

OPENNESS ON HIV STATUS: THE KEY TO AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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May 2012



Introduction

- Confidentiality - key component from HIV start
- Result was denial, secrecy, stigma & discrimination
- Grace and Light (2003) encourages disclosure
- Done in the context of preaching the Gospel
- Openness becomes key to integrating HIV intervention



Purpose of the Lesson

- Equipping the church to mount her own response
- Overcomes compartmentalisation of HIV
- “Us and Them” attitude broken
- Principles of grace, openness and love
- Improve quality of life of PLP
- Improve prevention



Key Steps to Implementation

- Training of local volunteers
- Envisioning church leadership
- Sharing the vision with the congregation
- Members committed to HIV screening
- Life-sharing groups (accountability)
- Committees set up to oversee church response



How far we have got...

- Visited over 1,000 churches
- Tested over 100,000 people
- Over 90,000 living openly
- Over 2,500 of whom are HIV positive
- In 2 years, 2,200 converts & 4,600 rededication
- 15 States in Nigeria and 8 more countries



Benefits of Implementing the Lesson

- Scaling up testing
- People tested negative rarely become positive
- Stigmatization of PLP defeated
- Churches take lead responsibility for members
- Easy access to treatment by all
- Gospel of grace lays foundation for openness



Strengths

- Cost effective - use of volunteers/churches' responsibility
- Permanent integration, not “hit and run”
- Bottom-up approach
- The use of existing structures
- Interdenominational – wide reach
- People know their status early
- Flows from the Gospel (*Samaritan woman*)



Challenges

- Sustainability of volunteers
- Expectation that HIV brings money
- Moving from secular to gospel perspective
- Insufficient resources to scale-up intervention
- Overcoming initial stigmatization (*'older son' complex*)



Replication and Next Steps

- Replicable wherever church and HIV co-exist
- 4 patterns:
 - *Our initiative*
 - *Partnering with existing organizations*
 - *Franchising (accountable but not funded)*
 - *Borrowing our method*
- Integrating social righteousness – gender issues, poverty etc



Conclusion

- Moving faster than AIDS:
 - *The Christian way*
 - *We don't have to do it the secular way*
 - *We as Christians can do it better*
- “Grace & Light” makes the difference



THANK YOU

