

### 3. WHAT NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE INITIATING INTERVENTION/S

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#### Four essential pre-requisites before launching an intervention

- ◆ Conduct situation and response assessment and implement interventions based on the assessment findings without delay.
- ◆ Ensure political and organisational commitment during situation and response assessment.
- ◆ Map resources and ensure appropriate allocation during situation and response assessment.
- ◆ Assess capacity of the agency planning to undertake intervention. This should include identification of the nature of inputs that might be required at different stages of intervention and the agency / individual who could provide them.

One of the critical elements for an effective public health response to any emerging epidemic is the promptness with which interventions are implemented. An essential prerequisite for such a rapid response is an assessment of the situation. However, the assessment should not be viewed as a 'one off' activity, which needs to be carried out only once before launching an intervention. In fact, in the field of drug use and HIV, scenarios change drastically under the influence of different determinants. It is essential, therefore, to reassess the ground-level drug and HIV situation and possible responses. This would require mapping of changing patterns and practices of drug use, documenting of altered risk perceptions, and analysis of newer socio-political determinants which could impact drug use and HIV vulnerability. These would, therefore, constitute important modifiers to ongoing interventions. As a result, interventions that fail to take the above into consideration fall short of the desired impact (Figure 1). It is also important to remember that the harm caused by drug use also tend to be greater if there is any delay in implementing interventions. Two other considerations that, therefore, appear crucial are commitment (at the organisational as well as political level) and the mapping of resources that can be tapped later for intervention development and implementation in order to ensure sustainability. Both these considerations should be taken care of during any assessment exercise.

Finally, a capacity assessment of the agency planning to undertake the intervention should be carried out at the beginning and should be able to guide the programme on different inputs that might

be required at a very early stage as well as during different phases in the life of an intervention programme.

**Figure 1: Assessment-intervention cycle** (Please note that the circle is an open and evolving one.)

