

# *The SOKA Transformative Peer Counseling Training Workshop for Teens in Partnership with Africa Aids Foundation*

*(July to December 2010)*

The demographic realities in Kenya and their relationship with the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, are greatly alarming and demands a strategic approach to address it transformatively. Sixty five percent (65%) of the Kenyan population is twenty five (25) years and below. Compare this to the reality that the prevalence rate is higher amongst the youths in Kenya. The Henry Kaiser Foundation report in October 2005 indicated that the 'percent of young women, ages 15-24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001 was 12.4 – 18.7% compared to the 8.9% for Sub Saharan Africa and 1.4% for global; while percent of young men, ages 15-24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001 was 4.8 – 7.2% compared to the 4.4% for Sub Saharan Africa and 0.8% for global'. (<http://www.kff.org/hivaids/upload/7356.pdf>)

What a tragedy some would say? This is obvious and the question is so what? SOKA seeks to address this by focusing on the teens (13-18 years). Every year we plan to train a hundred (100) teenagers in peer counseling particularly, addressing ways to curb the spread of HIV-AIDS by not only raising awareness on the pandemic and its realities, but empowering the teens wholistically and thus able to address the issues that make them most vulnerable. Each one of these trained youths is challenged to reach out to thirty (30) others and hence begin an exponential process.

Our peer counseling program therefore seeks to address the following areas so as to equip the Youths with quality life skills: Self-awareness and self worth, Good communication, Body changes at puberty and through teenage, Family and Friends, Consequences of Premarital and Extramarital Sex, The Facts about HIV-AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections, Dispelling Myths about Puberty , Sex and AIDS, Valuing Abstinence, Sexual Vulnerability and Protection, Achieving our Goals and Dreams, and Reaching Out To Peers Exponentially.

We started off with two sessions in two different areas and were able to exceed our first half-year target of reaching 50. The first workshop was done at Mairi in the Maragua North District of the Murang'a Country. The Baptist Men Fellowship mobilized the churches in this area, and borrowing from the Initiation model set by Koinonia Baptist church, planned a Church based initiation program for their boys last December. Being a predominantly Kikuyu (one of the 42 tribes in Kenya) and still practicing the tradition of circumcising boys at the age of 13-14 years, they decided for the first time to have this done under the supervision and training of mature Christian men. They assembled twenty (20) teenagers at the Mairi Baptist Church and used their school buildings as the venue for a ten (10) days program which included medical personnel from the local district hospital performed the surgery and monitored the healing process that was managed by older youths, and while they healed they received counsel and training on life skills and HIV-AIDS realities.

The second team involved thirty seven (37) teenagers who met for three (3) days at the Happy Day Academy again to be equipped with quality life skills and HIV-AIDS realities not only for their own transformation but also so as to become effective agents of transformation. The group was drawn from Koinonia being part of our Teens Empowerment Program and had a combination of some in primary school (year 7-8), most in Secondary school (year 9-12) and a few just completed year twelve (12). All of these left with a charge to reach out to thirty (30) others and hence begin the exponential process.

*We Greatly Rejoice For the Opportunity to Set off the Exponential Peer Counseling Process—What a Joy—57 on the*



*Duncan takes the Initiates at Mairi Baptist through the session on HIV-AIDS Realities including True Love Waits.*



*The Initiates in Mairi displays their True Love Wait Cards after signing them and hence committing themselves to abstinence and helping other teens to do the same.*



*Esther taking the Teenagers at the Happy Day Camp through the session on the Realities of HIV and AIDS.*



*Bernard taking the Teenagers at Happy Day through a session on Ways of Overcoming Challenges as a Teenagers.*



*The Teens at the Happy Day Camp in Small Group discussions during Bernard's Class--a great way of enhancing effective learning.*



*Group Photo of the Happy Day Teens Camp Participants- December 2010!*

*What is the way forward?*

- 1. Follow up on the 57 Teens to ensure the exponential momentum kicks off and is maintained—one on one contact and a debriefing Workshop in April when they come home for school holiday. Over 70% of these teens are in Boarding Secondary Schools.*
- 2. Train another lot of 50 Teenagers by April 2011—in the Ruaka area and another 50 in Nyeri.*
- 3. Plan a Training workshop for the Peer TOTs.*
- 4. Fine tune our curriculum for the Peer Counseling Training and set up strategy for 2011-2012.*