

ASA-Program 2004

Project: To know where Aids comes from – and how to handle it

Signature: GHA04/01

HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign

Akatsi District/Ghana

[reloaded]

August 3rd to November 4th 2004

Evaluation Report of the project participants:

Liga Krastina and Jan Weber

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Summary

From August 4th to November 3rd Liga Krastina (Latvia) and Jan Weber (Germany), in cooperation with their Ghanaian project partner, the National Youth Council (NYC) Ghana, represented by the NYC-Co-ordinator Jerry Agbo, carried out a HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign in the Akatsi District/Volta Region/Ghana. In total 32 villages and schools of the Akatsi District were visited during the time of the campaign.

Liga and Jan used the first weeks of their time in Ghana for acclimatizing, for getting used to the Ghanaian customs and special cultural features, for officially introducing themselves to the people and important institutions of the District and for observing the first official appointments. Besides that they used the time to develop their own stigma-module that fitted into the methodical framework of their ASA-predecessors of the year 2002. During their approx. 2 ½ hours programs at the village-greens and schoolyards of the Akatsi District, they were able to answer many urgent questions of their audience and in the same time got to know the fears, insecurities and diverse rumours related to "sexuality in general" and HIV/AIDS in particular.

During their bicycle-tours to the villages which ranged up to 40 kilometres into the bush-land of the Akatsi District, they had the opportunity to see places that a tourist probably had never reached before. They could become acquainted with the people and their traditional way of life and were able to make many important observations for their work. They were enthusiastic about and moulded by the hospitality, the frankness and the interest that was shown to them by their project partner, by the Youth Leaders of the Akatsi District and by many other people in Akatsi, of whom some also became good friends.

Their project, which had started earlier than anticipated, could be carried out successfully due to good teamwork with and due to the tireless commitment of their interpreters Daniel, Innocent and Jonathan.

Furthermore as proud members of the first GLEN-generation they enjoyed having the opportunity to learn more about their own "European identity" and the Ghanaian culture at the same time.

1. Introduction

The title of this evaluation report already points out, that the HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign that was carried out by us, Liga Krastina and Jan Weber, took place for the second time within the framework of an ASA-Project in the Akatsi District. The Akatsi District is situated in the Volta Region, in the far south-east of Ghana. A number of approx. 6000 inhabitants of the Akatsi-Township face approx. 85000 inhabitants of the villages in the bush-land of the District. The 3.4%¹-HIV-prevalence rate of Ghana is, in comparison to other African countries, on a relatively low level.

Like in the year 2002 when the ASA-participants Tobias Troll, Sven Voigtlaender and Irma Welinsky, carried out the first campaign, the National Youth Council (NYC) with its Co-ordinator in Akatsi, Jerry Agbo, again represented the Ghanaian project partner. In the year 2003 there had been an ASA-project in the Akatsi District as well. However, the emphasis of that project had been on the "Lifeskill-Training" of adolescents. Therefore it can be assumed that there was less content-related overlap with our work in the year 2004.

We were able to gain from the experiences which our project partner and his native co-workers had gathered in the previous years with their "visitors" from the north, and from the evaluation reports of our ASA-predecessors in various kinds of aspects. In the same way it was a fortunate circumstance that Sebastian Herold who had together with Franziska Sinner carried out the Lifeskill-Project of the previous year acted as our country-group-tutor on the preparation seminars. Thus we had the chance to receive some valuable hints and appraisals through personal conversation.

Therefore it is the aim of this evaluation report, to capture some of the experiences made by us so that future "ASA-generations" and ASA-projects can profit from them and future participants will find the "entrance into their projects" more easily. It is all the more regrettable in this context that the project proposal for the Akatsi District for the year 2005 was rejected.

We both were impressed by the fact that we were not only "simple" ASA-participants but in the same time we were part of the first GLEN²-generation. Thus ASA gave us the chance, that we, Liga from Latvia and Jan from Germany, were not only introduced to one other culture

¹ Source: HIV/AIDS Update, A Newsletter of The Ghana AIDS Commission, 2004 Vol. 1 No.2, p. 3

² GLEN – Global Education Network, the ASA-Co-operation-network with Central and Eastern European-partner-organisations.

respectively one other country and its people, but could extend "our horizon" twice. In fact through previous stays in Germany Liga had gathered some experience with "the Germans" before. However, going to Africa for a period of three months with a German whom she hardly knew could still be seen as a challenge. And for Jan who (at first!) could hardly locate Latvia on the map it was important to realize that there are not only interesting countries and people in the south but also in the east. Jan as well had never travelled to Africa with a Latvian he hardly knew before.

Liga studies sociology and works in social research. The main motivation for her was the opportunity to spend some time outside of Europe living and working with the local people. Curiosity and a wish to help was the most important motivation to apply for an ASA project. As only two projects were available for Latvians, it was rather a positive surprise and good fortune for Liga to find herself in Ghana doing this project on Aids.

For Jan the motivation to apply for the participation in the HIV/AIDS-Awareness-project emerged particularly from preceding experiences in development co-operation. Those experiences had sharpened his consciousness for the necessity of strengthening the fight against the HIV-pandemic. Furthermore he saw the opportunity to achieve a practical contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS besides his studies and to gain experiences for a future (professional) commitment in this field.

Encouraged by the advice of our predecessors, we attempted to change the focus of the campaign away from the pure HIV/AIDS-knowledge transfer towards the stigmatisation-discrimination problems regarding HIV-infected people and/or people living with AIDS. Therefore a module was developed by us which was added to the methodical frame that was developed by the participants of the first ASA-HIV/AIDS-project in the Akatsi District.

The experiences made by us during the work in our campaign as well as the stigma-module are supposed to be the subject of the following report. However, it is obvious that only the smallest part of our experiences and "tracks laid by us" can be written down here. Even a rather short time of three months spent in a different culture 'produces' so much "Life-experience" that you could write a whole book about it.

2. The Preparatory Phase

Right after the first surprise and joy about being accepted for the project by ASA, it was our task to get in contact with our tandem-partner and the Ghanaian project partner. This happened via email. Jan wrote a first email in English language to Liga and was quite astonished when Liga replied in German. The fact that Liga speaks German fluently turned out to be an exceptional advantage during the time of the project, a fact we will comment on later.

The first contact with our Ghanaian project partner Jerry Agbo was made very easily and was limited to exchanging a few emails in which we introduced ourselves and made some agreements concerning the dates of our trip to Ghana.

Only one misunderstanding turned up in respect to our accommodation. From our ASA-predecessors we knew that they were charged too much for the rooms they had rented in respect to the Ghanaian circumstances. Therefore we followed the advice of Sebastian Herold and got in contact with Daniel Thomann. Daniel was an employee of the DED³ and had been “stationed” in Akatsi for one year. He inhabited a big house with several bedrooms, kitchen, living room and two bathrooms which he rented from a policeman, living in the neighbourhood. The "Yellow House" as the house is called in Akatsi due to his yellow coat of paint cost approx. 150€ per month.

Since our predecessors each had paid up to 50€ for a single room per month, we decided to take over the house from Daniel whose time in Akatsi was coming to an end about two weeks after our arrival.

The “luxury” which was given to us with the Yellow House which came close to European standards, could be considered as exaggerated for a three month stay. On the other hand we soon learned to appreciate the advantage of being able to "withdraw" from time to time.

Unfortunately Jerry didn't respond when we informed him via email that we had organized the accommodation ourselves but wrote instead that an accommodation had been organized already. He wanted to put us in the guesthouse of the District-Assembly where the first ASA-participants of the year 2002 had stayed. After our arrival it was quite difficult to convince him that we would feel comfortable in the Yellow House despite the fact that the guesthouse of the District-Assembly had already been occupied by other visitors of the District-Administration as it later turned out.

³ DED – The German Development Service

The content-related preparation took the biggest part of the time expenses during the preparation of our project in the preparatory phase. In the course of intensive research and investigation for suitable instructions and manuals for the realisation of a HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign in an African context, however, we soon had to discover that there are only very few publications concerning that issue. A great number of descriptions about the necessity of a stronger HIV/AIDS-Prevention especially in sub-Saharan Africa as well as an amazing number of studies and/or evaluations are to be found about the results of prevention-work which already had been implemented. However, one hardly finds descriptions of the "How to do" in the HIV/AIDS-Awareness- and Prevention-work neither in connection with evaluation studies nor as separate publications. It gave us the impression that the actors in the field of the HIV/AIDS-Prevention don't like to share their knowledge and techniques.

For the subject of stigmatisation-discrimination of HIV-infected people and/or people living with AIDS it is difficult to find literature that is more than just a pure problem description.

We considered Welbourns "Stepping Stones" Manual (available in the internet: www.talcuk.org) to be principally suitable. That manual, however, is particularly meant for long-term prevention work with fixed small groups. For a three month campaign like ours we could only take a few methodological advices from it.

The Peace Corps' "Life Skills Manual" (which can be downloaded at: www.peacecorps.com) also seemed to be suitable for us, unfortunately only a small part of the publication refers to HIV/AIDS-Prevention-work and the emphasis is put on the training of "more general" life skills.

For us, the two ASA-preparation seminars in Trebnitz (Germany) and Kostelecke Horky (Czech Republik) were special highlights in the preparatory phase. Apart from the well organized program, we were particularly impressed by meeting so many like-minded people. The daily input of enormous amounts of information had to be frequently reviewed and discussed until late at night. Apart from that we met each other in Trebnitz for the first time.

3. The Beginning of the Project

After Liga had started her journey on a coach a day earlier in Riga, we met on the 3rd August 2004 at the central station in Frankfurt. From there we started our trip to Ghana together. From Frankfurt Airport we flew to Dubai, where we had to run to the gate to catch our next flight, due to a delay during our first flight. From Dubai the journey led us over Lagos in Nigeria to the International Airport of the Ghanaian capital Accra. There our project partner Jerry Abgo welcomed us. Unfortunately the first delay already occurred during our check out because Jans baggage got lost on its way to Ghana and he had to post it as missing. Apart from that he had to survive the first few days in Ghana without changing his cloth. All future ASA-participants are firmly warned here to never (!) start the journey without a change of clothes in the hand luggage. Even though we already had had email contact with Jerry and also our predecessors had given us some information about him we still were surprised about his juvenile-appearance. Jerry cordially welcomed us and together we continued our trip to Akatsi. First we crossed Accra with a taxi and then changed into a TroTro⁴ which took us to our destination within three hours. After a bus-ride and train journey, airplane, taxi and TroTro we were quite tired in the evening. However, Jerry could not take that into consideration since he had in mind to introduce us to the District Chief Executive (the mayor) in the same evening. Due to some fortunate circumstances we couldn't catch that one in his residence which is located at the outskirts of Akatsi. After that we could convince Jerry of delivering us to the Yellow House, where we finally had a good sleep.

The first days in our new environment we spent with acclimatizing and with getting used to the place. Since protocol-guidelines do have a high value in Ghana, Jerry in short intervals passed by and either brought visitors along, who were officially introduced to us or picked us up in order to show us his office or to escort us to one of the various Ghanaian-institutions, were we had to introduce us to the current heads. Beside that we used the first week to introduce ourselves to the neighbourhood. In doing so we got some help from Daniel Thomann who, in the same time, also helped us to familiarize with the most important social manners in Ghana.

We are very grateful for all his help and assistance in so many aspects of daily life in Ghana. A further advantage of Daniels presence was that we could take over his circle of friends, which he had built up during his time in Ghana. Therefore we didn't have to worry about a lack of

⁴ Little taxi-like Vans which, often in disturbing condition, organise the public transport are called TroTro in Ghana.

company from the very beginning.

At the end of the first week Daniel celebrated his farewell party. Besides his German colleagues he also had invited some Ghanaian colleagues. Furthermore a lot of our neighbours and our landlord came in company of one of his three wives as well as the Chief⁵, responsible for our quarter, who appeared in traditional clothing. We used the occasion to also officially introduce us to him.

The entrance of a dance group, which accompanied by drum rhythms, performed traditional dances was the highlight of the celebration. The fact that we were allowed to join the party brought the great advantage, that we were also inaugurated into the protocol-guidelines of Ghanaian celebrations. In keeping with the good old British tradition the appointment of a Chairman, the presence of a Speaker, an opening speech by the host, the official hand over of the visitor-gifts and the opening and the conclusion prayer, spoken by a pastor from the neighbourhood, was of special importance. Future ASA-participants should be well prepared concerning that and should always have a few friendly words about the respective host as well as a short prayer at hand. As the culinary highlight of the celebration, beside rice and fish, a big pot full of cat-stew had been offered, even though only one of us had the courage to try it.

Furthermore we particularly want to mention Ernestina A. Dorgbetor and her 15 years old niece Lilian Tara Senyah, who shared the compound with us and live in the rear house of the Yellow House. Ernestina and Lilian managed to make us “feel at home” from the very beginning of our time in Ghana and supported us in word and deed in every possible situation and, besides that, took good care of us. With tireless patience they answered the many questions we had regarding the behaviour of “the Ghanaians” which was, in the beginning, quite unintelligible to us and helped us with their advice to react “in the right course of action” to the challenges of the Ghanaian every day life.

In addition the two introduced us to the Ghanaian cuisine and taught us how to grind the local spices on a stone behind the house and how to use those spices properly while preparing food. Often they invited us for dinner and therefore we could enjoy deliciously prepared fufu and akple. Between Ernestina, Lilian and us a lasting friendship developed.

⁵ The Chief is the traditional leader of a village (or part of a town) in the west-African-bush and is the owner of the “stool”. His leadership is based on the hereditary of rights, the reputation, the age and the ownership of land.

On one of the next days, it was the Monday which followed the farewell party we made our first excursion to the Ghanaian capital Accra. In Accra we could pick up Jans baggage which finally had arrived in Ghana and register at the German Embassy. We also attended appointments at the GTZ⁶ and at the Ghana Aids Commission which we had arranged before. Dr. Christoph Habammer - an employee of the GTZ had kindly obtained access to the library of the GTZ in Accra for us although he was responsible for the tax-department of the GTZ. The "HIV/AIDS department" that had supported our ASA-predecessors 2 years ago had been dissolved in the meantime and the employees had been moved elsewhere. Nevertheless we had asked for access to the library because we hoped to find some methodical advice concerning the Stigmatisation-Discrimination-Problems regarding HIV-infected people and/or people living with AIDS for our campaign. Unfortunately our research has not been successful. We were very grateful for a condom donation out of the GTZ-supplies that Dr. Habammer gave us for demonstration purposes. Previously written inquiries to well known German condom manufactures concerning free appropriation of presentation condoms had unfortunately not been successful. Fortunately later on an employee of the DED gave us a bigger amount of male and female condoms.

After our visit at the GTZ we walked to the Ghana Aids Commission and Jerry introduced us to the general director of the Commission Prof. Sakyi Awuku Amoa. Unfortunately the interest and the intention of the Commission to co-operate with us was limited and the extensive information-materials which were promised to us and which we picked up a few days later with a car which was organized only for this purpose turned out to be only two small plastic bags full of information-brochures with limited value for our purposes.

Already in the first week we had been introduced to some of the youth leaders⁷ of the District by Jerry. The remaining ones we got to know a few days after Daniels farewell party on a conference of the youth leader in the conference room of the District Assembly (the local administration). There we introduced ourselves with a speech. Besides that while observing the conference we were astonished about the great degree of commitment and passion the Youth Leaders displayed in discussing, arguing and voting for the organization of the pending soccer season. It gave us the impression that many European adolescents could learn a lot from that

⁶ GTZ – Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH

⁷ Youth Leader is the marking of the Leaders of the local Youth Clubs in Ghana.

“grass root democracy” and commitment for social policies.

Since Jerry had to go to the capital on the following day due to an important meeting we had the chance to keep our first official appointment. Accompanied by Daniel Agbolo, a Youthleader from the village Gefia, a village which is situated approx. 5 km away from Akatsi and who, in the following weeks regularly joined us as our interpreter in our campaign, we represented the National Youth Council at the final event of a youth-camp which one of the various Christian youth-associations had carried out in Akatsi. The final event took place in the multi-purpose hall of the Teachers Training College which is situated in Akatsi. After our arrival we first joined the audience and followed the program which, alternately, consisted of long monologues of the representatives of the association and singing and dancing by individual participants or by the whole audience. The atmosphere was very good. After some time we were officially welcomed by one of the representatives and Daniel held a short speech. Meanwhile a table with tablecloth for the guests of honour was prepared and after Daniel had finished his speech we were asked to take a seat at this table.

In the following “our breath was taken away” for several times for instance when one of the preachers on stage gave the risky statement that “the HIV/AIDS-prevalence-rate in South Africa had strongly been increased since the beginning of the distribution of condoms”.

When the program was finished the leader of the youth-association took us aside and tried to convert us to the “right” Christian-belief by telling us some parables and stories. After about 30 minutes later and after a souvenir-photo was taken we were released.

3.1. The National Youth Camp

In the following week the annual “National Youth Camp” took place. Every year the Camp is carried out in a different Ghanaian city and this time the regional-capital of the Volta Region Ho had the honour to carry out the Camp. From every Ghanaian Region pupils and teenagers had been chosen and sent to the camp because of their extraordinary results at school or because of an outstanding social commitment. At least this is what the explanation of one of the participants of the camp was like. We are not sure if Jerry really took this in consideration when he chose the participants of the Akatsi District.

Of course we didn’t want to miss our chance and followed Jerry’s invitation of visiting him and the 10-member-strong Akatsi District group on the camp. Unfortunately our first visit, when we tried to join a football match, ended up in a long and strong downpour. This, of course, could not

discourage us and two days later we went there for the second time. Now we had the opportunity to join an excursion of the camp-participants, which led us to the brand new “Sea Defence Wall”⁸ at the coast line. Therefore the more than 600 youngsters were taken by busses straight through the Volta Region. This journey lasting several hours was a great experience for us. The atmosphere inside the busses was very nice. Hardly anyone sat on his/her seat instead everybody was dancing, playing music or singing. Besides that we had the chance to have some interesting conversations with young Ghanaians from all over Ghana.

Unfortunately the organization of the excursion was so deficient, that instead of spending the day on the beach we mainly sat inside the busses because the drivers didn’t know where to go and finally went on strike. However, this couldn’t do any harm to the good mood of the kids. Besides the visit of the Sea Defence Wall we stopped by at the ruins of an old Danish fort in which in colonial times slaves had been detained and shipped to America. The moment at this historic place that we as the only white people visited with our Ghanaian friends was a very special for us. Even though we belong to a different generation we somehow felt that we have a share in that historic responsibility.

3.2. The Youth Celebration Week

The next week was marked by the “Youth Celebration Week”. The Youth Celebration week is a five day program which includes the members of all youth clubs of the Akatsi District and intends community-activities under a specific motto for each day of the week. Unfortunately the rainy season had begun and it was raining constantly. Therefore the first three days of the week, with the items: “Cleaning up session” – in which the streets of Akatsi were supposed to be cleaned up; “the Donation session” – in which poorer families were supposed to get material or financial support and the “Youth-Forum” in which youth policies were supposed to be discussed, were cancelled.

On Thursday it was our turn. It was the day of the "Fun-Games" which in fact consist out of a great soccer tournament in which the different youth clubs play against each other. Already in the very beginning of our time in Ghana Jerry had told us that on this day we were supposed to introduce a “Silly Game” from Germany. Unfortunately we couldn’t really find out what the whole thing was about and in which organizational framework it was going to take place. First

⁸ The „See Defence Wall“ is a Ghanaian shore protection project which was finished in the year 2004.

we thought of some ball-game or something comparable. A few days before the Fun-Game-day we finally found out what our predecessors had done on the same day. The first group in the year 2002 had organized some kind of rally through Akatsi-town and the Tandem of the previous year carried out funny group-games on a meadow next to the soccer field. Therefore we planned a small group-competition. Unfortunately, even after we had asked several times we couldn't really find out for how many participants we had to plan our "game" for. Apart from that we thought of a Youth Celebration Week and therefore expected participants in the age between 14 and 18 years. On Thursday morning it rained but when the sun finally came through the dark clouds we walked to the stadium of the Teachers Training College. When we arrived there, however, we became a little uncertain about our plans. Approx. one hundred young men in the age between 17 up to 30 years had come together, all dressed with soccer shirts. The registration of the clubs had just been completed and the players observed the event with great seriousness. We slowly realized that we had planned our "carry eggs on spoons-game", tug-of-war and chocolate-eating-competitions for the wrong target group. Jerry, however, didn't think that this was a problem at all because he expected only a few participants from each soccer-team anyway. After we had ordered a few extra eggs and some more chocolate we asked only the youngest members of each team to participate and started our competition. Very quickly we were surrounded by more than 200 children who made it nearly impossible to carry out the games.

9 youth clubs were present while we had been planning for a maximum of five. However, we decided to carry out three rounds with three groups for each turn instead of just one round. After a few group-games which were supposed to welcome the participants and to strengthen the team-spirit we started with the tug-of-war. The next items on the agenda were the chocolate-eating-competition with covered eyes and cutlery, the carry-eggs-on-spoons-race and a race with a bucket on the head and a second kid on the back who was allowed to hold the bucket...

The last game was a garbage-collecting-session. Jan had had that idea because the "Cleaning up session" from the beginning of the week had been cancelled. Each of the three participating groups of the first round got a garbage bag and 15 minutes time in order to run to the main road and to collect as much garbage as possible. We hoped to "kill two birds with one stone" by doing something for the street scene and by making the youngsters run (sportive activity). Afterwards we had prepared soap and water because: "Always wash your hands with soap" (an advertising slogan of the Ministry of Health which you can read everywhere in Ghana). The first round

worked quite well. Unfortunately the 6 following clubs then refused to participate in the competition. The teenagers thought that the "water-on-the-head-carry-game" was too hard for them and they also didn't want to collect garbage because they were afraid that "the people" would start laughing at them.

Thus the competition represented our first failure. Also the non-participating clubs probably regretted not having participated because we had a soccer-ball as prize for each of the clubs who had joined the competition.

3.3. The Preparation of the Campaign

In the following days, we put more emphasis on preparing ourselves for our "real" project. Since our intensive research on alternative methods and concepts for our campaign had not been successful, we had decided to use (and if necessary change it according to our needs) the manual which was developed by our ASA-predecessors of the year 2002 that is also documented under the Internet address www.akatsi.net and can be downloaded as a bilingual (German, English) printing template. As far as we can say the manual turned out to be very practical and effective.

To guarantee a smooth course of the first program in one of the villages nearby Akatsi we carried out "dry-practices" of several hours in the living room of our house. In addition Noble, a Youth Leader from Akatsi, organised a "test-audience" for us so that we could try out the program under nearly authentic conditions.

Already in the first days of our time in Akatsi we had been introduced to Mrs. Letitia Togo and to her husband Mr. Steven Akle. Mrs. Togo, as an employee of the Education-office in Akatsi, had also supported the work of our ASA-predecessors. Unfortunately during our stay in Akatsi she frequently had to go on business trips which she repeatedly regretted. She and her husband, a retired psychologist, however, invited us a few times for dinner to their house. Since we hadn't yet forgotten about our goal to focus with our campaign on the Stigmatisation-Discrimination-Problems we asked Mrs. Togo and her husband for support on the search for the right method to tackle that issue. That approach seemed to be important to us since we didn't want to tackle the issue from a pure European perspective but preferred to choose a more specific approach which referred more to the every day life of our target group.

It wasn't that easy to make Mrs. Togo and her husband understand what we wanted from them when we asked them for an old Ghanaian parable or an old fairytale which deals with Stigma or

Discrimination and which we could rewrite for our purposes.

Finally Mrs. Togo told us the true story of a woman who had come, on the search for advice and support, to the consulting hour in the Education Office.

The woman had been infected with the HI-Virus through unprotected sexual intercourse. After the diagnosis was confirmed by a HIV-Test, she had told her friends about her fate. This soon turned out to be a great mistake since the news about her HIV-infection was soon spread over the whole village and through that she lost the basis of life for herself and for her children. Before her HIV-infection was known to the public she earned the bare essentials for herself and her family with a small “mobile restaurant”. Now nobody wanted to buy food from her anymore and she and her children were expelled by the village community.

Mr. Akle, instead, told us an old Ghanaian fairy tale – “The story about the fox and the cock”. The distinguishing mark of the fairy tale is the great fear of the fox of getting burned on the red comb of the cock because he thinks it is a fire.

Out of the story about the tragic fate of the women and the fairy tale about the fox and the cock we were able to develop a new module on Stigmatisation and Discrimination which we could integrate in the program of our campaign.

4. The Project

At the end of the second week of our stay in Akatsi we got the impression that we should have already started our work in the HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign. As mentioned before we had been able to take over a big part of the circle of friends of the predecessor in our house. Among this circle of friends there was a group of four to five adolescents or “young men” that regularly (in fact daily) came to visit us at our house and spend the evenings with us on our veranda.

Having so many visitors was a little bit strenuous at times. We hardly could keep our self made time schedules because our visitors didn't care about that too much. These circumstances had, however, a very thrilling aspect when we realised that our awareness-program had already started some time ago without us being aware of it. When our young friends emerged in a group of two to three people we liked to view the Ghana-map or to look through the Bradt-Tourist-Guide on our veranda. Not only we but also our Ghanaian friends could find out and learn many interesting things about Ghana. Besides that we (Liga and Jan) could mark out possible travel routes on how to achieve the different Ghanaian towns with the different TroTro-lines for later expeditions to the other ASA-projects. When our visitors came alone, however, the conversations by chance soon led to the actual reason for our presence in Akatsi. After a few general questions concerning our work our visitors quickly came “to their point of interest” and asked all the questions that had been on their mind for a long time. After they had overcome their initial shyness, they submitted all Ghanaian rumours, prejudices and fears in connection to sexuality. There is a great fear of illnesses caused by condoms. In the same way there is a big apprehension about condoms which could disappear “somewhere inside the women” and/or that sperm which stays inside the penis can cause dangerous diseases. Furthermore it was not easy to explain to our friends that condom-use is not to be seen on the same level as abortion. It became quite difficult when we had to explain why there are different condom qualities and if that is the case, why one should still use them and why there are differences in prices for condoms. Besides that it was not easy to explain that even with the use of condoms there is no 100%-protection and why higher risks could emerge if one uses the condom in a “wrong way”. All these questions were very important for our visitors and we tried hard to give adequate answers to all questions. This, of course, was a great responsibility and we have been aware of that. Nevertheless it was sometimes difficult for us not to start laughing for instance when the different apprehensions related to the possible positions of sexual intercourse were submitted. Because of the lacking knowledge concerning the right English-expressions of our "clients" (also we didn't know enough about the

right ‘technical terms’) the positions were, in outline, demonstrated to us on our veranda. Particularly sexual intercourse while standing is suspected to be extremely bad for ones health in Ghana.

Through our conversations we could correct many misunderstandings and apprehensions. Besides that it was a big advantage of these little “lessons” that through them we learned a lot about the prevailing fears and rumours within the Ghanaian society. Afterwards we knew what we had to talk about in more detail during our visits to the schools and villages of the District and which questions we had to be prepared for.

As mentioned earlier in chapter 3.3. we had decided to rely on the methodical framework of our predecessors during our campaign. Since the methods are fully documented in the manual which is published in the internet⁹, we are not going to give another detailed description of the single modules in this report. Instead we are going to concentrate in the following chapter(s) on the description of the experiences and methodical enlargements which we made respectively for our campaign.

In total 32 villages and schools of the Akatsi District were visited during the "NYC-ASA-HIV/AIDS-awareness Campaign 2004". Some of the villages visited in 2004 had already been visited in the campaign 2002. Nevertheless also in the villages and school which were attended for the second time the interest and the need for awareness was still great. This can be seen as a result of the chronological distance to the first campaign and the fact that only very few people had actually been in the audience of the first campaign in 2002.

Like our predecessors we also had to struggle with transportation problems. The first campaign, however, could rely on occasional support by the Education Office, the Health Center and of the Youth Leadership Training Institutes (Avernopeme) which, whenever possible, made a car available for the campaign. Those opportunities were dropped for us because either the car of the respective institution was broken or the willingness to co-operate with us was reduced due to staff modifications. Furthermore the District Assembly only made a car available for us twice so that we could be driven to villages which were situated very far away in the bush-land. We solved the problem by renting three bicycles for the duration of the campaign. The price for the bicycles was a fixed flat rate to which we had agreed after hard negotiations with the owner of the bikes. Thus

⁹ www.akatsi.net

we undertook daily bicycle-tours through the bush-land of the Akatsi District in a range of up to 40 kilometres. We could reach a few villages which were situated on the roadside of the street to the regional capital Ho by TroTro. Whenever possible two villages and/or schools had been visited on each day. The program usually lasted, without interruption, about 1 ½ hours. Due to the enormous interest and the never ending questions of our audience the programs were always lasting 2 to 2 ½ hours. After carrying out two programs a day and the above mentioned bicycle-tours combined with African climate we often went to bed at night completely exhausted.

Besides that it is important for us to mention the tireless commitment of our project partner Jerry Agbo and the Youth Leaders Daniel Agbolo, Innocent Katakau and Jonathan Atsa. While Jerry was concentrating on the organizational and planning part of the work on the campaign the Youth Leaders (always at least one of them) were accompanying us daily to the programs and translated what we presented into Ewe¹⁰ and, the other way around, the questions and answers of our audience into English.

Every day Daniel, Innocent and Jonathan made the effort to walk or to ride by bicycle from their villages which are situated some kilometres away from Akatsi-town in order to accompany us to the various villages of the District, after having had breakfast with us on our veranda.

We are grateful for their commitment, their friendship, their good mood and the fun we had together.

Furthermore our campaign would have failed already during the attempt to receive the permission of the Chiefs and the Assembly-men¹¹ for carrying out our program on the respective village-greens without their detailed knowledge of the Ghanaian protocol and their diplomatic skills. The official introduction and the explanation of our "mission" were a daily repeated ritual. After arriving in one of the villages we first were guided to the house of the Chief where, after a short welcome, we normally were asked to have a seat inside the living room of the house. After that it was the task of the Youth Leaders to explain the reasons for our visit to the Chief and his consultants. In the following the Chief would speak a longer welcome formula on which the Youth Leaders answered again and again with short sentences. Since this welcome formula was

¹⁰ Ewe ist the tribe-language of the same-named tribe which settles along the coast-line from the eastern-Ghana across Togo and Benin until Nigeria.

¹¹ The Assembly-man ist the elected mayor of a community in Ghana. He represents the interests of his village in the conferences of the Assembly-men at the District-Assembly and it is obligate for him to co-operate with the Chief – the traditional Leader of a village in the Ghanaian bush-land.

presented with certain variations we, even though we tried hard, were not able to give the right answers at the right time until the very end of our stay in Ghana. After the welcome formula was completed we stood up again to shake the hands of the Chief and his consultants and then sat down again. With that the official welcome ritual was finished and the conversation now could be continued in a much more relaxed manner.

After we were welcomed by the Chief the ritual would be repeated a few minutes later when we introduced us to the Assembly-man who loved to live on the other side of the village. Either the Chief or the Assembly-man then called for the Gongo-man¹² whose job it was to make sure that the villagers would come together on the village-green.

4.1. Lessons learned I (Observations)

During the preparation of our campaign the Chiefs and Assembly-men of the villages which we wanted to visit were, of course, informed in advance by letter about the nature and the volume of our program as well as about the planned date for their village. This happened about three to four weeks before the actual date in order to avoid organizational difficulties through punctual announcement and to give the villagers the chance to prepare themselves for the program within a given time.

Unfortunately this was not always working. Like on every other social field, there were great differences concerning the reliability of the Chiefs and Assembly-men. Depending on their organizational abilities, their education and their problem consciousness concerning HIV/AIDS, some villages were well organised and informed while in some other villages the people had not been hearing anything of our campaign up to our arrival. In the latter case much more time was needed to assemble the villagers and/or we reached only a small part of the villagers because people had gone to their farms and fields.

Besides that we had to learn, that some of the people reacted with some scepticism on program-announcements like ours. In Ghana it is common that on political events and governmental health awareness campaigns the speakers take turns while holding long and elaborate monologues, a procedure which is often tiring and not very attractive for the audience. Thus it happened to us quite often that we began the program with a small audience but when it came to the point that

¹² The Gongo-man is, inside the rural areas of Ghana, responsible for the distribution of the current news. Instructed by the Chief or the Assembly-man he walks from one house to another and shouts out the news. While doing that he beats a metal-bell – the Gongo.

people noticed that we involved them and they could take part in shaping the program, more and more people got interested and joined us.

Furthermore during our “bicycle-tours” to the villages of the Akatsi District we often met bigger groups of locals, all dressed in traditional cloth, who where, while walking or riding on every drivable wheels one can think of, on their way toward certain meeting places. They were members of dance and music groups in which the traditional tribe dances are practiced and cultivated. For a further HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign we recommend to turn to these groups and to integrate the awareness-programs in their exercise-meetings. The members of these groups are teenagers and adults of reproductive age and therefore belong to the target group. Besides that they are often led by a charismatic group leader with good organisational skills. Moreover it seems that the group-meetings, the joint dancing and playing music and the social exchange are of special importance for the people and they try hard not to miss any of the exercise meetings.

In the preparation phase of future HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign we should, besides the Chiefs and Assembly-men, particularly turn to the leaders of the traditional dancing and music groups.

While planning the dates and appointments for the campaign it is also important to consider the general local conditions. Thus, for instance, we refused to carry out programs on Sunday-mornings since at this time most people went to church. Also on market-days, occurring in intervals of four days, we didn’t schedule any program dates since on these days most villagers came to the big market in Akatsi to sell what they had grown on their fields and/or to do their shopping. Furthermore it should be considered that every village of the Akatsi-District has a cyclically occurring day off every week on which the villagers don’t go to farm and on which there is a great chance to meet most villagers in their village.

4.2. Lessons learned II (Experiences with the modules of the campaign)

While we were **welcoming our audience** we shortly explained the reasons for us being in Ghana and the co-operation with the NYC and also gave a short overview about the different subjects we were going to talk about. We also always tried to say some words in Ewe in the very beginning which usually had the result that the “ice” between us and the audience was “broken” quickly and that the people were with us.

Furthermore it was important to us to point out in the very beginning that talking about HIV/AIDS is always related with talking about sex and topics related to sex. This, we explained, is quite difficult for most people and even more difficult in front of an audience. But since in this

point we all feel the same we should forget about our fears on this day and every question that comes up should be asked.

After welcoming our audience we started the program with the so-called "**Mouse Game**". While carrying out the Mouse Game a small soft toy (a mouse) was thrown into the audience and the person who caught the mouse was then asked to tell us and the remaining audience what he or she had ever heard about HIV/AIDS. This had the result that we found out about the knowledge concerning HIV/AIDS and the fears, rumours and knowledge gaps of our audience and about the topics we would have to discuss in more detail. However, the statements of the audience frequently were similar at that point and often the most important ways of HIV-transmission were told.

It can be presumed that the relatively uniform answers are part of the results of the awareness-campaigns of governmental- and non-governmental-organizations (NGOs). These organisations concentrate in their messages in the newspapers, broadcasts, on television as well as on massively distributed posters and stickers, on the creation of a fundamental problem consciousness, on the amplified perception of HIV/AIDS as a threat as well as on the explanation of the most important possible ways of transmission.

This observation gives hope because it can be seen as a proof of the effectiveness of awareness- and prevention-work, at least with respect to the improvement of the knowledge about HIV/AIDS within the population. Through that as well as through the questions asked by the audience during the course of our programs it became obvious that, however, future awareness-work should put more emphasis on the distribution of every day life and life conduct specific information (or should be extended on that). This seems to be of special importance since most of the questions we have been confronted with in our campaign were related to the inability of the people to practically integrate the "abstract" information given to them into their every day life and into their personal circumstances.

The Mouse Game was followed by the explanation of the abbreviations HIV and AIDS and the function of HIV within the "**AIDS-Graph-Module**". As our predecessors already had suggested "the Graph" has been too abstract for the audience and so we decided not to use the Graph but to illustrate the connection between HIV and AIDS with the corresponding explanations and a simple arrow. In the beginning of our campaign we had had in mind to stop, in the course of the campaign, with the distribution of the HIV/AIDS knowledge base and to focus on more complex

issues like the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the Stigmatisation-Discrimination problem. Instead we soon had to discover that the knowledge gaps of big parts of the population of rural areas in the Akatsi District did not permit such an approach. Without the basic explanations regarding HIV/AIDS big parts of the public could not have followed us.

After the explanation of the abbreviations HIV and AIDS we deepened the comprehension of the operation of the HI-Virus inside the human body with the **“Our Body Game”**. With the support of nine volunteers out of the audience, who, with masks and signs, characterise the human body (1 person), “some diseases” (3 persons), the HI-Virus (1 person) and the white blood cells (4 persons) representing the human immune system, the protective function of the immune system regarding “normal” diseases is explained and the dreadful effect of the HI-Virus inside the human organism is shown.

We think that the “Our Body Game” is a great method because it makes complicated medical facts easily understandable in a very vivid way. Furthermore, because of the participation of some of the onlookers, the audience follows the event fully concentrated.

After the effect of the HI-Virus inside the human body had been tackled we explained the possible ways of transmission respectively the body fluids connected to them (breast milk, blood, sexual fluids) and then checked whether the audience could integrate the given information in their every day life and “choose the right behaviour” with the **“Traffic Light Game”**. For that purpose paintings with different every day life situations and/or every day life objects (for instance: razor-blade, plates, sponge) are shown to the audience and people are asked to decide whether they think a situation is potentially dangerous or not dangerous with respect to a possible HIV-infection and to point, regarding to their opinion, to the red or green “Traffic Light”.

The shown situations are chosen in a way that “automatically” a controversial discussion within the audience results. After a short discussion within the audience we selected one person from each fraction and had them formulating their points of view in order to, afterwards, clear up the situation with an adequate explanation from our side. For us it seemed to be of special importance to agree “a little bit” with both fractions as far as possible in order to prevent giving someone the feeling of being the “looser” of the Game.

We also tried to integrate practical hints for every day life in our explanations. Thus, for instance, we pointed out that it is not only important to have your own razor-blade at home, which should

not be shared with other people, but in the same time it is important to make sure that the barber in the barber-shop also uses a new blade. We stressed the same aspect with regard to the use of syringes and needles. We tried to strengthen the confidence of the audience in case of doubt to ask the doctor or nurse to show them that they are going to use a unused syringe for a possible injection, also because in Ghana everybody has to pay for the treatment in the clinic or in the hospital privately and a new syringe can be seen as part of the service. This advise is very important, because the (wrong) respect that many of the inhabitants of the rural areas of Ghana, who often are less educated, have for trained people (like doctors and nurses) often leads to the consequence that they are too shy and too anxious to ask the doctor any questions or even to contradict him.

Thus the Traffic Light Game proved to be an effective and realistic method for the explanation of, sometimes, complicated facts.

The different strategies on how to prevent a HIV-infection we tackled within the "**Boats of Hope**" Module. Therefore, in the beginning, the different opportunities for an HIV-infected mother, to protect her child against an infection through breast milk, were discussed. In this context we also pointed out, even though we had discussed that point earlier on while explaining the ways of transmission, that there is only one way to find out about somebody's HIV-status – the HIV-blood-test.

In the same way we explained strategies to avoid blood contacts. Besides the already mentioned razor blades and injections, we illustrated with the example of an injury on the soccer-field or on the farm, that it is possible to protect oneself even without a (in Ghana hardly available) latex glove by using a (in Ghana everywhere available) (clean) plastic bag as glove substitute while taking care of a wound of another man.



Even more emphasis we put on tackling the protection-strategies in respect to HIV-transmissions through unprotected sexual intercourse. Three boats are stitched to the HIV/AIDS-flood, which is symbolized by a blue curtain, - they are the “Boats of Hope”. The boats and their headlines are standing for three strategies to minimize the risk of getting infected through sexual intercourse: "Abstinence", "Being Faithful" and "Condom use". With the help of figures painted on small cards, which do get their own character through their own name and a little story about their social situation, the principle of each strategy is explained to the audience.

Followed by that the figures are allocated to the strategy which fits for them by putting the card in the respective boat. Afterwards more cards are given to the audience and everybody who gets a card is asked to step forward and to introduce his or her figure to the remaining audience by telling the made up name and short-story of the respective figure and to allocate it to one of the boats and its respective strategy.

It is the aim of this game to encourage the audience to reflect on their own social situation and to, afterwards, escape in one of the secure boats in which one can survive the "HIV/AIDS- flood".

The Boats of Hope module functions, according to our experiences, quite well. Problems and delays seldomly arose when the people who got the cards were too shy to talk in front of the remaining audience or when they hadn't understood immediately what we wanted from them.

The so-called "**Condom Presentation**" represented the penultimate part of the program. Jan demonstrated, with the help of a condom and a wooden penis, the secure use of the male-condom. After that Liga explained the help of her fist.



In one of our condom-point, followed the program whether he also has to use a some drinks, wants "to go behind the bush with a woman" or not and if, how he should manage that?

proper use of a female-condom with the presentations a man that had, up to that with great interest suddenly asked us, condom on a funeral when he, after

To understand his question we have to know that in Ghana funerals are celebrations of a greater scale. Several times we were told by locals that the families do spend more money for the funeral of a dead person than they ever had spent for the same person during his or her lifetime. According to the social-status of the deceased, a Ghanaian funeral consists out of several days "wake-keeping" with permanent loud music, church services and a celebration that last for 24 hours with performances of the already mentioned traditional dance groups and sometimes hundreds of visitors. The excessive consumption of alcohol (in the shape of self-distilled sugar-cane-schnapps) also plays a significant role in these celebrations.

Even though the question might sound a little strange to Europeans (we also faltered and had to smile a little bit), two different things can be learned from it.

Firstly the frequent and extensively celebrated funerals could, in connection with an often unrestricted sexual-behaviour in Ghana, play a role in the spread of HIV/AIDS which should not be underestimated. At least this seems to be an interesting point for further health-sociological and epidemiological research.

Secondly, if that is the case, funerals could be an interesting field for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention work. Also this might sound strange in a European context. However, if we make ourselves aware of the fact that in Ghana a funeral is not only a reason for mourning but in the same time is a reason to party, it might be beneficial to think about an approach which takes the actual setting into account.



5. The Stigma-Module

In the campaign of the year 2002 in the end of each program teenage pregnancy was made the subject of discussion with the help of “Leticias Story”.

We had decided, in reference to advice of our predecessors, to focus with our campaign on the Stigmatisation Discrimination problem with respect to HIV-infected people and people living with AIDS. We tried to reach this aim by developing a new module: “The Story about the Fox and the Cock”.

In the following the story is documented together with the methodological framework in which we used it.

5.1. The story about the fox and the cock

Objectives:

The audience gets sensitised for the social situation of HIV-infected people and people living with AIDS. The audience learns about or deepens its knowledge about the safety of every day life contacts with HIV-infected people and people living with AIDS. Tendencies of Stigmatisation and Discrimination are being counteracted.

Materials:

A copy of the story about the fox and the cock.

Description:

Tale and acting.

Realisation:

Because of the fairy tale character it is suitable for groups of all ages.

The story is told by one narrator. There are also two more protagonists needed who play the fox and the cock. They have to know the story very well and when it comes to certain signal words (which are typed in bold face type in the text) they have to act little character sketches.

The audience is asked to choose a partner in the beginning of the play.

In doing so it is important to point out that the partner doesn't have to be somebody who is known to them but it can also be the person standing right next to them.

Furthermore the audience is asked to copy the character sketches played by the protagonists with their partner.

Because the story is written in English and not in the local tribe language it was translated by our interpreters within the programs. Students and teenagers who had English lessons in school should be able to follow the story without translation.

The story about the fox and the cock like it was written and used by us:

The Fox and the Cock

Once upon a time there lived a fox^a Freddy. Next to his house was a chopbar^b where a cock^c sold fufu^d, banku and akple. The name of the cock was Compassion. Freddy never bought fufu at the cock's chopbar because he was afraid of his red comb^c. Freddy thought that it was fire that could burn him. The fox was so afraid that he ran away every time he saw the cock.

One day dark clouds were gathering over the village where the fox Freddy and the cock Compassion were living. It started to rain heavily. It was a big storm^f – the wind was blowing, the trees were moving, thunder and lightning were coming from the sky. Everybody tried to find shelter from the storm. It was already dark when the cock Compassion was running in the rain and he was happy to find an old but dry hut. He went in and sat down.

At the same time the fox Freddy was also running in the rain and looking for a dry place. He found the same hut and went in. As he entered **he touched the cock's shoulder^g** and knew that he was not alone. Somebody was with him, but he could not see who it was because it was pitch



dark inside the hut.

The fox Freddy and the cock Compassion **shook hands and started to talk^h**. The rain wouldn't stop, so they talked for a long time. They liked each other and **became friendsⁱ**. But the fox did not know that he was talking to the cock Compassion. It rained for many hours, and finally they both **fell asleep^j**.

In the morning the storm was over. Freddy the fox was the first to wake up. And then he saw the cock Compassion **sleeping beside him**. At first he was very frightened because of the red comb on the cock's head. But then he came closer, **touched the cock's head^l**, and realised that it was not a fire, but only the cock's comb. So he was not afraid anymore that it could hurt him. When the cock Compassion woke up they both went to his chopbar and **ate fufu together^m**.

From that time on, the fox Freddy and the cock Compassion were **very good friendsⁿ**. Freddy often came to the chopbar **to buy^o** fufu and akple from the cock. He was not afraid of the cock anymore. He knew now that it is not dangerous **to be a friend of Compassion and to eat fufu together with him^p**.

Every time the fox said bye-bye to the cock, **they shook hands^q, they hugged each other^r, and they even kissed each other^s**, because they were **good friends now^t**.

This is the story about the fox and the cock. But there is something that we as human beings can learn from it.

Now, imagine that you hear that somebody you know is infected with HIV. At first you might be scared to approach him or her. Just like the fox was afraid to approach the cock because he thought that the red comb on his head was dangerous.

But we know that even if somebody is infected with HIV, we won't get infected by **touching him, eating together, shaking hands with him, or even give him a kiss or by buying food from him^u**. We should approach people with HIV like we have approached each other now, and we will see that they are not dangerous to us in everyday contact. On the contrary – the whole society can benefit a lot if people with HIV continue to work at their workplaces and live together with their families.

Duration:

Approx. 3 minutes for the preparatory-explanations, 10-15 minutes for the story, depending on the necessity of a translation to the local language. Furthermore a few minutes for possible discussions should be included while planning the program.

Problems:

Depending on the situation it might be good to use a translated version of the story in the local or tribal language instead of using the English version of the text.

Explanations, Enlargements and Alternatives:

- a) There is no animal comparable to the European fox in Ghana, therefore our interpreters used the Ewe-word for bush-dog.
- b) In Ghana little restaurants and kitchens on the roadside, where one can buy a hot meal for low prices, are called “Chopbars”. This term should be changed if the story is used in a different country/context.
- c) The English term cock has to be used with caution and should be changed in respect to the local context. In US-American English the word cock also stands for “penis” and is therefore quite unsuitable. The word “rooster” could be an alternative.
- d) Fufu, banku and akple are the Ghanaian national dishes and, at least in the Volta Region, can be found on the menu daily. Is the story used in another region or country this words should be changed.
- e) For a better visualisation of the red comb of the cock and/or the ears and the tale of the fox you can use creativity and fantasy. It is easy to handicraft the comb of the cock or a fox-mask out of some paper, feathers and some colour.
- f) To present the storm more impressively, rattles, plastic pipes and sheets of metal can be used. Also the rain is more realistic when you spill some drops of water on the audience. Still it is important that the audience is not distracted from the strand of the plot.
- g) Here the protagonists have to act for the first time. We demonstrated the touching of the fox and the cock by softly bumping against each others shoulder. At this point it might be necessary to remind the people in the audience to copy the protagonists together with their partner.
- h) Here “the fox” and “the cock” shake hands.
- i) The protagonists demonstrated the arising friendship between the fox and cock by standing side by side and putting their arms around each others shoulders.
- j) The sleep is demonstrated by one protagonist who puts his/her head on the shoulder of the other protagonist while using his/her hands, that are put together, as a pillow.
- k) v. j)

- l) The protagonist who represents the fox strokes with his hand over the head of the other protagonist (sometimes the audience has to be reminded that they are supposed to copy the protagonists, but most of the times this is not necessary).
- m) At this point one of the protagonists forms a bowl with his/her hands while the other protagonist pretends to eat with his/her hand out of this bowl (it is also possible to use a real plate but this can also lead to confusion within the audience because they have no real plate to use).
- n) v. i)
- o) Here one of the protagonists counts “imaginary” money into the hands of the other protagonist. (also real money can be used)
- p) v. i) and m)
- q) v. h)
- r) Here the protagonists hug each other. That often leads to friendly excitement within the audience which will even increase with the upcoming sketches.
- s) At this point there normally is some excitement and laughing within the audience, especially if one has a “partner” that he/she didn’t know before or who is of the same sex of him/her. We played the kiss by kissing each other carefully on the cheeks. Depending on the circumstances it is also possible to kiss each other (carefully) on the mouth but it is very important to pay attention to the different cultural and religious moralities and values, because otherwise the audience could feel provoked.
- t) v. i)
- u) Here the above described sketches are repeated quickly one after another. Depending on the situation it might be better to do without these repetitions because it is important that the message of the story is heard by the audience.

Because of our experiences during our campaign, the questions of the audience and the discussions within the audience and because of the many conversations we had with many Ghanaians we can confirm that the Stigmatisation and Discrimination of people who are living with HIV/AIDS belongs to the main problems of the awareness and prevention work in Ghana. The Stigma module which was developed by us and which we used in our campaign is one possibility to approach that topic. In the setting of our campaign “The story about the fox and the cock” worked surprisingly well. Often people in the discussion of earlier modules and parts of the

programme had the opinion that HIV-infected people should be locked up or even be killed. Also many of them could not imagine to touch a person who lives with HIV/AIDS or to eat together with him or her. While we told our story they forgot about their anxieties and “played their role” with enthusiasm. Only when the moral message of the story was told they realised that we had “fooled” them and they had just played through what they had previously thought to be unthinkable.

Furthermore our little sketches meant a lot of fun and joy for our audience.

It is obvious that the Stigma module is far away from a serious answer to the Stigmatisation /Discrimination problem in respect to HIV-infected people and people living with AIDS. However, we hope that at least parts of our audience in Ghana got some first impulses for a change of their attitude towards these vulnerable groups.

5.2. Why is there no medicine? – An explanation-strategy

During our campaign in the various villages and schools of the Akatsi-District we were often asked the same or at least similar questions by the audience. The special challenge was to answer these questions and to explain complicated medical facts to an audience with often limited knowledge and education.

Therefore we often had to simplify our explanations.

It seemed to be of special importance to us to concentrate on every question and explanation in a way that the audience could follow because otherwise there is always the danger of losing the interest and attention of the audience.

By using one example we want to document our strategy while answering the questions.

Very often we were asked “why there are no drugs to heal HIV/AIDS?”

At the beginning of our campaign we limited our answer to the fact that scientists all over the world are trying hard to find a medicine that cures HIV/AIDS. Furthermore we explained that they haven’t succeeded yet because the HI-Virus is very “intelligent” and develops and changes quicker than scientists can follow. We explained as well, that the HI-Virus has only been known for the past 25 years and showed with the example of Tuberculosis that people sometimes suffer for centuries from an illness before a medication is found.

Due to the many inquiries we realized that we had to be more precise, because many Ghanaians think that HIV was developed by “the whites” to kill “the blacks” and therefore they won’t ever

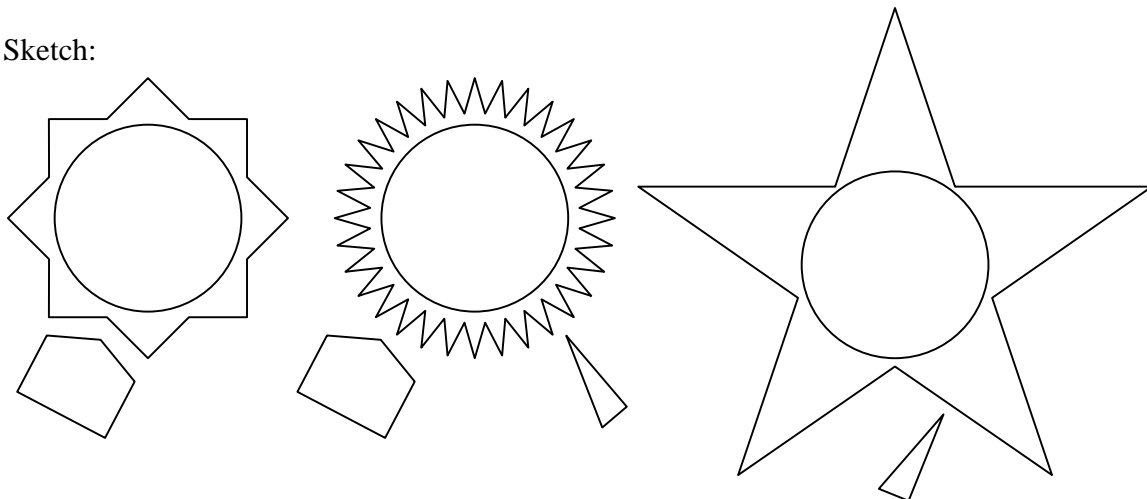
get the medication against it.

We then started to explain the problem of the frequently changing proteins on the cover of the virus by drawing in the soil or on a black board or on a piece of plywood.

First we drew a circle as a symbol of the HI-Virus that was surrounded by a second circle, the cover of the virus (respectively the “face” or appearance of the virus to make it understandable for the people).

Close to the cover we drew the symbolic drug that is developed by the scientists. Meanwhile we explained that before the scientist can finish such a drug, the virus has already changed its face because of its great intelligence. This we demonstrated by drawing another circle with a new cover. Close to the new cover we drew the “old drug” which still was developing. Thus we demonstrated that the drug doesn’t fit to the “new face” of the virus anymore.

Sketch:



By using a third circle with again a different cover and another drug symbol we explained that this process is repeating with high speed again and again and that this is the reason why it is so difficult for the scientists to find a drug against HIV.

Of course our explanation is an inadmissible simplification of the actual process. However by using the visualisation it was much easier for the audience to understand the facts and to believe us.

6. Black and white Missionaries

In respect to the sustainability of our project we wanted the Youth Leaders to lead and present the programs on their own, because they were well trained and experienced due to their participation in the first campaign in the year 2002.

We had planned to stay in the background to observe and to advise the campaign. Our project partner, however, insisted on his opinion that the people would listen to and believe us (as white people) much more than they would believe the Youth Leaders. It took us quite a while to convince him and the Youth Leaders that it was not the colour of our skin but the interactive teaching methods which integrates the audience, which made the program interesting for the people. But he still didn't want to take over the leading position.

Even the development co-operation has to face its historic responsibility. An employee of the DED, whom we met on a short-trip to Lomé and who also works in the HIV/AIDS-prevention, reminded us about that.

After we had told her about our work in the HIV/AIDS-education she commented on our explanations about our education work in the villages, where we as white Europeans taught the locals, with the words that the DED wouldn't work with such missionary methods anymore.

This justified criticism has to be considered for future ASA-HIV/AIDS-programs. For a stay of only three months and faced with the often very limited existing structures in the host-country respectively of the project-partner, it will be very difficult to establish another approach. Especially if, like in our case, the local project partner does not necessarily want "to stand in the first line".

7. Teamwork

(Liga Krastina)

The cooperation in the team was good, also due to the fact that we are similar in many ways in respect to interests and perceptions. Jan as expert in health issues and having more experience in developing countries took pains to lead our team through many decisive moments. However, in most situations we were complementing each other very successfully, e.g. when developing a new module for the programme. The relationship between us was very good, filled with mutual respect and care, for example, when one of us had malaria.

(Jan Weber)

The teamwork between us, Liga and myself (Jan) was friendly and smooth from the very beginning. This also found its expression through the fact that during the time of the project we did all main activities together. Because of our huge house it was still no problem to keep enough private space for each other. Besides that we complemented one another in many ways. While Liga used her sociological knowledge to find out more about the country, the people and the religion while talking for hours with our guests on the veranda and in the same time worked on her Ewe-skills from which we both could benefit in many ways, it was easier for me as a trained nurse to answer the questions of the audience within our programs.

Liga did the dishwashing while I cooked every day. If one of us was sick, the other one took over the work in the campaign and also took care of what ever came up. In most things we agreed anyway so that there was not much need for discussions.

Liga's fluent German language skills turned out to be an extraordinary advantage. We were told by other GLEN-tandems that sometimes it was difficult for them when important decisions had to be made and an English-speaking native was around and therefore an undisturbed discussion was not possible. We instead always had the opportunity to switch to German to talk about "problems" in order to have one opinion in the end.

The opportunity given to us by ASA to be a "European tandem" has been a great and enriching experience for us.

The work in the project team which consisted of Jerry, his secretary Victoria Yawa, to whom we

also could build up a close relationship, and the Youth Leaders Daniel, Innocent and Jonathan has also always been very friendly and productive. Irritations caused by the unsteady African every day life to which Europeans have to get used to rarely occurred.

Over and over again we were surprised to find a huge interest in us and our European culture as well as in European politics. We had to learn that even the good intention of our project partner was often limited by institutional failures and that many things were much more complicated than we first thought.

During the entire time of our stay in Akatsi we felt safe and could always rely on the help and support of our project partner.

We also found the teamwork within the Ghana GLEN-Team to be very successful and enriching. On several meetings and visits with the other ASA-participants we had a lot of fun and were able to share our experiences.

8. Conclusion

Three months, however, are too short to really get to know a country. Nevertheless we made many new friends in Ghana. We are grateful for the hospitality and for being accepted without questioning and that the people especially the people of the Akatsi-District let us participate in their every day life. We won't forget the warmth and sincerity and the many experiences and special moments we had in Ghana. Our project has been, as far as we can say, very successful. On one hand we could learn a lot about ourselves, our abilities and restrictions in the intercourse with people of another culture and their way of living and their every day problems. On the other hand we were able to gather experiences within the HIV/AIDS-education-work. We also got the impression that it wasn't just us but also the locals who could profit from our presence. In many conversations especially with young Ghanaians we could answer many questions about European politics and culture. Of course there were limits for instance when we had to explain why Europeans do smoke, drink coffee or eat raw tomatoes. The opportunity given to us and our Ghanaian friends to have an intercultural exchange between young Ghanaians and young Europeans was of special importance to us. In connection with our HIV/AIDS-Awareness Campaign we have to accept critical questions about the sustainability of the project. Of course there are reasons to question if there is sustainable use of a 2 ½ hours education unit in respect to

changes in health and sexual behaviours in respect to HIV/AIDS. But the huge interest and the endless questions of the audience which had been on their minds for a long time gave us the feeling of being “at the right place at the right time”. The light in the eyes of the people when we were able to answer their questions in a way they could understand and follow compensated for the long and hard bicycle-tours through the Ghanaian bush-land.

We would do this kind of project again any time.