

## English for Life HIV/AIDS Education Day Camp Program



*Global service Corps*

### Overview

The “English for Life” (EFL) program is a youth education program designed to provide both HIV/AIDS education and prevention and English language training for Thai secondary school teachers and students. An EFL pilot program was implemented through collaboration between Global Service Corps Thailand (GSC) and the Teenpath project of the Bangkok based Programs for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). This pilot program took place over a series of six weekends in June and July of 2007 under the direction of GSC and PATH technical staff based in Singburi and Bangkok. GSC and PATH staff were assisted by 19 foreign GSC volunteers, 42 Rajabhat University students, and 45 Thai secondary school teachers.

The EFL pilot program consisted of two distinct components; 1) an initial teachers training workshop and 2) a weekend student camp. Each month consisted of one training workshop and four student camps. The training workshops were conducted over a three-day period, while the student camps were also conducted over a three-day period as well as including an additional day prior to the camp set aside for preparation.

The initial teacher training workshop was conducted at the Pinehurst Country Club in Bangkok on June 8-10, 2007. The second teacher training workshop was held at Hostelling International in Bangkok on July 6-8, 2007. EFL student camps were held on June 15-17 in Bangkok that consisted of two separate camps, June 22-24 in Lampang and Ubonratchatani, June 13-15 in Ratchaburi that consisted of two separate camps, and June 20-22 in Pattalung and Nakornsritammarat.

The teacher training workshops were held to meet the following objectives:

1. To introduce teachers to a more comprehensive approach to sexual education for young people including human development, personal health, relationships, society and culture, sexuality and sexual behavior,
2. To increase the comfort level in which teachers are able to discuss sensitive issues related to youth sexuality and HIV/AIDS,
3. To familiarize teachers with different approaches in utilizing engaging youth activities related to sexuality and HIV/AIDS,
4. To provide training and support for teachers in order to effectively and sustainably promote HIV/AIDS education and prevention, sexual health and English language skills within schools, and
5. To clarify common misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and youth sexuality.

The student camps were held to meet the following objectives:

1. To provide clear and accurate information regarding HIV/AIDS, STIs, transmission and prevention in a way that is relevant and meaningful to students,

2. To effectively use English language training using practical situations in regards to youth sexuality issues that will develop the language skills of students,
3. To provide a safe and comfortable environment for young people to communicate with their peers and adults about sexuality and HIV/AIDS, and
4. To empower students to become peer educators within their own schools and establish sustainable student-led peer education health clubs.

### **The Results**

Surveys were given to student before the camps began to measure their basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS and STIs, as well as to gauge their willingness to discuss sensitive subject regarding the virus and their own sexuality. Identical surveys were also given to the students after the completion of the camps to measure knowledge gained and willingness to discuss sensitive subjects related to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Cumulative responses from the surveys were very promising. For instance, survey results showed a dramatic increase in the number of students who knew that condoms can help prevent the transmission of HIV. A similar increase was seen in the number of students who answered correctly at the end of the camps that HIV and AIDS cannot be spread by casual contact such as hugging or touching. A sharp increase was also seen in the number of students who answered correctly on the survey that HIV can be transmitted on the first time you have sex if you do not use a condom.

Analysis of the pre- and post-camp data also shows confusion regarding HIV perception and commonly held myths. Post-camp survey results were encouraging with large shifts in perception and information. There was nearly a 30% increase in the number of students who were able to correctly answer that choosing only healthy looking partners will not protect you from transmission of HIV. Post-camp surveys show that 95% of students knew that that the birth control pill only protects against pregnancy and not HIV and STIs. Although not 100% of students left the camp knowing that mosquitoes cannot spread HIV and AIDS, it is a step in the right direction when the percentage of students who knew that this myth was false rose from 48% to 90%.

These survey responses and many others clearly demonstrate that the camps achieved the desired effect of presenting accurate and clear information about HIV/AIDS to students and that the students were able to retain this knowledge.

Questions were also posed in the pre- and post-camp survey to gauge the willingness of students to talk about these sensitive issues. Survey results showed that students would feel more comfortable talking about HIV and AIDS with their families, peers, and teachers after completion of the camp after completion of the camps. Post-camp surveys also demonstrate that students would feel comfortable setting up extracurricular activities, but they would also feel comfortable approaching their principal about establishing such activities. Additionally, the majority of students also indicated that a peer education health club would have a positive impact on their school. More

encouraging was that all levels of agreement rose from the pre-camp survey to the post-camp survey.

GSC is now in the process of planning for a second round of EFL camps for the summer of 2008. For more information on these camps, please email the Thailand Program Coordinator at [brianfabian@globalservicecorps.org](mailto:brianfabian@globalservicecorps.org).