

HIV PREVENTION TRAINING IN MALI



Local school children in the village of Sirakoroba perform skits to inform their peers and community members about HIV/AIDS.

As Mali faces a steeply inclining HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, the need to increase awareness of the disease becomes more urgent in local communities. World Education seeks to address this need with a sweeping initiative to educate and engage teachers, parents, and students in a collaborative effort to confront the epidemic. The project trains and supports primary school parents' associations (Associations des Parents d'Elèves, or APEs) to disseminate HIV/AIDS awareness information.

Parents learn more than medical information. In addition to covering the modes of HIV transmission and strategies people can use to protect

themselves, the trainers discuss how HIV manifests itself in the Malian context. The parents discuss the broad economic and social consequences of the epidemic, and particularly its debilitating impact on the education sector, where schools lose teachers to HIV/AIDS and children miss school to take care of parents or siblings. After the training, the parents choose actions they can implement in their schools and communities to address the situation.

The initiative's objectives are twofold: to fortify the capabilities and overall impact of APEs and to identify a group of Malians to serve as a national training resource for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. The initial ten months of training was funded by World Education and USAID and used a training of trainers (TOT) model that built on previous World Education efforts and relationships to strengthen APEs. World Education worked with two Malian NGOs which received funding and technical assistance in implementing this activity. An additional 13 NGOs received training services and smaller grants to design their own HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

Mr. Seydou Konaté recognized that radio represented an ideal medium to discuss HIV/AIDS, as it avoided the stigma, embarrassment, and traditional taboos that can make face-to-face communication about HIV/AIDS difficult. A member of his local APE, Mr. Konaté participated in an HIV/AIDS training program offered through CRADE, a local NGO partner supported by World Education. He then began broadcasting HIV/AIDS information to his community. He praises radio for its reach, "One can listen to the radio anywhere—at home, somewhere in the village or in the fields, and have access to all the information that the APE is giving regarding HIV/AIDS."



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Mr. Konaté's efforts were well received by the residents of his village, Touna. Young people now routinely seek him out to ask questions about the epidemic. Konaté notes that the education program covers the essentials of home-based care and proper condom use. He concludes, "Thanks to this system, I think that today, in my village, it would be very difficult to find anyone of the age of procreation who has not received information about the modes of transmission and prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS."



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Fifteen local NGO partners in Mali started community awareness programs, and World Education has collected data to assess the viability of this approach as a means of increasing awareness and preventing further HIV transmission. World Education also helped create "Le Karité," a quarterly bulletin to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas surrounding the epidemic.

Anecdotal evidence shows how community ownership and creativity continue long after the completion of World Education activities. A year after the training, World Education returned to the village of Sirakoroba to find the community still actively combating the epidemic. Trained APE members continued to educate community members on the modes of HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention. Local schoolteachers were now teaching HIV awareness classes to students. To raise funds for future initiatives, children of the community performed a play to dramatize the impact of AIDS on the education sector. Drawing on all available resources, the village even organized sporting events and cultural activities to promote the fight against HIV/AIDS.

For more information about World Education projects that address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Mali and elsewhere, please go to www.worlded.org, or contact:

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