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SUCCESS STORY

Youth and Faith: A Conviction against HIV Infection

USAID-Supported Behavior Change Communication Activities Have Impact On Communities



Photo Aimé Tshibanda ASF/PSI/RDC
Kasaï Oriental

Without shame nor taboo, Ado Boss (wearing a blue shirt, at the right) is conducting a peer education session with young people of his church

Peer education, or being educated by a person who is like you, is a communication approach that has proven effective since the start of the HIV epidemic. Thanks to USAID's funding, PSI/ASF has trained and retrained 565 peer educators in 2012 who now operate in various settings, such as schools, offices, at ante- and post-natal sessions, and even churches. Churches are increasingly becoming active in the fight against the pandemic; they do not hesitate to talk about it and to organize meetings discussing this theme.

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Thanks to USAID's funding, PSI/ASF trained and retrained 565 peer educators across the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2012 to combat HIV. Let us focus on one of the 51 peer educators from both Kasais (Kasaï Oriental and Kasaï Occidental). His friends call him Ado Boss and he lives in Kananga, Kasaï Oriental Province. This young man, who is in his 20s, has always been a man of commitment; at school, he was in charge of discipline in his classroom. Since he wanted to use his energy to serve youth of his community and of his church, in April 2012 he became one of the peer educators of CODIF, a community-based nongovernmental organization (NGO).

"I was trained as a peer educator to raise youth awareness about the fight against HIV and AIDS. One of my objectives was to be able to talk with young people of my church during youth meetings and on other occasions," says Ado. However, he did not have the needed material to prepare his sessions, for instance he had no register to record his notes and names of youth who attended his behavior change communication sessions, nor a suitable place for these meetings. A small anecdote: once, Ado was conducting an awareness-raising session under a tree in the neighborhood and suddenly it started raining, and his notes got wetted. When CODIF heard about misfortunes like that, faced by its peer educators while fulfilling their activities, the NGO gave each of them a 200-page register for the preparation of their sessions and a better recording of names of peers they already sensitized or have been sensitizing. In addition, Jérémie Ilunga, pastor in charge of the church to which Ado belongs, i.e. the Adventist Church in Kananga, did not hesitate to make available a place in the church so that behavior change communication activities take place in a suitable setting. He said: "I support Ado's activity because I want young people to be informed and no longer be victims of HIV and AIDS, the scourge of this century."

"I'm very proud to do my bit in the fight against HIV, to contribute to good health in my community and to receive in turn its support," says Ado.