

## HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Projects in Kenya

### Delivering Faith-based Youth HIV Prevention Programming through Targeted School and Community Initiatives

Twinning Center partners at the Kenya Episcopal Conference-Catholic Secretariat (KEC-CS) Commission for Education and Religious Education in Nairobi and DePaul University in Chicago are collaborating on the implementation of a youth abstinence and behavior change program targeting children in Kenya's Catholic Schools, as well as other educational institutions that request the programming.

The long-term goal of the partnership is to increase the capacity of KEC-CS to design, implement, sustain, and evaluate their faith-based prevention efforts. Specific objectives include strengthening the Kenyan partner's ability to:

- Train and support teachers in the implementation of a school-based youth abstinence and behavior change program;
- Support diocesan leaders and teachers in the implementation of a complementary Families Matter! program that targets parents; and
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate ongoing updating, improvement, and expansion of these and related programs.

To that end, partners have adapted successful abstinence and behavior change models targeting young people not only to Catholic doctrine and teachings, but also to Kenya's rich and unique cultural heritage. The program they designed together contains two main components: Making Life's Responsible Choices and Families Matter!

Making Life's Responsible Choices is a school-based abstinence and behavior change program for youth that builds on standard HIV prevention information and activities included in the Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology's National AIDS Education Syllabus. Partners incorporated these messages with traditional Catholic and African values, drawing on the rich and varied teachings of both to better arm children

### Kenya Country Overview



Kenya has a severe, generalized HIV epidemic, but in recent years the country has experienced a notable decline in HIV prevalence attributed in part to significant behavioral change and increased access to ART.

National adult HIV prevalence is estimated to have fallen from 10 percent in the late 1990s to about 4.9 percent in 2007. Women face considerably higher risk of HIV infection than men and also experience a shorter life expectancy due to HIV/AIDS. The 7th edition of *AIDS in Kenya* reports an HIV prevalence rate of 8 percent in adult women and 4 percent in adult men. Populations at risk include injecting drug users and commercial sex workers, whose prevalence rates are estimated at 53 percent and 27 percent respectively.

With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Government team in country, the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center currently manages one partnership in Kenya.

with the tools they need to safeguard their health.

Currently, the Making Life's Responsible Choices program is being delivered in nearly 800 Catholic and public-sponsored primary schools within 24 of Kenya's 25 Catholic dioceses, with expansion to 25th diocese expected by the end of 2009. Partners have trained more than 1,500 teachers and some 168,000 pupils have participated in the school-based program since its launch in 2006.

By aiming to increase family involvement in abstinence and behavior change, the Families Matter! program further addresses the unique HIV prevention needs of Kenyan youth. Implementation of this program commenced in 2008 among parents of children aged 11-14 in Machakos Diocese. The program will be expanded to include other dioceses in 2009.

Partners are also working with Radio Waumini, a national Catholic radio station to deliver youth and family-friendly radio messages that enhance both of these programs.



Catholic Secretariat partner Julius Ruto during a teacher training session on the youth HIV prevention program in Western Kenya in October 2008.

As of March 2009, partners have trained more than 1,500 teachers across Kenya to implement the ABY program in Catholic and public-sponsored schools.



Teachers and pupils alike credit the ABY program with opening a dialogue about sensitive subjects including sexuality, HIV and other STIs, pornography, physical and mental abuse, and use of drugs and alcohol.

Pupils like these young ladies at St. Mary's School for Girls in Kericho feel comfortable asking once taboo questions and their teachers are prepared to give them accurate answers thanks to the program.



Thanks to the partnership's work, more than 168,000 school children across Kenya — like these pupils at St. Anthony's School for the Hearing Impaired in Bungoma — have participated in HIV prevention and life skills classes that arm them with the information they need to stay healthy.



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