

"FIGHT AIDS TOGETHER"
AN INTENSIVE DRIVE TO PREVENT AIDS

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INTRODUCTION

In September, 1990 the Department of AIDS Control (DAC), Ministry of Health of Ethiopia confronted a difficult predicament. The Department had long acknowledged that small as it was, it could not shoulder the responsibility of educating a nation of more than 50 million people. Nevertheless, it had been given the mandate of educating those millions to prevent the spread of AIDS. The dilemma was obvious.

Fortunately, the solution was equally obvious. There is, in Ethiopia, an organizational system that extends from central level down to grass roots. The populace can be reached through worker's organizations, such as military and police associations; women's groups; youth groups; neighborhood associations; farmer/peasants associations; unions; religious organizations; schools; the work place; and a wide array of NGOs.

By September the health education arm of the department of AIDS Control, called the IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Division, had prepared enough educational materials and training designs to move into the coordination phase of their work. The Department was ready to use the organizational system to appeal to the entire populace. Everyone would be asked to Fight AIDS Together. Phase I of what came to be known as the FAT Campaign was born.

RATIONALE

Throughout the world, AIDS is recognized as a social problem with roots in unemployment and/or underemployment, poverty, social alienation and drug abuse, deterioration of traditional values, family breakdowns, poor educational facilities and any number of other situations which are broadly termed social problems. Categorizing them as social problems is easy. Tackling them, however, is not just the work of a Ministry of Health, it is the work of civilization itself.

No Ministry of Health can win the fight against AIDS alone. Just as the seed of the contributing social problems is planted in many sectors, so must be the solutions. The Ministry of Health had to enlist all segments of society to fight the spread of AIDS. Thus, the general aim of the FAT campaign:

To mobilize human resources throughout the nation to work together in an intensive, systematic effort to bring AIDS information to all.

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OBJECTIVES

In order to accomplish the above aim, immediate objectives were established and served as strict guides to the implementation of the FAT Campaign. Among the objectives were:

1. To actively involve AIDS Communicators from central level government organizations, associations and agencies; religious bodies; and NGOs in face to face education sessions so that they can train their co-workers and become an active part of the AIDS educational materials dissemination network;
2. To actively involve regional leaders in an AIDS education effort so that AIDS messages will be delivered to all people in each region;
3. To mobilize the support of the mass media for AIDS control and prevention, and to promote a dialogue and bring about closer cooperation between health professionals and the medial
4. To provide educationally appropriate AIDS materials and training for special target groups such as the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Education, and CRDA.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The objectives aimed at bringing meaningful AIDS information to the entire population. Consequently, the implementation activities (It should be noted that the FAT activities as described here were only those in the first phase of the campaign and transpired during a three month period, i.e., 1 October - 31 December, 1990) had to be such that they could be implemented with and for millions of people. Careful planning and senior government support made the objectives attainable.

Doctor Gizaw Tsehay, Minister of Health announced the campaign at a national conference in early September, 1990. He acknowledged that there was an alarming spread of AIDS in Ethiopia and asked for the commitment of all government organizations, nongovernment and mass organizations and religious bodies in a mutual fight against the disease. At this national meeting, many senior officials publicly committed their organizations to full and active partnership with the FAT Team.

At that point however, the FAT Team itself consisted of only two people. Clearly, DAC would need more personnel to respond to the Action Plans and to provide technical advice. As a result, 3 extra people were seconded from other MOH departments to work temporarily with the IEC division. With a enhanced FAT staff, DAC was ready to take on the job.

The next step was for DAC to notify and mobilize organizations. They would, of course need guidance and suggestions if their support was to be more than merely lip service. Consequently, follow-up letters to Ministers, Heads of Organizations, Regional Heads of Ethiopian Workers' Party and Regional Health Officials were sent detailing the campaign and requesting that each organization assign a high level official to be the responsible coordinator for the Fighting AIDS Together campaign in the organization. A list of 24 suggested activities was included with the letter in order to help the recipients better understand the broad spectrum of possible AIDS actions. The letter also urged that Regional AIDS Committees be formed made up

of Community leaders; that Action Plans be formulated by the Committees and copies provided to DAC; and that requests for DAC support and/or technical advice be forwarded as soon as possible.

A month before the official launching of the FAT campaign, the FAT Team began their preparatory work. They looked at their 4 objectives and prepared activities for male mobilization, regional mobilization, mass media, training of AIDS Communicators and liaison with mass organizations, NGOs and target ministries such as Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Education (MOE). They prepared special educational materials; they planned a workshop design that was to be used for training hundreds of AIDS communicators during the campaign; they worked with MOE officials to develop basic information booklet for teachers in the nation's 1500 junior and senior secondary schools; they visited ministries, corporations, enterprises and agencies to help them formulate AIDS Action Plans; they began telephone and/or radio contacts with each region offering support and follow-up; they develop travel schedules and budgets so that the FAT Team trainers could train community leaders from each region. On 1 October, the campaign was officially launched. The FAT Team moved into a central location complete with telephones, computers, and an enormous supply of AIDS information including condom leaflets, posters and stickers. Already many requests for training had been received and the FAT Team poured its energies into providing new AIDS Communicators with the knowledge and tools they needed in order to be confident and competent AIDS educators.

OBJECTIVE I. EDUCATING AIDS COMMUNICATORS

One-day training sessions were given to these AIDS communicators who were chosen by their organizations because of their interest, dedication and authority to mobilize employees and give education. These people, most of whom were neither health workers nor educators, were provided with detailed information about the current AIDS situation in Ethiopia; methodology and materials for teaching about AIDS; and condoms and condom promotion techniques. The last hour of each session was devoted to development of a feasible Action Plan for each organization. Action Plans proved to be both innovative and ambitious. Some examples of activities planned and carried out by AIDS communicators are:

- large half-day sessions for all employees in an organization;
- regular lunch-time sessions open to any and all who want to attend;
- poster, song and poetry contests and displays;
- moments of silence offered for Persons With AIDS and their families;
- magazine and periodical articles on AIDS;
- condom promotion and condom sales through the canteen or public relations office;
- athletic events and marches with AIDS information given to participants and observers alike;
- small AIDS prevention messages put in vehicles as reminders for the men who travel;
- special AIDS education weeks which included many awareness activities;
- distribution of AIDS leaflets to all members of the organization; etc.

Such a range of activities being planned and undertaken by relatively inexperienced AIDS communicators after only one day of training illustrates the dedication with which people were prepared to Fight AIDS Together. Training was conducted in Addis Ababa each Thursday. Over 400 Addis area communicators with the potential to reach an estimated half-million people with face to face personalized education, were trained. Distribution of leaflets

reached well over one million copies and, if the assumptions are accurate, these will have been read by at least two people each. The sheer numbers of people reached by this intensive effort is impressive. In addition to conducting the initial workshops, the DAC/FAT Team provided other technical assistance as necessary. Perhaps one-third of the trained communicators did not at first feel confident that they alone could provide adequate training to their organizations. In these cases, DAC/FAT tried to provide a Health Resource person within each Ministry to enhance the session. In most cases, the Communicator was then able to carry out the following sessions without extra help.

OBJECTIVE 2. MOBILIZING THE REGIONS

Concurrent with the Addis based training was training and action planning in the regions. During the first 3 month phase of the campaign, the FAT Team worked with FAT committees from 26 regions. These committees, in turn, became the lead trainers for the regional communicators who were selected from branches of various ministries such as Agriculture, Education, Youth and Culture, Industry, Information; as well as religious and other community leaders. As was the case for the AIDS communicators in Addis Ababa, each regional participant was required to make an in-depth action plan indicating how he/she planned to spread the AIDS prevention messages.

Regional action plans often encompassed community activities. Kebele associations were mobilized, school children were brought together, merchants were surveyed and condoms supplied for sale, churches and mosques gave education, dramas were developed and performed.

OBJECTIVE 3. MOBILIZING MASS MEDIA

Akin to the training of communicators was another effective FAT strategy aimed at the mobilization of key MEDIA people. A four day workshop was conducted in Ambo for the nation's radio producers and script writers. Participants from both Ministry of Information and Ministry of Education Mass Media Division were given a thorough AIDS information background and then developed specific AIDS-related radio and television programmes. Scripts dealt with topics such as: "Talking with Teens about AIDS: How Can Ethiopian Parents Do it?" and "Are You At Risk: How Can You Tell?".

Close DAC liaison with the Ministry of Information resulted in almost daily newspaper articles, radio AIDS health promotion messages and television interviews, spot announcements and programmes. .

OBJECTIVE 4. SPECIAL TARGETS

Reaching special target groups required special activities. One was a workshop sponsored with CRDA, the Christian Relief and Development Association. Member churches and agencies sent 94 health workers and educators from all corners of the country to a 4 day workshop during which they refined their knowledge and skills in AIDS materials research and production, teaching techniques, and action planning. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this workshop will be felt as increased AIDS awareness activities throughout the country.

A seminar for senior military officials was also held with the purpose of making them action oriented in the fight against AIDS. Work with the Ministry of Education was targeted at students

in secondary schools. AIDS information booklets for teachers were prepared by DAC and edited and printed by MOE. The booklets, accompanied by specially prepared posters about young people and teachers, were sent to each junior and senior secondary school with a letter from the Vice Minister of Education asking that each teacher devote at least one class period to AIDS prevention education.

Another activity of the FAT Campaign that it is believed influenced its positive outcome was the distribution of a biweekly progress review. This newsletter detailed the activities of the FAT partners and served as a motivator for those organizations that had not yet fully participated. The progress review was also an acknowledgement to partners that their work was neither unnoticed nor unappreciated.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Complete information about the nation-wide outreach of FAT is not yet available. However, reports received from Regions and Addis Ababa organizations indicate that the AIDS education sessions conducted by the more than 600 newly trained communicators varied in size from approximately 50 to over 3000 in Kebele meetings. It is also reported that many communicators repeat AIDS education several times in their branch offices and in various areas of the country.

Consequently, although exact figures are difficult to authenticate at this point in the on-going campaign, a conservative estimate of the number of people reached by a personal AIDS education session conducted in the capital city or the regions during the first 3 months is 750,000.

Educators believe that each person reached personally will, in turn, discuss the information with a minimum of 3-4 friends and/or family members. Thus, up to 3 million people have had their AIDS knowledge refined, confirmed and reinforced. Educators also believe that such interpersonal discussions and exchange of information are a necessary prelude for behaviour change which is a primary intent of AIDS education.

The number of people reached by the first phase of the FAT campaign will undoubtedly grow as many of the recently trained communicators may not yet have fully implemented their AIDS action plans.

The number of people reached through the intensive print and electronic media campaign can not be quantified.

FAT-PHASE II

The Fighting AIDS Together approach must continue and the momentum built during the initial phase not lost. Consequently, DAC/FAT is concentrating on personal follow-up with the FAT partners. Distribution of a new generation of AIDS leaflets and posters; telephone calls confirming DAC's continued support and reminders of condom availability are all regular activities.

In addition, planning and materials development for Phase II is underway. Among the planned activities is the FAT Rapid Assessment Technique, or FAT RAT. It has been developed to get quick information that will be useful to the FAT communicators in planning their continued AIDS educational work. The FAT RAT is designed so that it can be conducted and analyzed by the FAT

communicators with minimal training. The results will indicate the primary educational needs of the target audience. DAC has produced 5 AIDS educational modules which the Communicators can use to tailor their education sessions to the needs of their audience.

The FAT RAT will be conducted and analyzed in each Participating organization. Follow-up AIDS education sessions conducted by the AIDS communicators using one or more of the appropriate modules will be conducted in the weeks after FAT RAT analysis.

The Modules and trainers' guides will cover:

- Review of Basic AIDS Information

- Condom Use

- Risk Perception

- Overcoming Fear and Prejudice of Persons With AIDS

- Discussion Skills; Talking to Teens and Talking to Your Spouse about AIDS While the new materials are being produced, FAT Partners continue implementing their Action Plans of Phase I.

It is clear that their work, will be necessary for years to come.

It is equally clear that their influence will endure.

