

Effectiveness of HIV/AIDS Community Trainings



During a training in Boma, young trainees present the results of their 'decision-making' group exercise.

“Why can't you get HIV through mosquito bites?” “I heard on the radio that there is a cure for HIV. Is this true?” “Where can someone get treatment for STIs?” These are just a few of the many questions volunteers are asked during community trainings in HIV/AIDS and health. Like many countries in Africa, Tanzania is facing a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic whose negative impact threatens not only individuals but also the growth of the country. Even though awareness of the disease is almost universal (99.5%), comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention is much lower (50%) (Tanzania HIV/AIDS Indicator Survey, 2003-04).

In response to this crisis of knowledge, GSC has teamed up with local community members and organizations to offer week long trainings in HIV/AIDS prevention to urban and rural community groups, churches, and vocational school students. Volunteers, in collaboration with Tanzanian counterparts, provide lessons that not only include information on HIV transmission and prevention but also cover STI treatment, life skills, stigma, and nutrition. Trainees also learn practical skills such as how to properly use a condom, how to communicating effectively, and how to think critically about decisions that affect their health.

In addition, in response to the need for people to know their status, in 2006, GSC incorporated HIV testing into community trainings. At the conclusion of training, a mobile voluntary counseling and testing unit visits the village to test all who are ready. As a result of adding this voluntary counseling and testing component, approximately 80% of participants choose to be tested.

Since 2001, GSC's HIV/AIDS community trainings have educated over 10,000 people in Tanzania with the results gathered from pre and post surveys showing a positive impact. Trainees gained an increased awareness of their personal risk and after training, less people considered AIDS a disease of immoral people. In addition, knowledge of specific ways HIV can and cannot be transmitted increased as did knowledge of prevention methods and the importance of testing. As a result of GSC trainings, trainees have clearly moved from a general awareness of HIV/AIDS to comprehensive knowledge!



Proud trainees in Njiro receive certificates of completion.