

## MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS IN GHANA'S EDUCATION SECTOR

Today, the HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens to undermine decades of considerable progress made improving the quality of and access to education in Ghana. Although Ghana's adult HIV infection rate is relatively low compared to many African nations, recent estimates suggest that HIV prevalence rates in the education sector are twice as high as the national figures. With support from World Education through USAID, students, teachers, and parents are confronting this challenge in several different ways.

In more than 50 schools in Ghana's most affected regions, HIV/AIDS education clubs serve as a focal point for school-based activities. Once trained by World Education-sponsored NGOs, peer educators like Emelia Addae (age 15), Alex Bampoh (12), and Prince Wiredu (15) organized a range of learning activities for their peers. While Wiredu admits that "most of us hadn't heard about HIV until we were trained," the peer educators quickly used their new skills to initiate peer education training sessions, one-to-one counseling, small group discussions, and large student assemblies. Under the guidance of a faculty "patron" who acts as the key liaison with school administration, these three young people trained nearly 150 of their fellow students over the course of the school year.

While the HIV/AIDS education club is often the most recognizable face of World Education's approach to combating HIV/AIDS in the education sector, the comprehensive program reaches all target groups. At the core of World Education's strategy is intensive support designed to build the capacity of civil society and government institutions to more effectively design and implement innovative HIV/AIDS prevention activities. Once strengthened these institutions carry out myriad responses, ranging from sensitizing parent teacher association (PTA) members and performing community puppet shows on the epidemic to creating youth-friendly STI clinics and forming an HIV/AIDS secretariat within the national Ministry of Education.

Because of its potential for widespread impact, one response in particular deserves special note. As well-educated and respected community members, teachers represent tremendous potential allies in the fight against AIDS, but they are also highly vulnerable to HIV infection. World Education and the Ministry of Education have worked to fully incorporate HIV/AIDS prevention into the national pre-service training curriculum at each of Ghana's 41 Teacher Training Colleges. The new HIV/AIDS curriculum, entitled *Window of Hope*, is designed to prepare new teachers for the challenge of teaching



World Education's partner uses puppet shows to convey messages to students about HIV/AIDS.



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A peer educator uses picture cards for an after-school discussion on HIV/AIDS.

in a world plagued with HIV/AIDS and protecting themselves at the same time. As a component of the national pre-service training curriculum, it is expected that *Window of Hope* will reach approximately 14,000 future teachers each year. With their new skills and knowledge in place, teachers are expected to create safe learning environments for students, protect their own health by adopting safe behaviors, and ultimately to engender the respect that they deserve as community role models.

**For more information about World Education projects that address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ghana and elsewhere, please go to [www.worlded.org](http://www.worlded.org) or contact:**

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