

# The *Crisis* of HIV/AIDS in Africa

By now, the seriousness of the crisis of HIV/AIDS in Africa is well known. According to the World Health Organization, between 60 and 70 percent of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa. And while HIV/AIDS began as a largely urban problem, it is now becoming far more prevalent in rural communities. ACDI/VOCA is taking an active role in mitigating the impact of the disease through campaigns to educate people about prevention and ensure that people already living with the disease know appropriate coping strategies. Programs in Malawi and Ethiopia build on ACDI/VOCA's existing relationship with rural cooperatives, which have hundreds of thousands of members and well-established communications systems that can be used to spread information. In Uganda, ACDI/VOCA is working to ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS receive the proper nutrition to keep them healthy and prolong their lives.

## *Education* and the Battle Against HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia

By Holger Wagner

One in ten of the world's 40 million people infected with HIV/AIDS lives in Ethiopia. Although 90 percent of Ethiopia's population is aware of HIV/AIDS, only 60 percent know how to prevent the disease, and far too few sexually active men and women use condoms. DKT International, a well-known social marketing organization that has been working in Ethiopia for over a decade, has struggled to increase the number of Ethiopians who use condoms. While DKT possesses extensive experience in HIV/AIDS training, ACDI/VOCA has access to hundreds of thousands of rural farming families through a network of agricultural cooperatives. In 2003, these complementary strengths led to the establishment of a highly successful partnership.

ACDI/VOCA Deputy Country Director Teddy Fesseha summed up the collaboration: "DKT has had an enormous marketing capacity but no rural experience or coverage. ACE has had extensive rural coverage, but very little experience in terms of marketing behavioral change.... It is a unique example of synergy between two organizations."

ACDI/VOCA's Agricultural Cooperatives in Ethiopia (ACE) project, active since 1999, works with 25 cooperative unions, representing

420,000 members, to develop and promote modern business-oriented agricultural cooperatives that supply inputs, market outputs, and provide credit. ACE activities include strengthening the capacity of the regional government cooperative promotion offices, diversifying and broadening business services, developing rural savings and credit cooperatives, promoting value-added products, increasing women's participation in cooperatives, and improving natural resource management at the farm level. In 2003, ACE and its partner, DKT, received additional funds from USAID to implement an HIV/AIDS education campaign through the cooperative network.

Throughout 2003, DKT provided extensive training on the causes and impacts of HIV/AIDS, human anatomy, prevention methods, community action and family planning to government cooperative promotion officers



A trainer demonstrates proper condom use in an ACDI/VOCA-sponsored training.

and cooperative officials who in turn trained cooperative members. The week-long trainings included innovative, participatory sessions including role-playing and small-group discussions. Along with information on the transmission and impact of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, participants discussed risky behaviors, HIV infections in their home communities, and perceptions of condom

use. Trainers also spent two hours discussing the issues surrounding condoms and demonstrated their proper use. A total of 343,022 farmers have received training in HIV/AIDS, and follow-on trainings are planned for 2004 to ensure continuation of this community education campaign.

Due to national concerns about cultural acceptability, the mass media campaigns with frank messages that have characterized HIV/AIDS education in much of sub-Saharan Africa have not been permitted in Ethiopia. The training conducted by DKT and ACE circumvents this issue by going directly to the communities affected by the crisis. Future training will focus on boosting condom use in Ethiopia in order to decrease infection rates. In addition, training activities will





promote the use of family planning services and health facilities in general to address the high rate of maternal mortality.

Fesseha noted, “Often HIV/AIDS is portrayed as a health issue, but in rural Ethiopia it is much more of a social and economic issue. Many cooperative members have died leaving families without heads of household, loans without repayment and farmland unattended. The entire financial health of a cooperative is in jeopardy if a number of members die prematurely. Our training has provided farmers with information on preventative as well as treatment measures, and has created a kind of blanket awareness in rural Ethiopia about HIV/AIDS... And with condom sales beginning soon in cooperative shops, even more can be done in terms of prevention. Behavioral change is taking place every day, and it is because of the training in rural areas.”

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