

AFRICA KENYA, TANZANIA, SOUTH AFRICA AND MALAWI

MAN ENOUGH

ADDRESSING MASCULINITY IN THE HIV AND AIDS PANDEMIC

Women are at greater risk of contracting HIV than men and tend to be worse affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. But men play a significant role in the spread of the disease because of cultural norms and notions of masculinity. In order to address these issues, Canadian Churches in Action (CCA) has begun to train its partners in Africa to look at the pandemic through the lens of gender, with particular emphasis on the role men play in the pandemic.



Project title

Gender and human rights in HIV and AIDS education in Africa

ACT member

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF)

Implementing partner

Canadian Churches in Action (CCA) in collaboration with Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT) African Partner Organisations

Funders

Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D) Canadian Baptist Ministries United Church of Canada

Location

Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Malawi

“Gender equality must be at the core of all our actions. Together we must energise the global response to AIDS, while vigorously advancing gender equality.”

Michel Sidibé UNAIDS Executive Director

Gender inequality the crux of the HIV crisis

In sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 60% of people living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are women. Gender inequality and the violation of human rights make women and girls particularly susceptible to HIV. Women and girls often lack control over their bodies and information about HIV, while also having fewer resources to allow them to take preventative measures. Women face two main disadvantages in negotiating safe sex: their economic dependency and their lack of legal protection from violence. Certain traditions and customs, including bridal inheritance, polygamy and early marriage, place women in situations that increase their risk of contracting HIV, which can cause acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

Women's lives are also more affected by HIV than men's. In many situations, it is the woman's role to care for those who are sick or dying. It is women, often grandmothers, who care for orphans. Stigmatisation and social exclusion prevent women who have contracted HIV from seeking help or engaging in income-generating activities. Women who are widowed by AIDS can face property or custody disputes or be forced into becoming second wives to their brothers-in-law.

Despite increased awareness that women are more susceptible to HIV for social, cultural, and physiological reasons and despite the fact that women are now being infected by HIV/AIDS at a higher rate than men, many organisations continue to focus on promiscuity and 'risky behaviour' as priority areas for prevention. The fight against the pandemic largely overlooks gender inequality in social, cultural, political and economic spheres. Meanwhile, local or cultural constructions of masculinity can also play a large role in the spread of the disease. One particular constraint in reducing HIV infection is men's lack of engagement in awareness-raising activities that focus on their behaviour, masculinity² and the rights of women. The lack of focus on equality, coupled with a decrease in funding for HIV programmes, led members of Canadian Churches in Action (CCA) to start a programme to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on target communities.

Assessing agency capacity to address HIV crises

In 2008, CCA conducted an assessment of its African partners' capacity to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS in several communities. The results revealed that, despite good projects and

excellent intentions, few of the partners had adequate training or organisational structures to deal thoroughly with core issues in the crisis, including gender equality and human rights. Few partners had gender or human rights policies for either their own organisations or the projects they ran. Within the organisations, men tended to be in leadership and decision-making roles, while women tended to work first-hand on issues at the grass-roots level. At the project level, data was not disaggregated by gender, which led to weak analysis, evaluation, monitoring and project planning. The assessment exposed the need for an increased awareness of gender equality, with a specific focus on how men's behaviour and notions of masculinity contributed to the spread of HIV. Furthermore, it showed that those affected and/or infected needed to be empowered to exercise their legal and human rights.

Increasing capacity through participatory training

Once the assessment was completed, the focus shifted to training partner staff. It was crucial to the goals and objectives of the project that the African partners were involved both in developing the educational tools that would be needed and in implementing

² Masculinity "pertaining to men. It is used to speak of the roles and behaviour that are traditionally assigned to men and sometimes of the properties or characteristics of men", as defined by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in "Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership", 2010



A member of the Keishkama Trust in South Africa makes a point during a meeting on gender



Participants in a gender workshop in Tanzania relax at the end of training

Men's roles excerpt from toolkit
Men's roles vary, depending on their relationship with others

This project focused on man as

- Husband and boyfriend
- Brother and cousin
- Father and uncle
- Friend and colleague
- Manager and supervisor
- Community leader and faith leader
- Stranger
- Customer
- Teacher
- Celebrity
- Sports star

Gender and human rights in HIV and AIDS education

Training modules

- 1 Introduction and guide for facilitators
- 2 Understanding human rights
- 3 Mainstreaming gender
- 4 Human rights and gender in organisations
- 5 Biblical references

the training. Although an agency was hired to facilitate the project and process, the partners remained active throughout. They guided the curriculum content, development and training; they participated in a training-of-trainers programme; and they continue to replicate the training at regional and sub-regional levels today.

In 2010, CCA produced a training toolkit containing five modules. It was launched at a five-day training-of-trainers workshop to prepare agency staff with community facilitation skills and curriculum knowledge so that they could in turn train others in their organisations and communities. The workshop brought together 26 participants from four African countries, representing 18 of CCA's partner organisations, attended the workshop. As follow-up to the training, CCA is working with its partners to identify ways to support their work and develop tools for measuring results.

Ensuring relevance in differing cultural contexts

To ensure that there was a high level of retention, a commitment to skills transfer and that content was culturally appropriate, the participants were required to bring three skills to the training: related experience in the training of faith and community

leaders in issues of HIV, human rights and/or gender; a good relationship with their colleagues and communities; and a good understanding of community dynamics, particularly relating to gender. Since many of the partners were faith-based organisations, a biblical resource module was included in the training and toolkit. The biblical module aimed to support trainers in linking gender and human rights with biblical references, including Bible passages, prayers and discussion-starters, all of which could be interwoven with the other modules. At the beginning and end of the training, each participant presented plans as to how they would replicate the training and share the new knowledge in their respective organisations and communities.

Addressing masculinity and male behaviour

Besides increasing awareness of how gender inequality and HIV are related, the project also set out to empower people affected and infected by HIV and AIDS to exercise their legal and human rights. To achieve this objective, the training and subsequent activities had a special focus on how men's behaviour and notions of masculinity have contributed to the pandemic and the violation of women's rights. Discussions

focused on two main questions: how can men best use their privilege and power to promote sexual and reproductive health, and how should men's roles in promoting reproductive health link to gender equality?

The key message conveyed was that men can use their privilege and power in several ways to promote sexual and reproductive health (SRH), especially in view of HIV and AIDS. The most immediate way in which men can promote sexual health is through responsible actions in their own sexual lives. Because of their gender roles, men often have power over women in sexual decision-making. With power comes responsibility. Men can use this responsibility to protect themselves and their sexual partners from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI), as well as unwanted pregnancies. Men also have power in the family, the community and the workplace. They can use this power to support gender equality and reduce women's sexual vulnerability.

Promoting gender equality must be central to men's roles in SRH promotion. Women's lower social, economic and political power is at the root of their greater vulnerability to HIV. Increasingly, HIV/AIDS is becoming a women's disease in Africa. In taking action on HIV, men need to listen to women, acting

as allies rather than protectors, and challenge sexist attitudes, behaviours and policies.

Lessons learned

Churches in Africa have been viewed as responding very slowly to issues related to HIV and AIDS and being too cautious in addressing human sexuality through education or prevention strategies. As gender and gender relationships are central to issues of sexuality, CCA decided to develop biblically-based resources to guide discussions, raise awareness and encourage action.

Conclusion

Within the first year of the project's existence, partners are observing successes that include policy changes, adoption of the message in church settings and active participation by both men and women at community level. The 26 participants from the initial training-of-trainers session have provided extensive reports on how they are applying their plans using what they learned about gender and human rights in HIV and AIDS. In 2011, CCA began preparing for a second training course involving more than 20 new African partners in various countries.

Contacts and further reading

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Canadian Churches in Action
<http://churchesinaction.ca/what-were-doing/hiv-aids/>

Silent no more: the untapped potential of the church in addressing sexual violence

www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2011/20110321_Silent_no_more.pdf