



News from African Action on AIDS office in Cameroon

Fear of the Unknown *

Generally, people will rush to grab something, just anything, provided it is free. But the contrary was proven right at the on-going University Games in Buea. If this were not the case, the stand for voluntary free HIV screening would have had the greatest number of visitors.

Reports from Buea, however, said in spite of the efforts to attract students and other visitors at the 9th University Games to the HIV screening stand (good music, display by humorists, etc), turnout at the stand was the lowest in the Games recreational zone.

The stand was facing the same stigma which most HIV/AIDS patients face in the society to the extend that most people turned their faces away from the stand when they were in the vicinity. Most students said they were scared of the unknown. "Just imagine what my life would be if I discover that I am infected with the HIV virus", one athlete said. If university students could shun HIV screening, what more of the man on the street ... From all indications, the road to combat HIV/AIDS is still very long.

**By Tche Irene Morikang, Talk Shop, Cameroon Tribune, 26 April 2006*

Respond to the fear of AIDS with AIDS or AM I DOING SOMETHING?

The above observation is an outward demonstration of the ignorance still surrounding HIV/AIDS even among the university trained segment of our population. The initial reason is the method that was earlier used to fight HIV/AIDS - instigate fear into the people so that they run away from AIDS. This fear has so settled and deep rooted in our minds that the positive evolutions in the prevention and treatment of AIDS still do not reassure many people who had for long equated AIDS to a death sentence. Many who had earlier learned to run away from HIV/AIDS now find it very difficult to face it squarely.

These are some of the reasons why African Action on AIDS (AAA) put forward the JUST KNOW Campaign. This campaign is a precept that requires that everybody, regardless of the level of education and social stratum should be able to understand HIV/AIDS so as to better combat it. The first step to combat a mal is to understand it. If you do not know your HIV status you cannot act; and a person who does not act dies slowly! A sero-negative person may be better than a sero-positive person, but a sero-positive person equipped with knowledge is far better than a sero-ignorant person. A sero-ignorant person is he/she who does not know his/her HIV status. This sero-ignorant person is a victim of circumstances not an actor. Seropositivity may not kill but sero-ignorance does. Use the AIDS acronym in a positive way and always ask yourself am I doing something? Or AIDS?

**For more information, please visit the Website www.africanactionaids.org
Partner of the WFWO**