

Fight Against HIV/AIDS Gains Local Support

Challenge

Namibia has one of the world's highest HIV/AIDS infection rates. Behavior change programs are critical to curbing the growth of the disease which is still on an upward trajectory. The workforce is an important target audience - to reduce infection rates and protect economic growth. Equally important is reaching workforce managers to help them understand the consequences of HIV/AIDS and adopt measures to lessen its impact.



Photo: FHI/WBeverly Figaji

Employees of the Hansa Brewery discuss their HIV/AIDS education program

“I am particularly thrilled to see how far the Multi-Purpose Centre has gone to achieve its goals and to see how well it has served the community of Walvis Bay.”

– Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Richard Kamwi

Results

The Center, with one of Namibia's most successful workplace programs, has reached over 3,100 workers in Walvis Bay which represents 82% of the workforce within the targeted companies. Remarkably, the Center has been able to reach out to regional government and private sector organizations to fund other aspects of its operations as well. Currently at least 49 organizations are making donations. Income diversification and cost recovery have allowed the Center to expand its services to include voluntary counseling and testing, as well as enhanced care and support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Initiative

Since opening in 2001, the Kuisebmond Multi-Purpose Center has been supported by a USAID grant to Family Health International. It has been central to public and private efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in the port city of Walvis Bay, Namibia. Among its many HIV/AIDS related services is a successful effort to take the fight against HIV/AIDS into the workplace.

The Center has worked with thirteen businesses to establish or strengthen their peer education programs. Peer educators receive an intensive five day course focusing on communication skills, basic facts of HIV, and use of a specially designed peer education manual. Subsequently, each peer educator receives a kit to assist in monthly workplace sessions, including visual aids; participates in monthly discussion sessions with other educators; and refresher training.

By instituting a “fee for service” for its workplace initiatives, the MPC has been able to recover an estimated 60 to 70 percent of its training costs during FY 2003.