



RESPECT e-Zine

Refugee Education Sponsorship Program: Enhancing Communities Together

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Refugee Trainers Receive HIV/AIDS Awareness Training

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On Sunday, April 9, 2006, an event whose planning started in 2005, began with a welcoming ceremony. Entertainment was provided by different groups who came to Baraka Catholic Parish for the occasion. So began the HIV/AIDS training for about sixty participants.

The training was the result of a collaboration between [Working To Empower](#), [RESPECT International](#), [RESPECT DRC \(Democratic Republic of the Congo\)](#), and [ArtHum \(Artists for Humanity\)](#). The training was led by Logan Cochrane, Director of Working To Empower. As RESPECT DRC Coordinator, I directly assisted Logan and served as an interpret and translator.

After a brief introduction, participants attended a series of short shows played by an ArtHum affiliated acting group from Baraka. The goal of the shows was to convey real HIV/AIDS experiences in Baraka and the local area. Human mistakes when dealing with the disease received special attention.

Attendees were able to catch a glimpse of certain factors, behaviors, and situations helping increase the epidemic, such as: war, poverty, ignorance and denial, perceptions and taboos due to traditions or religion, and lack of equipped and specialized health centers. To conclude the show, each actor introduced her/himself. We analyzed the scenes and gave explanations. Logan made small comments and provided practical advice to the audience.

While the female volunteers were preparing the dinner in a familial atmosphere, four musicians went on stage. They helped to ease the fatigue faced by some participants who made the long trip to Baraka. Singers, one young girl and three boys, along with a guitar, conveyed educative messages about HIV/AIDS. The entertainment lasted until 7PM.

The training started on Monday April 10, 2006, with a speech from the Resident Territory Administrator Delegate. It included each participant's introduction, followed by Logan's overview of the course.

The training lasted six days, each day starting at 8AM and ending at 5PM with one break in the morning, one in the afternoon and a lunch with everyone. During the sessions, trainers and participants discussed the content. In addition, there were collective and participatory workshops as well.

Subjects addressed were:

- Exchanges on experiences of HIV/AIDS.
- What is HIV/AIDS?
- History of HIV/AIDS.
- Virus biology.
- Virus transmission.
- Epidemiology.
- Drugs, especially anti-retro-virals.
- The dangers of stigma.
- Gender, group, ethnical, religious prevalence.
- Prevention: individual and collective level.
- Specific examples of success/failure.
- Importance of culture and art in a prevention campaign and struggle against the disease.
- Discussions of actual actions.
- Programs to implement in the area.
- Evaluation.

Around 4:30 PM, on Saturday April 15, 2006, a happy atmosphere spread during the closing ceremony. The Resident Territory Administrator Delegate gave the closing remarks and handed out the attestations to the 60 participants who attended the whole training week.

The ArtHum orchestra took charge of the musical entertainment for the audience, including participants and people from Baraka. It was held in the Institute Mwenge Wa-Taifa yard close to the Catholic parish where the training was hosted. During an educative song about condoms, participants handed out condoms to the excited audience who asked for more.

Spontaneously, Logan, some of the participants, and ArtHum volunteers executed Congolese dances under the joyous screams and applause from the audience. Soon, the whole audience was dancing, despite a temporary interruption due to a generator breakdown. Even at 7:30PM everyone wanted the party to continue.

This training of 60 future HIV/AIDS trainers in Baraka satisfied the audience, the public authorities, as well as the training team. It reached its objectives regarding its content and empowered the community to struggle against the disease spreading and its stigma. Participants wrote a thank you letter which was read in public. The Delegate expressed his appreciation as well. However, the need for equipment in Baraka and in the territories is tremendous. Inhabitants expressed their wishes to continue with such initiatives.

Last but not least, we thank the International Coordination of RESPECT and all the volunteers (women, men, old and young) involved in the preparation and in the execution of the training. Our special gratitude goes to Logan Cochrane who not only spent his energy but also used his own financial resources via his organization Working to Empower. He also made a personal donation to the ArtHum orchestra: two electric guitars and an audio amplifier which have been ordered for the musician who serves ArtHum.

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