



Open Your Eyes! Open Your Heart!

Challenge

According to Ministry of Health data in Romania, 4,591 persons (3,526 children and 1,065 adults) are currently living with AIDS, and another 5,825 (4,416 children and 1,409 adults) are HIV-positive but have not developed AIDS. A World Bank report states that the epidemic in the region will grow significantly during the next five to ten years even with more effective preventive efforts. Other sexually transmitted infections are also increasing, and the potential for heterosexual transmission is high because of human trafficking, prostitution, and other risky behaviors. A lack of information about how the disease is spread exacerbates the already high-risk levels.



Photo: JSI staffperson

Human Red Ribbon in Bucharest, December 2002

“Through this campaign, we remember the children who have died, and those who have been forgotten. Many of them... were themselves orphans.”

- Diana Cristescu, Iasi project coordinator

Results

The 2002 AIDS campaign educated one-third of the Romanian population through its activities and events. While discrimination remains a problem, it is now openly discussed, even in schools. Additional campaigns in 2003 and for 2004 have been successfully modeled after the Campaign 2002's example.

Initiative

In collaboration with the UN and the National Ministry of Health in Romania, USAID sponsored an annual AIDS awareness campaign - coinciding with World AIDS Day - to educate the public and combat discrimination faced by those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The campaign included informational sessions in schools, factories, hospitals, and other locations to present correct information about HIV/AIDS, in order to combat discriminatory attitudes toward HIV-positive persons.

Local NGOs in cities throughout Romania organized human ribbons of remembrance to commemorate those lost to the AIDS epidemic and to raise public awareness. Public service announcements on TV and radio were used to educate Romanians about protecting themselves and those they love.

