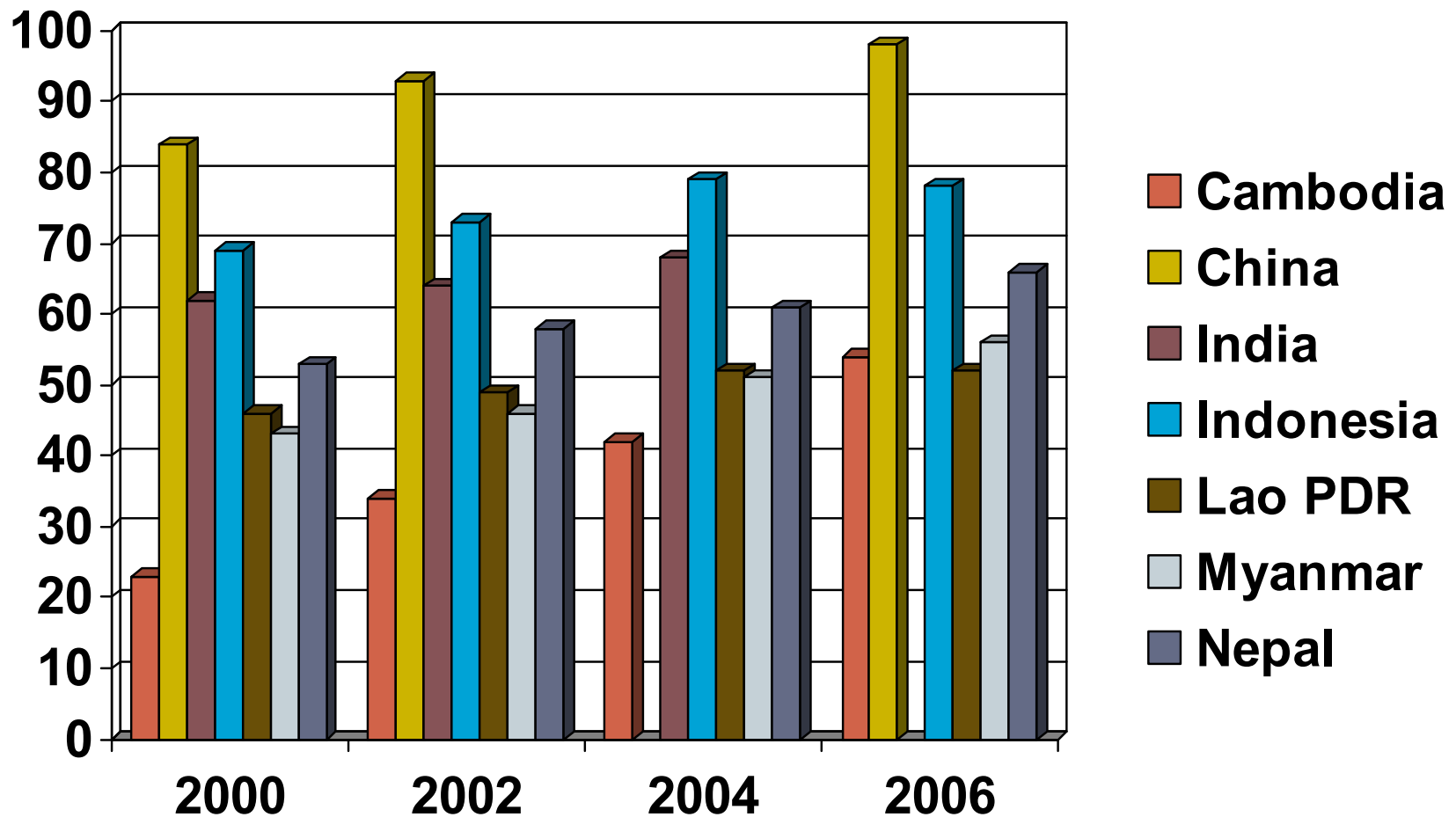


- ... is important for reasons other than HIV prevention
- ... to decrease fear, insecurity, confusion during adolescence
- ... to prevent unwanted pregnancies
- ... to instill values that are important to establish healthy and loving relationships
- → Focus of SRHSE may initially be mostly on general population (i.e. heterosexual) youth

# Can we also reach Most at Risk adolescents (MARA) through schools?

- Depends on the country - but answer is increasingly 'yes' as enrollment is growing...
- Include non-formal and vocational schools
- Gross Enrolment Ratio: GER is calculated by expressing the number of students enrolled in education, regardless of age, as a percentage of the population of official school age for the three levels

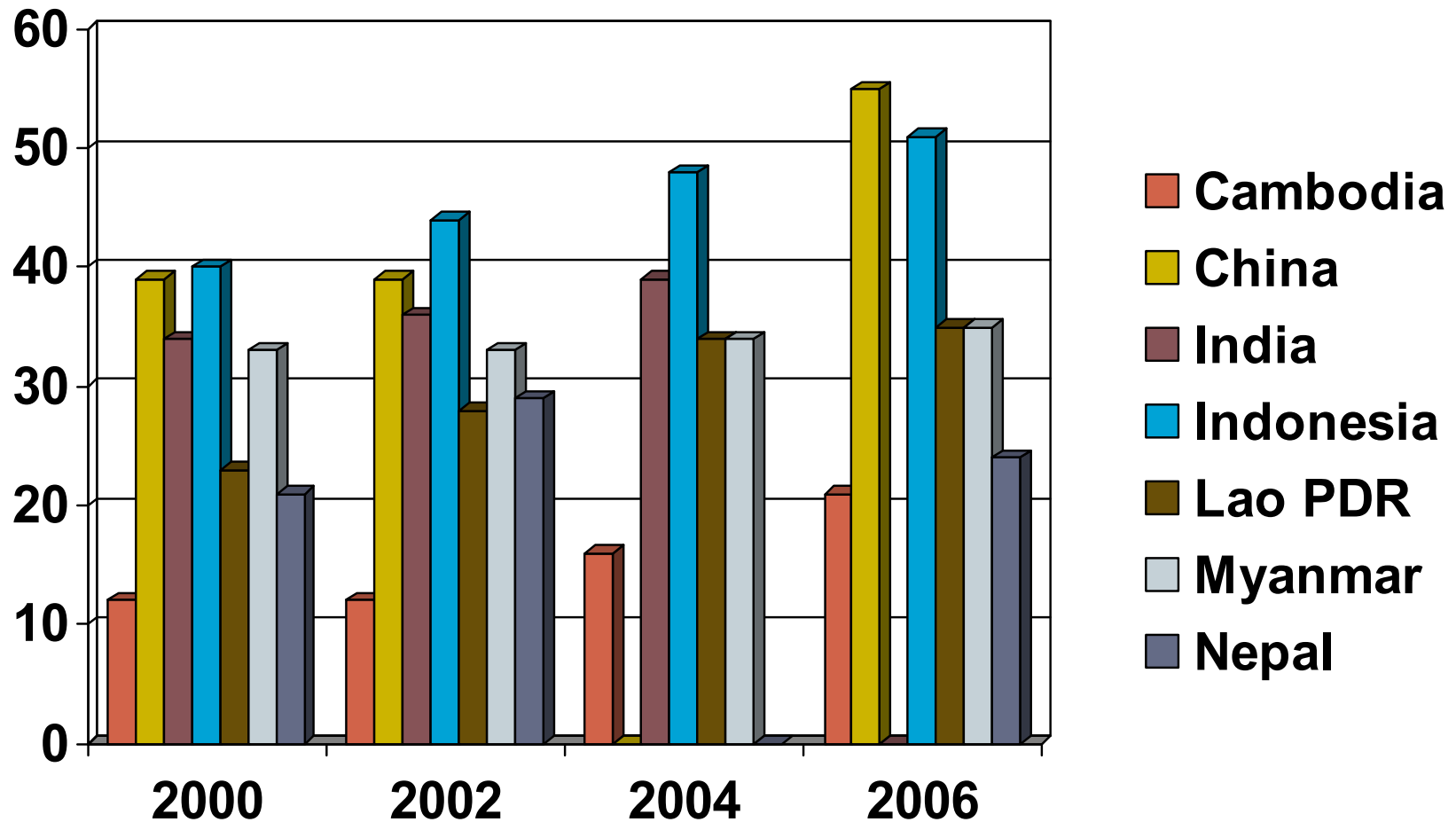
# Lower-Secondary School Gross Enrolment Ratios



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics website



# Upper-Secondary School Gross Enrolment Ratios



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics website

# Secondary Education GER:



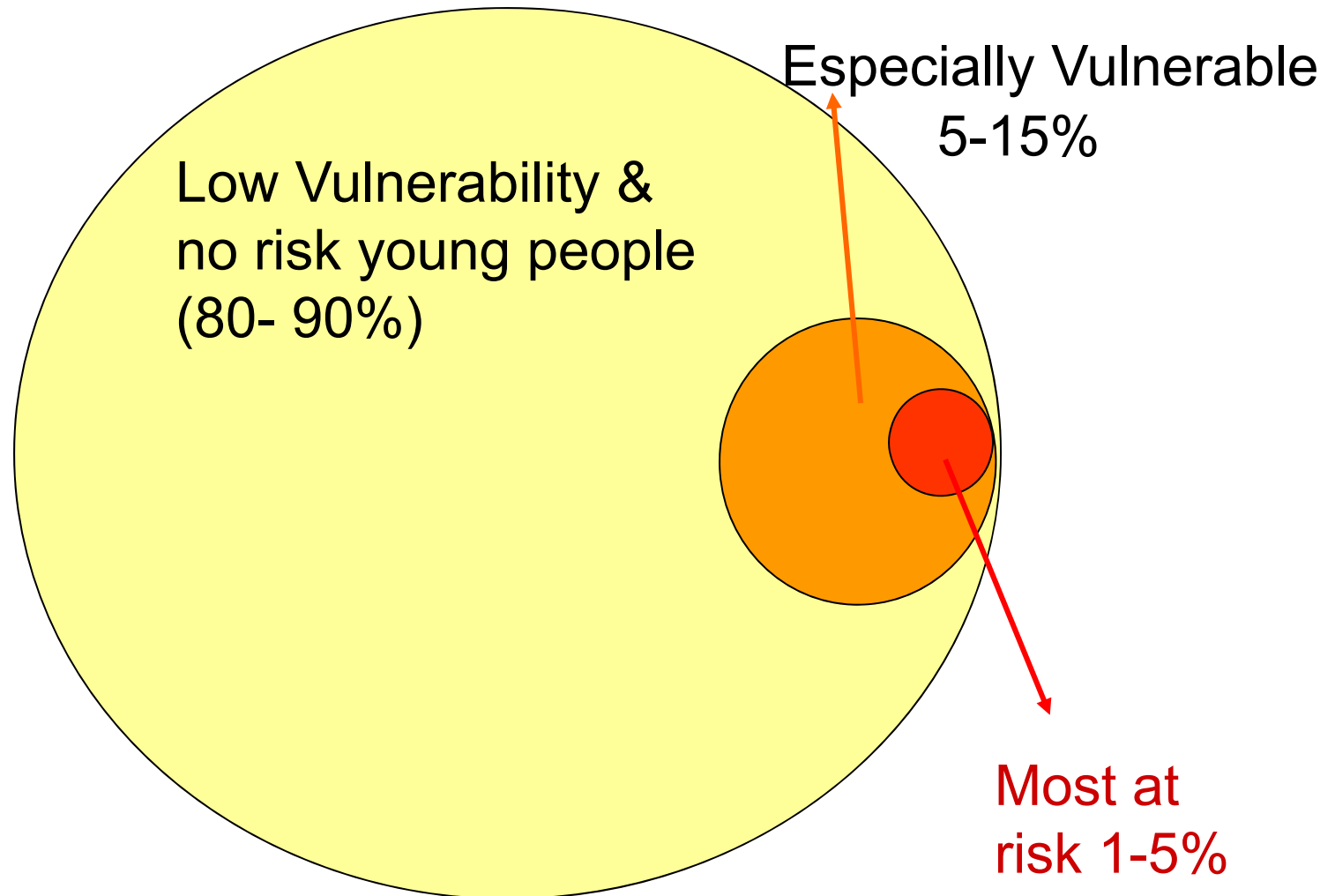
- Between 1999 and 2005, GER in East Asia & Pacific rose from 64% to 73%;
- GER <50% in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar
- Between 1999 and 2005, GER in South and West Asia rose from 74% to 83%;
- GER lowest in Afghanistan (16%) and Pakistan (27%)
- Strong gender disparities in secondary GER

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO 2008

# Mismatch between epidemiology and HIV prevention programming for youth

- In nearly all cases the Government, including the education sector, are programming for HIV prevention as if all youth have the same odds to get HIV....
- ..or...
- They end up focusing on providing knowledge and changing behaviors that are least urgent to change (I.e. preventing heterosexual casual sex / promoting abstinence rather than focusing on sex work, injecting drug use, male - male sex)

# Not all adolescents and young people in Asia and the Pacific are at the same level of risk or vulnerability to HIV



# Overall recommendation:



- Prioritise HIV resources and investment in programmes that provide comprehensive HIV prevention for young people engaging in high risk behaviors

# Key Supporting Recommendations

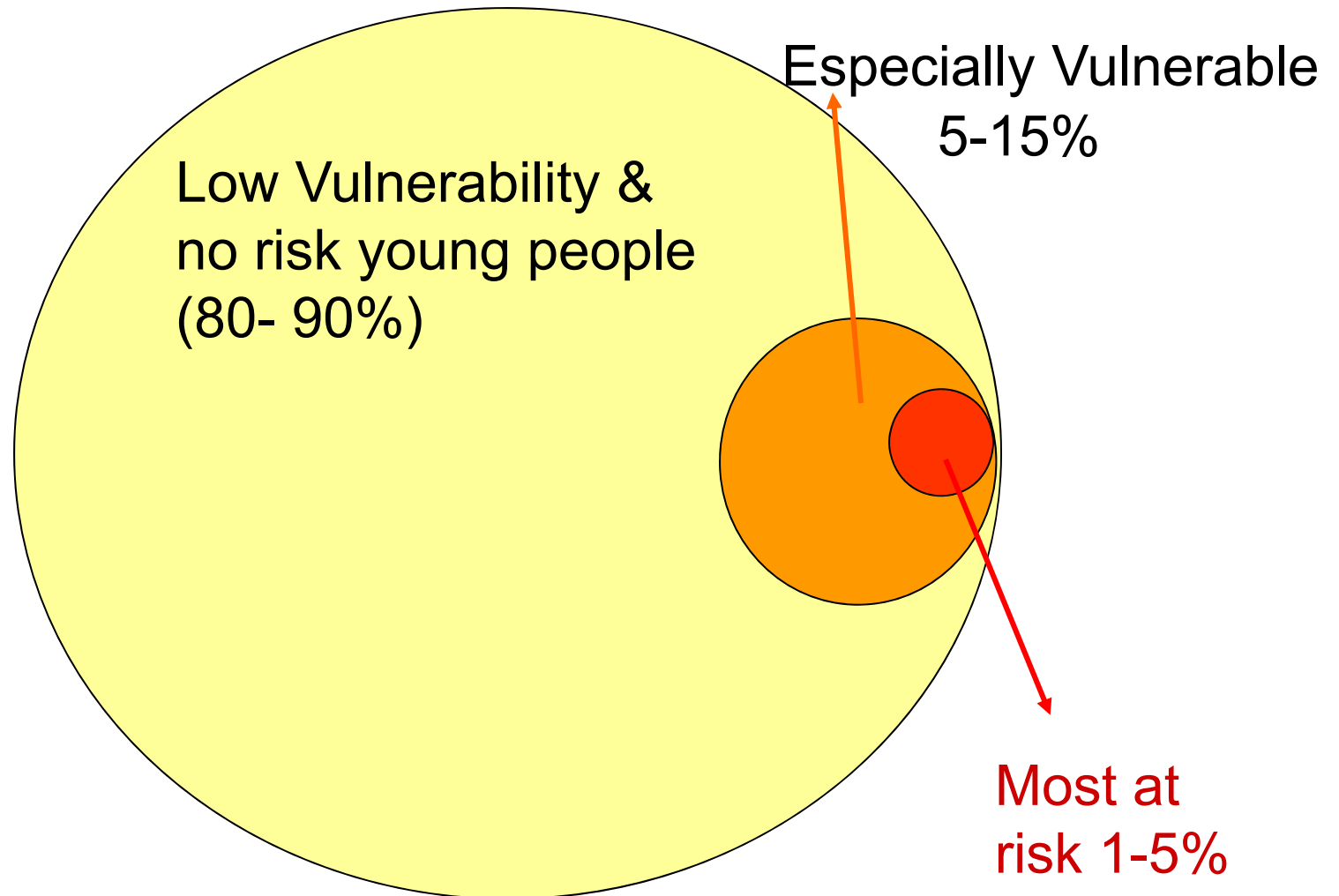
- 1. Invest in prevention for adolescents and young people depending on their level of HIV risk and vulnerability
- “*Most-at-risk adolescents and young people*”: defined as those already engaging in high risk behaviors
- “*Especially vulnerable adolescents and young people*”: defined as those who are more vulnerable to start engaging in high risk behaviors.
- “*Low risk adolescents and young people*”: the majority of adolescents and young people in Asia whose behaviours and situation place them at little or no risk of HIV infection
- 2. Develop / integrate age-appropriate HIV prevention strategies and interventions for ‘most at risk populations’

## Most at-risk adolescents (MARAs) and especially vulnerable adolescents (EVAs)

For HIV programming purposes it is critical to distinguish between the concepts of risk and vulnerability

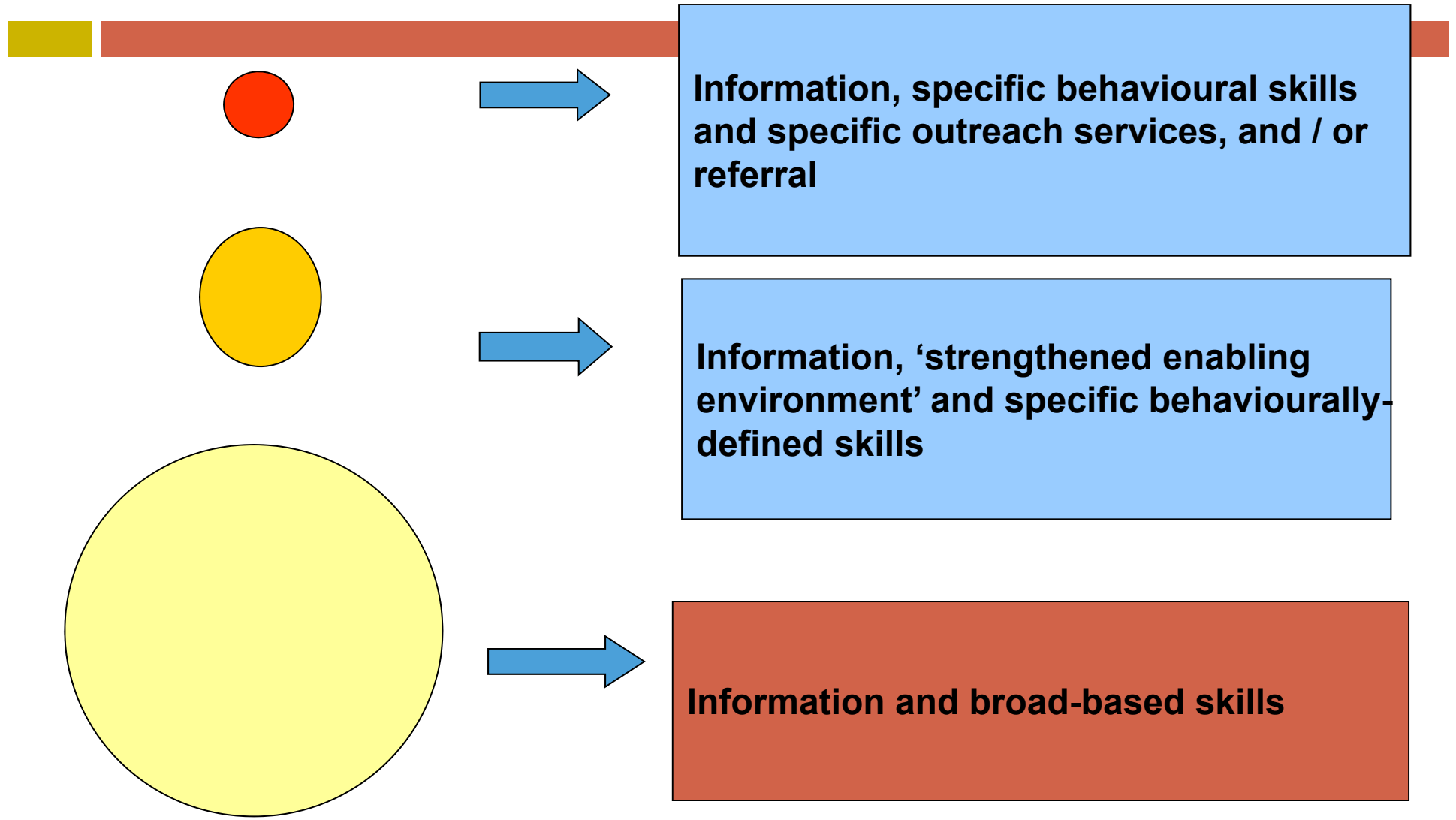
- ❑ Prevention interventions to reduce risk are directed towards individuals to change their risk behaviour – i.e. These individuals **are already engaging in risk behaviors**
- ❑ Programmatic responses to reduce vulnerability need to promote adoption of positive behaviours as well as address broader structural issues of a safe and supportive environment (such as supportive peers, parents and social norms, non-discriminatory policies) and to reduce gender inequalities, poverty, unemployment, migration and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation – i.e. These responses aim to **reduce the chance that individuals will start engaging in risk behaviors**

Because not all adolescents and young people in Asia and the Pacific are at the same level of risk or vulnerability to HIV...

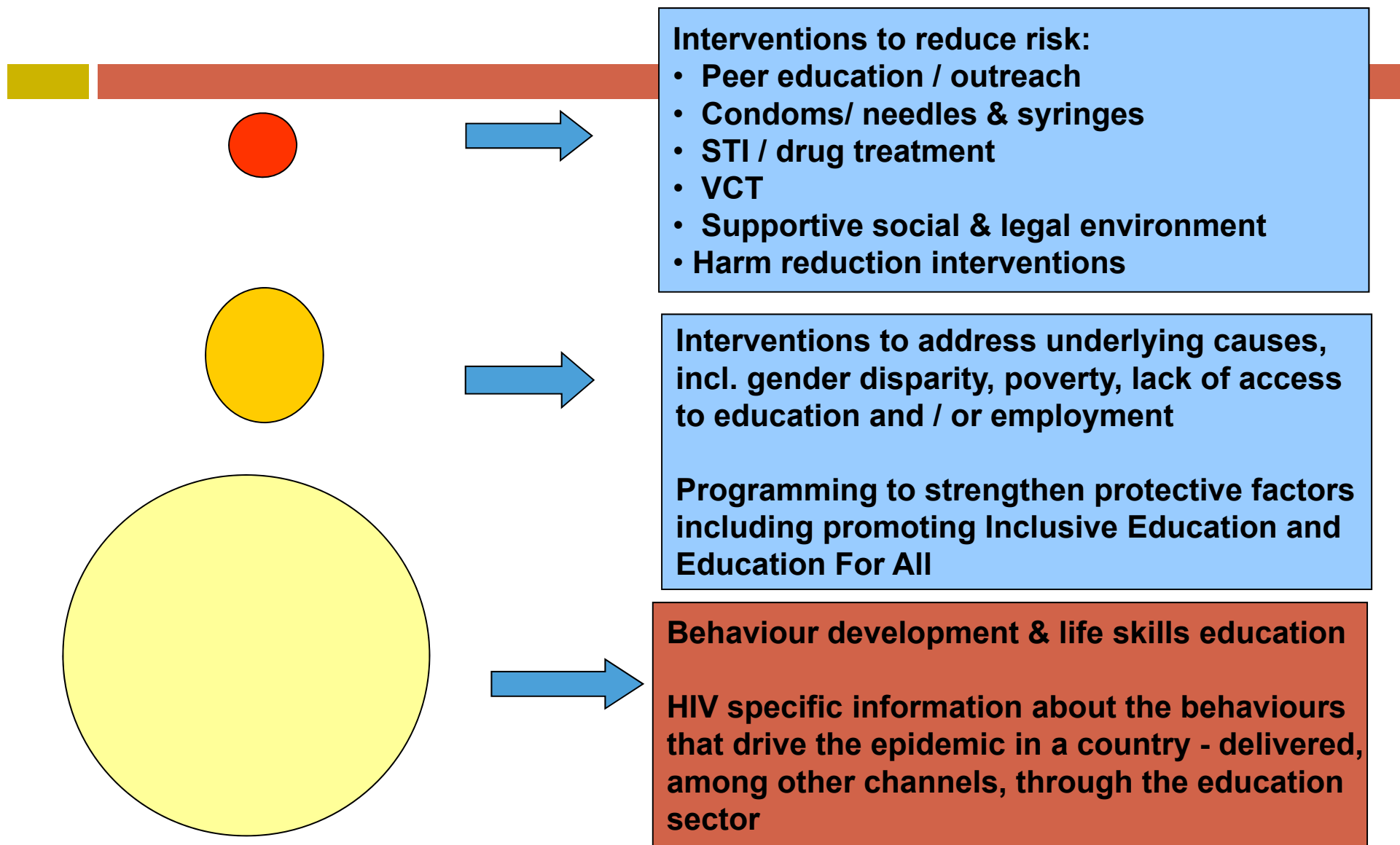




# Intervention strategies should be different!



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# For adolescents engaging in high risk behaviors...

- Unsafe sex in the context of sex work, unsafe male to male sex / anal sex and unsafe injecting drug use should (at least) be specifically mentioned as drivers of the HIV epidemic in Sex, Relationships and HIV education
- Not only because youth engaging in these behaviors may be in school...
- ... after they leave school, they may be exposed...
- Or they may have friends outside school who may already be exposed.
- Links to 'adult' services?



IMPLICATIONS  
FOR  
EDUCATION  
SECTOR ?

# Especially vulnerable adolescents and young people

- For those who are most vulnerable to start engaging in high risk behaviors, a wider, less HIV-specific approach is needed, strengthening their 'social safety net'.
- Links to wider community



**IMPLICATIONS  
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# Low risk adolescents and young people

- For the major proportion of Asia's adolescents and young people who live in environments where specific risk behaviours are very minimal and where HIV prevalence is very low or negligible – it is recommended that messages, attitudes and skills are integrated into existing subjects / activities



**IMPLICATIONS  
FOR EDUCATION  
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# THANK YOU



- Dr Chaiyos of UNFPA for inputs to the paper on which this PPT was based...
- All of you ... for your attention!
- For more info pls contact:
  
- Jan W de Lind van Wijngaarden - [j.wijngaarden@unesco.org](mailto:j.wijngaarden@unesco.org)