

materials for general use in the region (e.g., a condom-use brochure and poster, T-shirts bearing five AIDS-related slogans and three radioslots broadcast during Carnival). It also has provided technical assistance for the introduction and management of a national AIDS hotline.

CRIDIS, in Mexico, is part of the National AIDS Commission (CONASIDA) and thus has a broader documentation function concerning medical, social, legal and political aspects of the AIDS epidemic. This centre has been active in setting up decentralized branches within Mexico and the Central American region.

AIDSED, part of UNESCO, counts the UNESCO National Commissions and a large network of educational institutions and communication media as its natural partners. For other regional centres, linking with organizations in different sectors and different countries has thus far proved more difficult, because of their location and institutional support or because of the size and complexity of the regions they serve (different needs, language problems

and many and/or large countries and populations).

To date GPA support for the centres has consisted of financial support, coordination of the centre network and the supply of technical assistance in database management and evaluation of educational material.

Future plans vary per centre according to their developmental stages. Whereas CRIDIS and CAIEC are well under way, CUSS/CREDLS and WHO/SPC are only beginning their work. Differences in the centres' complementary activities and functions also will influence future work. For example, while CAIEC will facilitate in-country production of educational materials and increase capabilities for the promotion of counselling activities, CRIDIS will continue to decentralize its work. However, all centres plan to strengthen their services for the National AIDS Committees.

A concern shared by all the centres is their sustainability in the future. Different options, discussed at the Mexico meeting, will be pursued in the coming year. ■

## PROGRAMME FEATURE

### Crash course in survival skills: reaching street children in Zambia

V.C. Mouli, J.C. Phiri and K.N. Rao

**As part of its comprehensive AIDS prevention and education programme, the Copperbelt Health Education Project (CHEP) in Kitwe, Zambia, has begun a unique course for street children in which AIDS information and education, personal skills development and training aimed at increasing employment opportunities are combined. It also creates a supportive social environment.**

**Z**ambia's population is very young: about 61% of the nation's inhabitants are younger than 20 years. The schools are finding it hard to keep pace with population growth and many children are unable to continue their studies after primary school; coupled with few employment opportunities in the formal sector, this means that many school leavers must turn to the informal employment sector, particularly in the towns and cities, as Zambia is the third most urbanized country in Africa. Some work as street-corner vendors, house servants or nannies, bar workers and entertainers in

night clubs; others may turn to petty black marketeering or crime.

These youths are difficult to reach with AIDS-related information through established institutional networks such as schools, young Christian groups, etc. Distribution of information on AIDS via street workers also has not appeared to be accomplishing the objectives sought.

CHEP therefore decided it was necessary to embark on a new approach in order to reach these young people. The programme objectives were to:

- provide basic information and create concern (not fear) about AIDS,

- impart practical skills (e.g., how to use condoms),
- impart assertion skills (e.g., how to say "no"),
- increase self-esteem and
- stimulate peer education and generate peer-group support for non-risk or low-risk sexual behaviour.

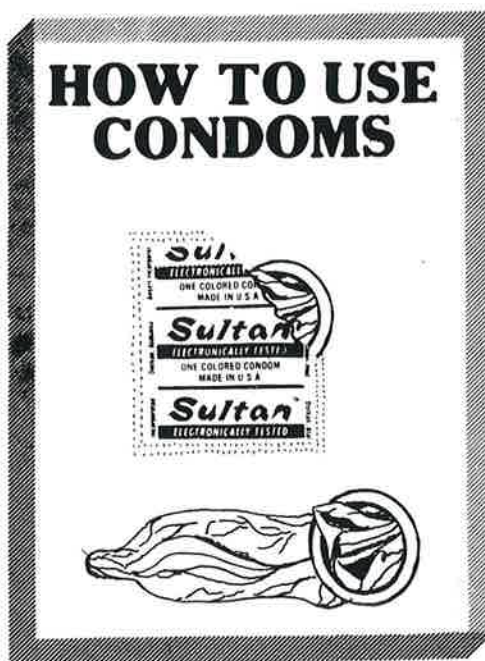
### What do the youths need?

Focus group discussions with the target group revealed that they had many concerns and AIDS was not the most important one. Their concerns were therefore listed and CHEP decided to address as many of them as possible, which led to the idea of a "crash course in survival skills".

The objectives of the five-day course are to: provide information and education on AIDS along with information on a range of other topics which concern the youths and affect their lives; encourage them to examine their present life-styles and the various realistic options/choices available; and help them make informed decisions.

Since most of the target-group members have a working knowledge of English, this language is used for the presentations.

*The condom use pamphlet given to participants in the Copperbelt Health Education Project's "crash course in survival skills"*



Educational materials are provided free of charge as are mid-morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. On the fifth day the participants receive a small amount of money to cover their local transport expenses; this recompensation is given purposely on the

last day so as to encourage their full participation throughout the course.

### Course content

In order to make the course as down-to-earth as possible, CHEP has recruited resource persons from a variety of institutions to act as instructors in the different sessions; each day of the course focuses on a different aspect of survival skills.

Day 1 begins with a morning session during which the youths are encouraged to share their best life experiences with one another; this serves as an "ice-breaker" and generates some rapport within the group. The second part of the day is devoted to "staying healthy": information is provided by CHEP and Ministry of Health staff members on AIDS, STDs, drug and alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking. Among the materials given to the participants are a pamphlet on condom use and informational booklets on AIDS and STDs (all produced by CHEP); the *Karate Kids* video (produced by Street Kids International) is shown as well. This session ends with a visit to a local hospital where the youths learn about the procedures followed in visiting clinics.

On the second day, the course participants discuss ways to stay within the law, since some of them have unfortunately been arrested in the past for involvement in criminal activities such as theft or rape. A local police officer gives a talk and answers questions whereafter the group visits a local police station to see the cells where prisoners are detained.

The entire third day is spent at the Flame Tree Farm Training Centre, a Roman-Catholic mission-run farm where people can follow a one-year course preparing them for an agricultural career. Many of the course participants are third-generation city dwellers who have not considered farming as an occupation; the visit to the farm is intended to suggest to them that there are employment opportunities available in farming and that rural life can be fun, too. After a tour of the Centre, the participants are treated as Centre trainees for the full day and given a chance to ask questions and experience what a trainee's life is like.

On day 4 attention is devoted to urban-oriented employment opportunities; the youths are educated on how to run a successful small business by staff members of

the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. This training session – which forms an introduction to the subject – includes basic arithmetic and accountancy lessons in which concepts such as profit, loss, turnover, capital, etc. are discussed.

The course ends with a day devoted by Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation staff members to skills training opportunities in the Copperbelt District. Visits are paid to two vocational training centres (whose courses are mostly subsidized) and the participants receive a list of institutions where they can apply for training. Since virtually no advisory services exist for the target group, they are given application forms and details on the courses as well as guidance on application procedures.

The course is scheduled to be offered three or four times per month as part of the regular programme at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe. So far it has been given four times with a 15-20 participants in each course.

## Course follow-up

*Two pages from the brochure for adult men and women distributed to CHEP's "crash course in survival skills"*

After about two months, CHEP staff members visit the course participants with a view to determining two points: the

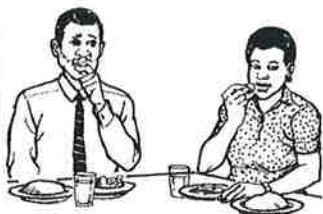
youths' opinion of the course itself and the impact of the course on their lives. A conscious choice was made not to conduct group evaluations; CHEP considers it more advantageous to carry out short individual discussions and to ensure that the evaluation is non-judgemental in nature since the worst thing would be for a course participant to leave the evaluation session convinced that he/she was a failure. The evaluations thus consist of short 10- to 15-minute interviews in which questions such as the following can come up:

- Have you had an STD since you completed the course?
- If the answer to the previous question is yes: have you been to the clinic for proper treatment?
- How is your business doing? Have you made any changes since you undertook the course?
- What are your future plans?
- Have you had any trouble with the police?

In addition to assessing the course's impact, these interviews also help to reinforce some of the messages given during the course on a one-to-one basis.

## YOU CANNOT GET AIDS FROM:

**EATING TOGETHER**  
AIDS germs are not spread through food, drinks, plates, glasses and similar items.



**SHARING TOILETS OR LATRINES**  
AIDS germs are not spread through toilet seats, wash basins and bath tubs.

**COUGHING OR SNEEZING**  
AIDS germs are not spread through the AIR.



**INSECT BITES**  
AIDS germs are not spread by mosquitoes or other insects.

## WHO CAN GET AIDS?



AIDS is not a problem of prostitutes and their clients only!

**Any person who has sex with many different people, has a high chance of catching AIDS**

If you have casual sex even once in a while, you are still at risk of catching AIDS.

*People who have sexually transmitted diseases such as Syphilis (Akasele) or Chancroid (Bola bola) have open sores on the sex organs.*

*It is much easier for AIDS germs to enter the body through these open sores than through normal, healthy skin, (even if these sores are small.)*



The evaluation talks held with the first graduates revealed that the youths consider the sessions on how to run a successful business the most important part of the course; this was taken into consideration for the sessions on health education in which emphasis is now placed on the fact that if the youths become ill, they will be unable to continue earning an income – illness prevention thus makes good business sense. Another point which has become clear is that the course instructors must not be judgemental in their approach; special care must be taken to ensure an appropriate stance in their discussions with the young people.

In order to expand the programme, CHEP will explore possibilities of collaboration with the police, who could perhaps refer first offenders (for petty offences) to them. They are also looking into involving political leaders in the recruit-

ment of course participants. Many members of the target group belong to informal gangs with one or more leaders who are well-known locally; it is hoped that administrative leaders such as the Youth League Chairman, Women's League Chairperson, etc., will be able to contact "gang leaders" who can encourage the Mishanga boys to participate in the course since the gangs are perhaps the only networks through which they can be reached. If youth leaders can be involved in the course, they may begin to act as peer educators and this multiplier effect is viewed as perhaps being the most important outcome of the programme. Future plans include expanding the programme to young women as well. ■

V.C. Mouli, J.C. Phiri and K.N. Rao,  
Copperbelt Health Education Project, P.O. Box 23567, Kitwe, Zambia.

## COUNTRY WATCH

This regular column focuses on innovative AIDS health promotion materials and strategies. Brief notes from readers on evaluation results, rapid assessments or pre-testing are also included. Suggestions from readers on items for this column are appreciated.

### Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, 100 bar workers have been trained to promote condom use and provide education on AIDS to their col-

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The two cards used in Ethiopia to explain how HIV infection progresses to AIDS analogous to a tree dying from a termite infestation.

leagues. The programme was developed by the Department of AIDS Control (DAC), with assistance from WHO, and implemented in March 1990 in Nazareth, a trading town of 95,000 inhabitants. The objective