

The South African Scout Association and HIV/AIDS

INTRODUCTION

It is the moral responsibility of Scout Associations to address the impact that HIV/AIDS (and other STD's) is having on our societies and to include the education of its causes, symptoms (individual and societal) and prevention. It is estimated that this disease affects over 20.8 million people in the Sub-Saharan region. One in 4 people are affected in South Africa. A tremendous need exists to address the pandemic in an integrated manner in partnership with civil society and government.

DEVELOPING THE SCOUT AIDS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Why is it important for the South African Scout Association (SASA) to have an AIDS Education Programme?

HIV/AIDS has given rise to a tremendous social challenge and SASA is committed to meet this challenge. The youth are most likely to bear the brunt of this pandemic. It is therefore, by the very nature of the Scout mission, fundamental that the Association bear the responsibility to work in tandem with schools, other organisations, the media and all communities by educating, developing and equipping the youth. It is of prime importance that peer interaction is achieved which is proven to lead to behavioural change. Communication barriers between adults/minors are a fact. Many HIV/AIDS agencies and educational programmes focus on overcoming this obstacle. Scouting overcomes this by limiting adult intervention and encouraging peer training and development.

“The challenge” is a complex one in that the Scout programme is a holistic youth development tool and one runs the risk of developing an HIV/AIDS education programme that dominates the Scout programme and activities. The challenge therefore is to harness:

- the role of the adult leader as someone who guides rather than instructs
- knowledge that is already available (schools, media, organisations, etc.)
- the fundamental Scout principle of peer training
- the Scout ethic

The need is to re-enforce available knowledge and develop a powerful compact message that:

- stimulates conversation
- is clear and simple in its message
- includes STDs
- is based on Scout ethics
- presents an ongoing re-visiting of the material
- develops the life skill of being able to say “no” in all spheres of life

To this end a 3 step, compact HIV/ADS and STD programme has been developed enhancing the strengths of the Scout programme.

“Scouting and AIDS”

THE AIM OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of the programme is to focus on Scout ethics and the right to say “no” while re-enforcing the facts in terms of the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs. This is to be achieved by the establishment of a comfortable forum and culture of discussion amongst peers. By encouraging development amongst peers, behavioural changes in the individuals, group and community will be achieved.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

The Association’s long-term objective is to have an effective HIV/AIDS programme integrated into the Scout programme, available to all. This programme must be specific, subject to ongoing implementation and evaluation.

SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

- The development of a compact and powerful educational package for the learner (Scout) with guidelines for the adult leader. This is to be done in consultation with other specialised service providers and governmental departments.
- Offer training to the adult leaders to equip them to facilitate implementation.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
- Production of 450000 packages for distribution.

PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING THE HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME

RESPONSIBLE STRUCTURES

The National Office under the leadership of the CEO is tasked to:

- Design and develop the HIV/AIDS package and programme
- Liase with National, Provincial and Local AIDS Service providers and governmental departments.
- Communicate with all structures at all levels of the organisation’s HIV/AIDS programme and clarify their roles and responsibilities.
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the programme.

CO-OPERATION

In order for SASA to achieve its objectives, a need for networking and consultation was identified. Ongoing consultation with government departments, specialist service providers and all stakeholders was conducted. These organisations and government departments commended the Association for the concept programme. Continued support (in an advisory and consultative capacity) of the programme was pledged.

THE PACKAGE

The Association identified a need for the development of a simple hard-hitting package. The package will address the fundamentals of the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs; situational guidelines; and re-enforce the right to say “no”.

The package will consist of pamphlets, adult leader guidelines, model questions and badges.

The educational package will be designed to:

- Provide information about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Provide a situational analysis, guidelines reference to specialist organisations
- Encourage discussion
- Re-affirm the right to say “no”

The adult leader guidelines will include activities that will help the youth to make informed decisions. These will develop the youth's:

- Sense of self
- Decision making skills
- Problem solving skills
- Assertiveness
- Negotiation skills

THE PROCESS

Step 1: Adult Introduction and Evaluation

- Initially the adult leader is asked to guide all the Scouts (starting at 12 years old) through the pamphlet while encouraging the asking of questions and general discussion.
- Activities such as role plays, puzzles, games, etc will follow the discussion
- After two weeks, questions based on the pamphlet will be asked.
- The adult leader will evaluate whether the Scout is familiar with the content of the pamphlet.
- The Scout will be issued with a proficiency badge.

Step 2: Continuous Exposure to Peer Group Discussions

- The Scout will be exposed to numerous group discussions on HIV/AIDS and STDs led by Scout peers who have advanced to the First Class level (Approx. 16 years old).

Step 3: Lead a Peer Group Discussion

- The Scout will lead a group discussion on HIV/AIDS and STDs when he/she reaches the First Class level.

(The above process will take 2 to 3 years to complete)

THE BADGE SYSTEM

The badge system is central to the progressive nature of the Scout programme. It recognises and rewards the individual's efforts. Once the Scout has completed the HIV/AIDS discussion and evaluation presented by an adult leader, he/she will be awarded the HIV/AIDS badge. This will indicate that the Scout is, not only concerned about HIV/AIDS, but understands how it is spread and prevented.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The nature of the structure within the Association lends itself to effective implementation on a large scale. It is intended that the package is distributed free of charge to the Provincial

offices, who in turn will distribute to all Scout Groups also at no cost. It is planned that 450000 packages are distributed free of charge. Effective training for adult leaders and implementation throughout South Africa will take place in all provinces. Continuous evaluation over the implementation period of three years will be effected with biannual reports.

Because the HIV/AIDS programme is an integral part of the reviewed Scout programme and is relatively inexpensive to produce, sustainable ongoing implementation is guaranteed indefinitely.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation have an important role to play in ensuring that the programme is appropriately implemented and effective.

Useful indicators for monitoring are

- Number of packages distributed
- Area reports on implementation
- Adult Leader Training reports
- Group/District report back
- Dedicated forum on the website
- An anonymous attitude survey

CONCLUSION

It is abundantly clear that SASA has risen to the challenge of providing an effective HIV/AIDS programme. Material has been developed which is simple, informative and comprehensive. It harnesses peer discussion and development while encouraging the right to say “no”. It will unquestionably bring about behavioural change, and respect for oneself and others. The project involves the production of 450000 pamphlets and badges, distribution, training, monitoring and evaluation. Subsequent to the project period of 3 years, the programme is assured of being sustainable and relevant to the Scout Programme and South Africa.