

Current Projects Funded by the Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury Fund September 2002

Currently, the Eleanor Bellows Pillsbury (EBP) Fund is supporting 9 projects around the world, including in East, West and Southern Africa, Asia and the Middle East. As dictated by the mandate of the EBP Fund, all of the projects strive to improve the reproductive health status of refugee and internally displaced adolescents. The methods of reaching this goal are as diverse as the organizations themselves. Peer education through cultural theatre and dance, integrating reproductive health into literacy classes and teaching essential life skills such as negotiation and assertiveness are only a few of the ways these organizations work to raise awareness of important reproductive health issues. Examples of important reproductive health issues are preventing and treating sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, offering prenatal care to expectant teenage mothers, providing a choice of family planning methods and ensuring that survivors of sexual violence know where to go to access essential services.

The following is a description of current projects that the EBP Fund is proud to support. We have tried to allow the perspectives and expressions of our partners to stand out in these summaries and therefore have used much of their language as they submitted it to us in their proposals. We hope these brief synopses will illustrate not only the many challenges faced by adolescent refugees but also the commitment that young people themselves and the many organizations supporting them have to improving reproductive health for youth.

REGION: WEST AFRICA

Name of Organization:

Current Evangelism

Ministries

Country of Operation:

Sierra Leone

Project Location: Refugee

camps in Kailahun and
Kenema Districts

Project Title: Assistance for

HIV/AIDS Prevention
Among Adolescents in
Liberia Residing in Refugee
Camps in Kailahun and
Kenema District

About the Organization:

Current Evangelism Ministries (CEM) is a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) established in 1992 during the height of the rebel war in Sierra Leone. CEM's mission is to work with grassroots organizations to alleviate poverty and promote peace. CEM has



assisted survivors of rape with medical attention and training to spur income-generating activities.

Need for Project

Due to the civil war that has wracked Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone, many women and girls have been victims of rape and other physical violence. For example, according to a study by Physicians for Human Rights, 50,000 to 64,000 internally displaced women in Sierra Leone have histories of war-related assault.

Project Objectives and Activities

CEM's goal is to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS infections by raising awareness among adolescent refugees about the danger of HIV/AIDS and teaching the importance of safe sex. CEM is using cartoons and billboards to display HIV/AIDS prevention messages, creating jingles and hosting discussions on the radio with health professionals and distributing fliers with educational messages on HIV/AIDS.

People Served by Project

Liberian refugees residing in refugee camps in Sierra Leone.

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Name of Organization: International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Country of Operation: Liberia

Project Location: Montserrado Refugee Camps around Monrovia

Project Title: Young Mothers Empowerment Program in Montserrado Refugee Camps

Recently, the EBP fund invited agency members of the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium to submit proposals to support the work they do with local partners on adolescent reproductive health. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) was the first agency to be granted funding.

About the Organization

Founded in 1933, the IRC is a leading nonsectarian, voluntary organization providing relief, protection and resettlement services for refugees and victims of oppression or violent conflict. IRC-Liberia has provided services to the refugees in that country since 1997. Currently IRC implements an education program, community services, gender-based violence (GBV) and health programs. The beneficiaries of these programs are mainly youths. The programs work in collaboration with the local NGOs Forum of African Women Educationalists (a former EBP grantee) and the Family Empowerment Program, Inc. to provide reproductive health education and counseling to the beneficiaries.

Need for Project

The political and ethnic conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis for much of the 1990s and up until today. Several innocent civilians have been tortured, mutilated and killed, and the lucky ones displaced or forced to cross borders for refuge in neighboring countries. It is estimated that more than 500,000 people have become refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) to date. Even though

democratic elections took place in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the regional security is unstable due to the existing fight between the Liberian government forces and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development (LURD) dissidents in northwest Liberia. The current refugee population is estimated at 28,000, the majority being women and children. They are hosted in four camps in Montserrado County around the capital Monrovia.

IRC-Liberia has been implementing GBV prevention and response interventions to the Sierra Leonean refugees since September 2001. From the observations in the camps and various references, women and girls are extremely vulnerable to this type of violence. During the conflicts, in flight for safety, while in camps and probably in the process of repatriation, women and girls suffered various levels of GBV. The environments they find themselves in have increased their vulnerability to GBV due to male dominance, disintegrated social ties, extreme poverty and high levels of illiteracy. In early 2002, a UNHCR/SCF-UK survey revealed high levels of sexual abuse and exploitation of women and girls in relation to material needs. Recently, the IRC's GBV program realized that there were a large number of desperate young mothers aged 14 to 20 years with either one or two children, abandoned by their partners and/or families, living alone and providing for their family members. However, the young mothers see a better future for themselves if assisted to improve their life skills, economic status and literacy levels. In so doing, they will be able to prevent further reproductive health problems, such as unwanted pregnancies, STI/HIV/AIDS, abortions and complicated deliveries. They will also be better able to take care of their children and themselves while in the camps and in their future homes.

Project Objectives and Activities

IRC-Liberia is working to increase reproductive health knowledge and promote self-esteem among young refugee mothers in Montserrado refugee camps in order to prevent further reproductive health problems such as unwanted pregnancies, STI/HIV/AIDS, abortions and complicated deliveries.

Activities:

- Facilitate the formation of young mothers groups and leadership.
- Conduct Training of Trainers (TOT) to the 16 peer guides on general life skills and reproductive health.
- Conduct meetings, talks and trainings on family planning, GBV, STI/HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood, nutrition and hygiene.
- Provide youth-friendly reproductive health counseling and referral services.
- Facilitate interested young mothers to go back to school or attend adult literacy classes.
- Encourage participation in sports and drama activities.

In addition, the project is promoting self-reliance to 20 young mothers in Montserrado refugee camps through small economic activities such as baking, sewing, tie and dye, and soap making projects.

Activities

- Train 100 young mothers on basic skills in baking, sewing, tie and die, and soap making.
- Support 20 young mothers to implement small-scale baking, sewing, tie and dye, and soap making projects.
- Conduct basic business skills training to 20 young mothers.

People Served by Project: 100 young mothers ages 14 to 20 years from Sierra Leone residing in Liberia refugee camps.

REGION: EAST AFRICA



Name of Organization: Gulu Youth for Action (GYFA)

Country: Uganda

Project Location: Gulu District

Project Title: Program on Sexuality and AIDS

Gulu Youth for Action (GYFA) is unique in that it is a nongovernmental organization run by adolescents for adolescents. The Women's Commission identified GYFA through its adolescent participatory research study that was carried out in the summer of 2001 to document the challenges Ugandan and Sudanese adolescents face in this region. (See *Against All Odds: Surviving the War*

on Adolescents on the Women's Commission website www.womenscommission.org.)

GYFA says that the study has raised much hope for adolescents who want to lead a useful life and be instrumental in solving their problems.

GYFA is operating in northern Uganda where recent rebel incursions by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have killed and wounded many people.

Need for Project

The 16 years of war in northern Uganda concentrated in the Acholi sub-region (Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts) have adversely affected the lives of people in northern Uganda. In addition to many people losing their lives, families and property, over 12,000 children and adolescents have been abducted by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA). Young people have been forcibly recruited to serve as combatants and many adolescent girls having been abducted to serve as wives to LRA soldiers suffering repeated rapes and other abuses.

Due to large-scale population displacement, overcrowding in the camps has led to a breakdown in the strong social and moral fabric of Acholi society. Due to widespread food insecurity, many vulnerable girls adopt risky survival mechanisms like trading sexual favors for food with military personnel posted in the camp. The rate of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among the adolescent and youth population has increased due to sex beginning at an earlier age, multiple partners and incidents of rape. Adolescent girls are also more vulnerable to either voluntarily or involuntarily unprotected sex. As a result, many child mothers are forced to drop out of school and those who survive their pregnancies may end up having large, unplanned families.

There is still a big gap in information on sexuality and HIV/AIDS among adolescent youth due to cultural factors. The girl-child is commonly looked at as a source of wealth and forced to marry at an early age. There is increasingly high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, STIs and other sexual and reproductive health related problems among adolescents and young people, especially girls. In general, HIV/AIDS has reduced the life expectancy of young people, leaving behind many AIDS orphans and reducing the productivity of the area given that young people are the most heavily affected by AIDS.

Project Objectives and Activities

The goal of the project is to increase awareness and communication about reproductive health problems among adolescents aged 10-24 years in Gulu district. GYFA hopes that through its work adolescents will:

- be more aware of how to prevent STIs, including HIV/AIDS,
- have a better understanding of the particular sexual and reproductive health problems facing girls, including early and forced marriages and incidences of rape and defilement; how to prevent them; and what alternative means of livelihood (versus trading sex for food and goods) exist for adolescent girls; and
- know where to go for prevention information and accessories, such as condoms, and counseling and treatment information.

In order to accomplish its goal, GYFA will seek training from government officials, the Department of Health and local NGOs working on these issues, including PEARL (Program for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Health Life) and Save the Children-Denmark. At least 12 GYFA members (four from within Gulu town and two members from four internally displaced persons camps) will be trained in a training of trainers workshop during the first quarter of this project. The training will take place within Gulu town. GYFA will also work closely with PEARL throughout the project, particularly to gain needed tools and educational materials.

A youth-led, adolescent-friendly approach will be adopted during implementation of the project involving information and awareness raising on sexuality and reproductive health through education meetings, radio presentations and drama.

People Served by Project

Approximately 4,000 adolescents living in internally displaced camps in Gulu district of northern Uganda.

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Name of Organization: WATWERO

Country of Operation: Uganda

Project Location: Northern region in Kitgum District

Project Title: Promoting Adolescent Behavior Change, Increasing HIV/AIDS Awareness and Creating Life-Skills Education

About the Organization

Watwero is another local youth-led organization working in northern Uganda. Watwero, which means roughly “We can do it” or “We are able,” has been working in Kitgum district since 1998 and was also identified by the Women's Commission's through the adolescent participatory research study. Watwero was originally started by educated, unemployed youth who set out to generate some income for themselves and has since expanded to several branches. The agency seeks to empower young people economically and socially. It has undertaken several income-generation projects, maintains an engineering and carpentry workshop, conducts HIV/AIDS sensitization trainings and engages in peace education.

EBP Partners Operate in Risky Regions

The security situation scared us a bit so we had to hold off for a little while. The rebels have calm abit on civilians in the last week but still abduct and their intention is not known. However, traffic around Kitgum has resumed but with a lot of risk, though the rebels say they don't hit civilian targets. There are tens of thousands of displaced persons from the various subcounties frequently attacked.

Need for Project

The 15-year-old war that has prevailed across northern Uganda and particularly the districts of Kitgum, Gulu and Pader has left thousands dead and much property destroyed. The people remaining in the region live in adverse poverty coupled with the psychological impact of their experiences. In addition to the war, HIV/AIDS is another risk to the lives of adolescents in the region. Girls are particularly impacted, many being forced into early sexual involvement resulting in unwanted pregnancies, early child mothers and unsafe abortions. The Women's Commission report noted the high rate of HIV infection in rural areas and crowded places such as IDP camps and the lack of reproductive health programs targeting adolescents.

Project Objectives and Activities

The objectives of Watwero's project are to reduce the vulnerability of young people to HIV/AIDS, with a focus on adolescents and the girl child. Watwero is promoting behavior change such as safe sex practices and faithfulness to one partner among sexually active adolescents and abstinence as an alternative to sex. Some of the interventions used will be life skills education in and out of school, peer education and a teen recreation program.

Watwero identified some of the challenges it will face in project implementation, including: strong biological drives among adolescents about sex, adolescents' biological

changes, exposure to environmental influence, e.g., mass media, promotion of adolescent sex and subordinate position of girls and women in the Acholi society.

Watwero expects that after implementation there will be an increased flow of information and education and the adolescent population will have access to other information and education programs that will make them more aware of sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Further, it is expected that there will be increased behavioral change that will decrease drug use, early sexual involvement, early marriage and rape.

People Served by Project

Displaced Ugandan adolescents living in Kitgum District.

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REGION: SOUTHERN AFRICA

Name of Organization: Christian Organization for Relief and Development (CORD)

Country of Operation: Zambia

Project Location: Nangweshi Refugee Camp, Western Province

Project Title: Supply of Sanitary Towels for Women of Child-bearing Age in Nangweshi Refugee Camp

About the Organization

CORD (Christian Outreach for Relief and Development) is an UK-based NGO currently working in ten countries, namely Afghanistan, Albania, Cambodia, India, Mozambique, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam and Zambia. CORD's aim is "to demonstrate the love of Jesus by practical care of vulnerable and marginalized people, especially children, displaced communities and refugees."



In response to the Angolan refugee crisis, CORD, as an implementing partner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is implementing reproductive health projects in Mayukwayukwa Refugee Settlement and Nangweshi

Refugee Camp. At Nangweshi Camp CORD is implementing reproductive health, community services and education programs amongst Angolan refugees. The existing reproductive health program began in October 2001 and seeks to address several reproductive health issues, especially fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and promoting the well-being of those affected by these diseases. CORD also collaborates with another implementing partner of UNHCR, CARE International, on its initiative to combat sexual and gender-based violence. CORD employs a reproductive health officer who works with 16 reproductive health motivators from the refugee community to use a community-based, peer-to-peer approach in addressing the reproductive health issues in the community. The RH motivators also support anti-AIDS clubs amongst both school children and out-of-school youth. Through previous EBP funding, CORD established a youth-friendly center in the camp to provide peer-to-peer counseling, reproductive health-related information (leaflets, books, etc.), "social marketing" of condoms, as well as literacy classes and entertainment. The Women's Commission visited Nangweshi Camp and the center in April 2002.

Need for Project

CORD's reproductive health efforts began in response to problems affecting adolescents as identified by UNHCR. Adolescents had a great deal of idle time due to the lack of activities in the crowded camp environment. Many youths dropped out of primary and secondary school and most young people have little personal access to cash even though they may be used by their families to trade goods within the camp or in local village markets. These factors are leading to adolescents having sex at younger ages, engaging in early and/or forced marriages, trading sex to obtain daily survival needs and engaging with multiple sexual partners. Lack of knowledge about STIs/HIV/AIDS, contraception and other reproductive health information puts these youth at great risk.

In addition, women and girls do not have access to a regular supply of sanitary napkins, which inhibits their activities each month during the time they are menstruating. This means that many young girls do not attend school because they are embarrassed and ashamed of their condition. Women stay at home during this time and may not go to the market or leave the home due to lack of appropriate sanitary material.

Project Objectives and Activities

CORD will provide raw materials, tools and/or training and income-generating activities for vulnerable groups such as single female household heads who may be under pressure to enter prostitution and families hosting children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Through an income-generation approach, CORD aims to create a sustainable supply of sanitary napkins for women of child-bearing age in Nangweshi Refugee Camp.

CORD is supplying raw materials to, and meeting labor costs of, women's income-generating groups in order that they may provide a free two-month supply of sanitary towels to women of child-bearing age. The income-generating groups will be encouraged to save their profits from this activity in order that, after the two-month period, they can continue producing sanitary towels and selling them to women as an income-generating activity. CORD will be sharing ideas with another Women's Commission subgrantee,

Hodi, with which CORD works very closely, to find the best way to make the project sustainable and most useful to the adolescent girls.

People Served by Project

Approximately 5,000 refugee women of child-bearing age residing in Nangweshi Refugee Camp.

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Name of Organization: Team of Volunteers Against AIDS (EVAS)

Country of Operation: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Project Location: Goma

Project Title: Addressing Reproductive Health Needs of Adolescents Displaced by the Volcano in Goma

About the Organization

EVAS is an NGO that focuses on the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. EVAS staff consists of a psychologist, a public health physician, a social worker and five rural development specialists. EVAS works in collaboration with UNICEF-Goma and ISIG (Institut supérieur d'informatique et de gestion)-Goma.

Need for Project

Following the eruption of Nyiragongo Volcano that occurred in Goma in January 2002, many families were displaced from their homes and few had the resources to rebuild. The population of Goma (approximately 400,000 people) was evacuated for three days and 14 villages were damaged by the lava flows. Reports state that the eruption killed more than 45 people and caused approximately 12,000 homeless families. The displaced population, particularly adolescents, was exposed to the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as sexual abuse.

Project Objectives and Activities

EVAS proposes the follow objectives for its project:

- teach adolescents sexual responsibility
- assist adolescents in finding occupations
- educate the parents of adolescents on gender-related issues
- train 48 adolescents to educate their peers
- train 1,200 adolescents on preventing HIV/AIDS

People Served by Project

1,200 displaced adolescents in Goma.

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Name of Organization: Great Lakes AIDS Program (GLAP)

Country of Operation: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Project Location: Goma

Project Title: AIDS Awareness Project

About the Organization

GLAP (Great Lakes AIDS Program) is a unit of the health activities carried out by the African Development Council (ADC). ADC is a nonprofit organization founded in 1998, after considering the scope of poverty in the Sub-Saharan African region. In addition to HIV/AIDS, the organization develops other projects in the fields of energy, microfinance, education, water and sanitation, and housing. GLAP works in close collaboration with the district health authorities, including the HIV/AIDS program coordinator.

Need for Project:

The project has its background and general context in the civil war which devastated the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly Goma and the neighboring areas and the 17 January 2002 volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. These events have displaced people within the region, concentrating them in bigger families and making them vulnerable to diseases. The people in Goma town are supplied by food and non-food items from the UN and international agencies. These goods are carried by truck drivers from Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia and Congo. Studies have shown that mobile people such as truck drivers have a high risk of contracting and transmitting HIV. These men typically are away from home and family and often frequent prostitutes or may be attractive to young girls seeking money to obtain their daily survival needs.

Project Objectives and Activities

EVAS is focusing its efforts on addressing the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS among the adolescent population. The project objectives are to impart to adolescents comprehensive knowledge about how to prevent HIV/AIDS, to build self-esteem and open networks for dialogue and to teach adolescents proper condom use.

EVAS will design a training manual and other educational materials, identify 160 adolescents to participate in the trainings and conduct training workshops. Situational role-plays or dramas will be created and played by the youth to express the messages they receive and improve their understanding. At the end of each workshop, participants will answer an HIV/AIDS knowledge questionnaire to determine how effective the training technique has been.

People Served by Project

160 displaced adolescents in Goma.

REGION: MIDDLE EAST

Name of Organization: Tamer institute for Community Education

Project Location: West Bank and Gaza

Project Title: Health Awareness for Adolescents

About the Organization

Tamer Institute for Community Education is a nongovernmental organization that was established in 1989 to meet the educational needs of Palestinian children and youth, who constitute more than 60 percent of the Palestinian population. Tamer believes in interactive and alternative education as a tool in mobilizing young people and introducing them to the basic life skills to enhance their awareness and involvement and active contribution to the building of the Palestinian civil society. Tamer's volunteers between 13-20 years of age are involved in most projects of the institute. They work in teams (Nakheel Teams) which have members in many areas in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, and share their experiences with their friends at school and community centers. The youth also run a weekly page and a monthly supplement in a daily national paper for which they do all of the editing and production tasks.



Need for Project

Working closely with the youth-led Tamer to recognize the need to address the community health issues, particularly reproductive health, among the young population. The project area has been impacted negatively by the long years of Israeli occupation and has produced a more closed and conservative society.

Project Objectives and Activities

Tamer aims to relate reproductive health with crucial needs in life and to address topics like basic sex education, early marriage, medical check before marriage and family planning as a personal choice, as well as hygiene, nutrition and fitness. Workshops aim to supply the youth with the awareness, strength and the life skills needed for a better future. Tamer believes by instituting the project, they will be contributing to the social development process and bolstering the new generation.

People Served by Project

Palestinian youth living in the West Bank, Gaza.

REGION: ASIA



Name of Organization: Shuhada Organization

Country of Operation: Afghanistan

Project Location: Jaghori District Ghazni Province

Project Title: Reproductive Health Education and Literacy Program for Afghan People in Jaghori, Afghanistan

About the Organization

Shuhada Organization is a nongovernmental organization committed to the welfare and progress of the Afghan communities living inside and outside Afghanistan, with special emphasis on the empowerment of women and children. Shuhada was founded in Quetta, Pakistan in 1989

and is involved in a range of sectors including health, education, income generation, construction, training and relief distribution. Shuhada runs a hospital in the project area.

Need for Project

The need for improved health care and family planning are acute in this region. Although Shuhada runs a hospital in the project area, which provides access to some reproductive health care and family planning services, the needs for community-based adolescent reproductive health education and expanded resources for family planning are great and remain largely unmet. Shuhada is uniquely positioned to carry out this project to improve the reproductive health and overall condition of women in Afghanistan. (For more information on Afghan women, see the Women's Commission site:

<http://www.womenscommission.org/afghan.html>.)

Project Objectives and Activities

Shuhada will train 20 young Afghan women about reproductive health care through basic literacy training classes using reproductive health as a main theme. These women will then educate 750-1,200 of their peers in the community using the knowledge they have gained through their training in order to expand community awareness about reproductive health and family planning. Shuhada will also establish a center in the hospital to enroll 20 trainees to learn about essential reproductive health care.

People Served by Project

750-1,000 adolescent Afghan women.

*Julia Matthews
September 9, 2002*