

PACANET CONFERENCE HERONBRIDGE
JOHANNESBURG
7 – 11 OCTOBER 2002

REPORTS FROM THE TASK GROUPS

Four issues were set up for discussion in groups as follows:

1. Public relations, advocacy and fund raising
2. Life skills materials
3. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation
4. Life skills methodology and message

The report back from the groups led to several questions being raised, among them:

- HIV and the language of war, conflict, the repeated reference to "war on aids". We speak of a biblical identity and Christian principles; surely God is a God of love and compassion not of war and conflict. In our advocacy and public relations, what language are we going to be speaking?
- Who are we as Pacanet, what will separate us from other FBO's. What is our defining point and how are going to express it?
- Should we as Pacanet develop standards regarding materials - development, content, distribution?
- Christians and condoms :-
 1. Do we shy away from the safer sex option, do we give people condoms as an option. How does the church view condoms?
 2. How do we handle discordant couples, or Christian, and other wives at risk, are we happy to recommend condoms?
 3. Do condoms lead to promiscuity in young people, can we speak to young people about condoms, what do we tell them?
 4. What is the biblical point of view on "safer sex" Is this acceptable as a prevention method in certain cases?
- A lot of grim statistics were given at this conference, and much as it may be true, are we going to join the world in spreading despondency via statistics, or are we going to offer hope?

- Where is the issue of voluntary counseling and testing within prevention? Are we able to give hope that will minimize the fear of testing, hope of a better future irregardless of the result? Are we informed enough about the practical options to positive test results?
- Are there biblical indicators to measure behavioral change, can spiritual impact on young people be measured. How do we prove that being born again leads to behavior change, how does one measure the fruit of the spirit?
- How does the church relate to people who are HIV positive? Do some of our sermons increase or reduce stigma. Are we the father of the prodigal son, or maybe his older brother?

(Note: detailed reports from all the workgroups are available on this cd)

A question was asked on the criteria for partnership. Are we open to partner with anyone who subscribes to our beliefs? Are there grounds to refuse partnership? It was decided that the steering committee shall come up with a set of ground rules regarding membership.

Finally, an issue was raised on the task groups themselves. What is their mandate, what is their lifespan, how often shall they meet, how will they communicate, and what is their relationship to the work groups that are to be formed by the steering committee. It was suggested that the task groups should carry through what they have started and bring it to a logical conclusion, hopefully within the next four months. They will report to the steering committee.

Members of the current task groups are free to indicate to the steering committee their willingness to be part of the larger work groups once they are set up. Four work groups will be set up based on the four objectives of Pacanet. These will cover all the areas Pacanet is involved in, including prevention.

However before committing ourselves to be part of a work group we need to be aware of two factors:

- We need to step back and reflect on where we want to be involved in the work groups. The work group will involve more than prevention, and we must therefore be clear which are we want to be involved in.
- Do we have what it takes to participate? Do we have the time, do we have access to communication, e.g. e-mail, and do we have the

resources. If we commit to a work group will we be able to meet the needs of the work group whenever and wherever required?