HIV TRANSMISSION FROM HUSBANDS TO WIVES
IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER AND CLASS RELATIONS,
AN URBAN SLUM AREA, PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to describe the relationship between gender/class and power relations and the phenomena of HIV transmission from husbands to wives by using socialist feminist theory. Purposive sampling was employed in this study. In-depth interviews as qualitative research were conducted in the urban slum Boeng Kak area, in the center of Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. Nine wives living with HIV/AIDS were selected as key informants. Another three husbands living with HIV/AIDS were also interviewed as secondary informants. Data was collected during in a period of three months from July to September 2004.

It was found that the patriarchal capitalist structure has affected the lives of husbands and wives, particularly on sexuality, sexual practices and has also indirect or direct effects on the phenomena and process of HIV/AIDS transmission in which husbands are playing dominant roles in heterosexual relations both inside and outside home. In this capitalist male-dominated society, the social constructed relations in gender and social norms and social classes shape male supremacy and female subordination in all sphere of life. This type of socially structure supports husbands having more freedom in sexuality and sexual practices in their sphere of life, including playing in extra-marital sexual relations, involving sexual risk conditions, making them to be vulnerable to HIV infection. HIV-infected husbands continue to spread the virus to their conjugal partners in intra-marital sexual relations. Recommendations for the application of HIV/AIDS intervention program and for further research study in this urban slum area are raised.

KEY WORDS: HIV/AIDS transmission/ URBAN SLUM/ GENDER RELATIONS/ SOCIAL NORMS/ SEXUALITY/ SEXUAL PRACTICES/ INTRA-MARITAL SEX/ PATRIARCHAL CAPITALISM/ SOCIALIST FEMINIST.