

**HIV/AIDS WORKSHOP REPORT**  
*Ladybrand, 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> May 2006*

**CABSA ‘Churches, Channels of Hope’ Weekend Workshop**  
Ladybrand, Free State, 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> May 2006

FROM : Ian & Anita Rushton, CCH Workshop facilitators, Ladybrand

**Introduction**

The workshop was organized primarily for trainers and peer educators from the various Jewels of Hope projects in Gauteng, the Eastern Free State and Lesotho. Invitations were also extended to our local church (Christian Revival Church, Ladybrand), from where two of the pre-school teachers also attended and two care givers from the Hlohlolwane Children’s Home. Two participants were also sent from Nedbank Lesotho.



In view of the diverse nature of participation, this workshop was simply titled ‘Channels of Hope’.

**Program**

The workshop was held at the Ladybrand Public Library. It was a full weekend workshop, commencing with registration on Friday afternoon (17h00) and an evening session, then all day Saturday (up to 17h00) and again on Sunday, following the church service, from 11h30 up to 17h00.

**Facilitation**

The workshop team comprised Ian & Anita Rushton (lead facilitators), with Cindy Easterday and Thato Malahleha from Maseru as Co-facilitators, and Matšelisio Ntahane from Ladybrand who publicly disclosed her status for the first time at the workshop (‘Living with HIV’).



Cindy was one of the first people trained by CABSA back in the beginning and welcomed the opportunity to get back into active presenting. Thato Malahleha (Eric) was recently trained by WVI in Lesotho at a WV ‘Channels of Hope’ TtF week, in which Ian was Assistant Trainer. He is involved in a local church in Maseru and is a resource person for an Area Development Program in Lesotho.

Jared Rushton provided technical support; including equipment setup and maintenance, printing of handouts and all other IT functions.

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### Attendance

Total attendance for the workshop (counting participants only and excluding facilitators and co-workers) was 21. This included project trainers and small group of the orphans which are being built as Peer Counsellors. There was no outside funding for the workshop, but Jewels of Hope provided some degree of internal sponsorship.

Only the bank paid the full workshop fee of R250 in respect of their two employees, and the remainder of participants attended at a sponsored rate of R100/R50.

An attendance list is attached. Sorry, we forgot to take a group photograph this time ('Ouch!'). There are some good pictures from during the workshop though.



### Community Focus Case Studies

As working cases of Community Focus we had a representative from The Love of Christ (TLC) Ministries in Gauteng (an abandoned babies' home and adoption centre), and 'Jewels of Hope'. Both of these did presentations during the community response sessions.

The venue was adorned with relevant posters from RSA Dept of Health 'Khomamani', UNICEF, Action Aid, Soul City and Phela Communications, Lesotho. Each participant was given a file with essential hand-outs together with an ample note pad to take personal notes.

### Mobilisation & Way Forward

We have noticed a gap when looking for the fruit of our previous 3 CCH workshops, conducted over the past 10 months. A total of over 80 church members have been exposed,



mainly from two congregations, and the level of participation was very intense. However, despite this we have not noted any new corporate initiatives being taken by either of the local churches and, in fact, very few significant individual actions.

Certainly a lack of validation on the part of spiritual leaders has left somewhat of a leadership vacuum in the church situation. Long-term strategies, and those involving mobilizing a large number of people, have

higher leadership requirements. Where do you start in this realm as a church member? This creates a crisis if this is what you are trained for. Training is only effective if it becomes quickly reproducible in the everyday life situation.

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It seems that we have to develop a different strategy in order to try to win the buy-in of spiritual leaders prior to mounting a CCH workshop. Individual participants have no control over this factor, but they do have some control over what they do in their own families, social circles, schoolrooms, workplace, etc. Why then do we not see more individual action or spontaneous action groups being formed?

We have noticed in the workshop evaluation question 'Relevance for you ...', that people have frequently responded positively to the second category: 'Relevance for you at Your Congregation/Church/ Organization' but not to the first category: 'Relevance for you at personal level'. This indicates a need for conceiving practical individual responses that will be attainable immediately following a CCH workshop, rather than only those that depend on factors beyond their control.

*(Our thoughts are that...)* If we can achieve both support from congregation leaders prior to the workshop and some individual momentum and experience following the workshop, we would then be in a position to hold an effective follow-up meeting within a congregation for developing specific and practical congregation plans. Once there is a demand for action this would be a suitable forum for imparting know-how on the strategic planning process.

As a result of the above experience we decided to try modifying the Mobilisation section of this CCH workshop. Following the 'We dream' activity, we proceeded directly to focus on immediate actions that we figured the participants would be able to carry out in their specific local groupings at home and work. This was made easier by visualizing the participants in their present functions and mandates in the family and job situations (pre-school teachers, bank employees) and in their role as Jewels of Hope trainers. We finalized the list of activities with reference to the comments and the discussions we had detected through the course of the workshop.



Following the 'We Dream' activity, which produced the typical expected (long-term) results, we then formed the workshop into locality/work functional groups and gave to each group a card with the details of a task and some supporting materials to plan and prepare for presentation to the workshop. There were 5 activity groups and the tasks included:

- Choose a topic and organise presentation materials to support a talk by you on HIV-AIDS to your bank colleagues on your return
- Prepare a youth drama to highlight an aspect of the HIV-AIDS crisis
- Prepare a visual presentation to pre-teen and teen girls on feminine hygiene
- How to implement practical life skills training among orphans
- Using posters supplied discuss how you could introduce Sexuality to your group of children

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The interaction process during the planning of these activities involved integrating the knowledge newly gained in the workshop with their own understanding of their contexts and its needs. There were vigorous discussions and many questions from the floor to facilitators. A lot of shyness had to be overcome there and then, because people had to start using the dreaded s\_ \_ word and other hard words themselves, which is itself an ice-breaking experience. Many of them spontaneously talked of their own experiences.

Following the presentation of the activities we encouraged the participants not only to perform the activity in their own workplace/project but also to tour around the other projects following the workshop and visit the other participants with their demonstration.



### **Evaluation**

Other than the changes outlined above, the workshop entirely followed the proven program and methodology of 'Churches, Channels of Hope'. The workshop once again visibly made a very high personal impact on participants and several people have since begun talking openly from their own experiences for the first time.

Amongst the other presentations we used the stigma pictures on the walls for the first time, together with writing space for participants to express their perceptions, as demonstrated in the recent Free State refresher meeting, and the six 'Christians and condom' questions in group discussions.



We found once again that two of the strongest personal impact factors were the personal disclosure story 'Living with HIV-AIDS' and the Risk Assessment questionnaire, also the syringe exercise and the sexual history slide. These seem to be very hard hitting.

### **Catering & Accommodation**

Odette Jenneker of Cosmo Café, Ladybrand catered for the workshop. Friday supper was provided on a 'take away' basis to be eaten at the venue whilst meeting other participants during registration. For the other meals (lunch times) participants walked down the main street to the café, which provided much needed physical exercise amidst all the mental and emotional exertion. Tea, coffee and biscuits/cakes were provided at the venue by Jewels of Hope organizers.

Participants took breakfasts at home or at their place of accommodation for the workshop (several Lesotho participants were housed at the Rushtons' flat – it was real Africa style with 15 folk finding floor space here, there and everywhere).

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### **Things we tried for the first time**

Things we did for the first time in this workshop included:-

- The workshop was not organized for a specific congregation;
- We included some of the Project beneficiaries (orphans) into the workshop, both to obtain their own views and insights and as a first step to selection and training as peer counselors;
- Someone from our own community (a participant from one of the previous CCH workshops) disclosing their status and becoming a resource person, *and*;
- New mobilization activities.

### **Things we would like to do next:-**

- Working with the DRC congregations in Ladybrand & Clocolan on HIV-AIDS (we don't have any contacts ourselves), *and*;
- Developing training for peer-counselors (any partners out there?)

### **Acknowledgments**

'Thank you' once again to CABSAs for training us and for allowing us the privilege of presenting the Churches, Channels of Hope programme.

