



## **KASOCO CBO**

### **TA Phambala, Ntcheu, Malawi**

**==United In The Fight Against HIV-AIDS==Kugwirizana Pogonjetsa HIV ndi EDZI=====**

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#### **2007 WORLD AIDS DAY**

#### **LEADERSHIP**

#### **KASOCO'S THEME: PROMOTING YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV-AIDS**

For two years KASOCO CBO – Kam´mwamba Aids Supportive and Community Development Organisation in conjunction with KYO – Kapeni Youth Organisation, has been promoting HIV voluntary testing and counselling among the youth in TA Phambala in Ntcheu South. This work is being done through the empowerment of the youth to become leaders of their own lives. Two football and netball leagues tournaments have been held with the aim of providing a platform for the youth to come together and teach each other about HIV-AIDS and sexuality. Special emphasis has been placed on voluntary testing.

KASOCO and KYO have been monitoring the HIV testing statistics at Kapeni VCT, the only HIV testing facility in TA Phambala. In this article we are sharing the brief analysis of the test results and the implications they have on the issues of youth empowerment.

Over the two year period (February 2006 to August 2007) a total of 1,107 people were tested of which 47% (525) were male and 53% (582) were female. On year by year basis, there has been an increase of 57% people tested in 2007 over those tested in 2006. This increase has been a direct result of the intensive awareness work the two organisations have been undertaking regarding voluntary testing.

The overall results with respect to HIV prevalence among the people tested is that there is prevalence of 19%. Among those testing HIV-positive, 23% are male and the alarming 77% are female. The female HIV-positive are 54% higher than male HIV positive although the difference between male and female tested is only 6%. These statistics have far reaching implications for the welfare of women.

So far most of the HIV-AIDS work has been general with little specificity. The Kapeni VCT data shows that women are most affected by the disease. Studies relating HIV-AIDS to gender have shown and concluded that women are more vulnerable because of the cultural and poverty subjecting them to male domination and they rarely have a choice over sex type. Women are the double victims, firstly victims of male domination and secondly victims of the disease.

The only way to protect the women and reduce the escalating spread of HIV-AIDS among them is empowering them. Women need to be made leaders of their own lives; women should be empowered to make choices about issues of their own sexuality and finally women should be empowered to challenge the cultural strings tying them to risky lifestyles.

KASOCO and KYO are making significant progress with respect to brining awareness about HIV-AIDS prevention. TA Phambala is an area with one of the highest prevalence (19%) of HIV-AIDS in Malawi but ironically there is no any Government or international NGO funding

the KASOCO and KYO on-going fight against the pandemic in the area. KASOCO and KYO are working on meagre funding from well wishers. If these organisations had not taken the initiative, TA Phambala would have been out of Malawi's HIV map.

Adverts on radio, TV and newspapers will not make any significant impact if the same are not followed by concrete work on the ground. Let us make our women leaders of themselves! For that we need a lot of ground support.

The recently concluded Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Kampala Uganda came with a resolution calling for the empowering of the youth. While we are welcoming this belated landmark statement, we would like to remind our leaders that these words must be followed by concrete action. We need to move away from the current culture in which the youth and youth initiatives are at the margin of the society. In Malawi there are many organisations working for the empowerment of the youth in various ways, unfortunately these organisations are the least funded by the national Aids Council (NAC) and other international organisations working in the fight against HIV-AIDS.

Many studies have shown that behaviour change education is more effective among the youth than it is among the adults. This calls for concerted action targeted at the youth, centred at empowering the youth with knowledge and skills on how they can lead their lives.

As we focus on LEADERSHIP theme in 2007 in our fight against HIV-AIDS we need to recognise that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow and in order for them to be better prepared for this future role and responsibility they must be best prepared now. The fight against HIV-AIDS that ignores the youth, youth activities and youth organisations will not be successful.

For Youth Leadership!

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