

50m Asian women at risk of HIV infection: UNAIDS

BALI: Fifty million women in Asia are at risk of being infected with HIV because of the risky sexual behaviour of their husbands or boyfriends, leading health experts said in a report on Tuesday.

More than 90 per cent of the 1.7 million women now living with HIV in Asia became infected while being in monogamous, long-term relationships with men who engaged in risky sex behaviour, the report launched by UNAIDS said. These include men who had other sexual partners or who were drug users.

"We need to target men who engage in paid sex, injecting drug users, men who have sex

with men, who can transmit the virus to their partners," Jean D'Cunha, regional director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in South Asia, told a news conference held on the margins of an HIV/AIDS conference in Bali. "We need to question the attitudes, values and behaviour and transform these so that women would be less vulnerable to HIV/AIDS."

Maire Bopp-Allport, head of the Pacific Islands Aids Foundation, contracted the AIDS virus from her boyfriend around 1996. Today, she is a familiar figure in the global fight against the disease.—Reuters