

**A COMMON TOUCH**  
**THE STORY OF COMMUNITY LIFE PROJECT (CLP), 1992 - 2005**

**COMMUNITY LIFE PROJECT**  
**9. ILOR1 STREET ISOLO, LAGOS**

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## **About CLP**

CLP is a non-governmental, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of People's lives in grassroots communities by increasing their knowledge and access to health information, thereby empowering them to take control of their own lives.

While CLP's initial focus was on HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, the organization from the outset operated from an understanding of health as integrated; comprehensive, and multi-dimensional, including diet and nutrition, personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, self-esteem, family life and relationships, as well as livelihood.

## **Contents**

1. Preface/Foreword
2. The Background \_
  - Birth of a social experiment
  - HIV/AIDS as entry point
  - HIV/AIDS: towards a new paradigm of intervention
3. Getting Started
  - Stepping out
  - Choosing a location for intervention activities
  - A makeshift office
  - Bringing People Together
  - First time out; Reaching the National Automobile Technicians Association
4. Developing Partnerships
  - Proceeding from the NATA initiative
  - Towards funding stabilization
  - Expanding the network
  - Reaching schools; Boy Nnamdi and Okota High School experience
  - From school to church
  - Reaching commercial sex workers
  - Going into the community; Isolo Community Day.
  - Concluding remarks
5. Working with Community Groups
  - Goals and objectives
  - Guiding principles
  - Agenda setting
  - Partnership with community associations
  - Partnering with hairdressing and barbing salons
  - Partnership with market associations
  - The community Action committee (CACOM)
  - Challenges
  - Lessons
6. Reaching Youths
  - Expanding the school work
  - The CLP Youth Centre
  - The CLP Youth Club
  - Vocational centre activities
  - Youth Rally and street outreaches
  - Reaching apprentices: Out-of-School Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme
  - Challenges of youth work
  - Success factors
7. Partnering with Faith-based Institutions
  - Seeing it differently

- Origins of CLP work with faith-based institutions
  - Advocacy meeting with religious-leaders
  - Comprehensive sexuality education in faith communities
  - Success factors
  - Other lessons of work with faith-based institutions
8. Reaching the Commercial Sex Workers
- Why work with commercial sex Workers
  - The Peer Health Education (PHE) workshop
  - Securing access to condoms
  - Follow-up and review
  - Towards rehabilitation
  - Challenges
  - Achievements
9. Building families
- Background to the Love Feast
  - Understanding women's inability to practice safe sex
  - Bringing husband and wives together: the Love Feast
  - After Century Hotel
  - Pre-marriage course and Marriage Forum
  - Achievements and failures
  - Success factors
  - Challenges and lessons
10. Theatre for Development
- Background to adoption of Theatre for Development
  - Acquiring the tools of Theatre for Development
  - Mainstreaming TFD into CLP initiatives
  - Challenges and success factors
11. Partnering with Government
- Partnering with Local Government health institutions
  - integrating HIV/AIDS education into Primary Health Services in Isolo
  - Partnering with the Lagos State AIDS Control Agency
  - Partnership with the Department of Community Development and Population Activities
12. Challenges and Lessons
- Features of the CLP model
  - Success factors
  - Challenges and how they were tackled
  - Lessons of the CLP Experience
13. CLP in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Developing a dynamic organization
- Human resource development/Capacity building
- Towards replication and scaling up
- Visions for the future

**Preface/Foreword**

(Please insert Preface or Foreword here- whichever you prefer to call it)

## Chapter One

### The Background

#### **Birth of a Social Experiment**

The birth of CLP cannot be separated from the person of its Project Director, Mrs. Ngozi Iwere. Indeed, CLP could easily be said to have emerged from her previous life as an activist for social justice in the country. As a student at the College of Education and later in the University, the then Ngozi Ojidoh was active in union matters protesting living conditions in higher institutions and demanding: the democratization of the higher educational system in the country. She also demonstrated along with her colleagues in support of the struggle for the eradication of apartheid and other forms of internal colonialism and white minority rule in, southern Africa, and restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria. Even as the teenager, Ngozi Ojidoh had teamed up with the leftist Marxist- Leninist movement in the country. Her ideological views were close to those expressed by Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Eduardo Mondlane and the views of these fiery African leaders of the independence movements in their respective countries had shaped her perspective of what governance ought to be in African countries.

In a way, CLP is a reflection of the ideals which she had fought for and had seen in these leaders. CLP's concerns about the grassroots, its interest in human rights and gender equity, the holistic and integrated approach to community development and social service delivery cannot be separated from Mrs. Ngozi Iwere's passions dating back to those early teenage years.

The failure of the Nigerian state to actualize the ideals in the years after independence, and the failure of the socialist movements to effect any change in the country was a source of personal disillusionment to Mrs. Iwere. Beyond that, that failure was also the prime motivation for putting together a structure that would try to accomplish some of the ideas and ideals that she had espoused over the years. That it was not enough to just raise the consciousness of the people as the old guard of Marxism-Leninism in the country such as Eskor Toyo and Ola Oni did through their radical writings, fiery speeches and regular appearances at the trenches. It was also important to touch the lives of people directly, put in place a structure that would bring about change and improve the quality of life of the people. It was important to demonstrate that things could be done and from there convince colleagues in non-governmental and social development work circles as well as policymakers that the approach of popular participation in the development process works.

In developing a new paradigm of intervention for development, Mrs. Iwere drew upon her ideological background when she concluded that the Nigerian post-independence political elite had made a big mistake by continuing to rely upon the structures inherited at independence rather than adapting and developing the indigenous people-controlled structures with which the masses of the Nigerian people could easily identify. Nigerian societies are rich in social capital



that was not being harnessed. The Nigerian people should not just be the focus but also the engine of development. Thus, a way must be evolved to ensure popular participation in the development process. The bulk of the people, who seem to be on the fringes of development, had to be brought along if the development process were to have real meaning.

Mrs. Iwere became even more convinced that a community-based approach to social service delivery and human development intervention could produce the appropriate results following her involvement in a UNDP water and sanitation project in which she was invited to serve as consultant. The project, which was executed by the World Bank in Five local government areas of the country, engaged Mrs. Iwere as a consultant charged with ensuring that gender interests are taken care of and with ensuring women and community participation in the installation and delivery of the services. This experience convinced her that community participation and community ownership of development projects is possible. She further shared her ideas with colleagues who opined that the community approach could not but have worked given the fact that water and sanitation are felt needs and argued against her opinion that community participation could be meaningfully and fruitfully applied to even less tangible or software aspects of service delivery.

Thus, CLP actually started as a social experiment to prove that the people participation approach could really work. CLP was not conceived as the solution to a problem; rather it was an attempt to demonstrate a new paradigm in social service delivery and popular involvement in determining the direction of policies that could impact their lives. CLP started life as a social experiment and the entry point was HIV/AIDS, the disease which by 1992 had starting manifesting the various manifestations that were to confirm it as the scourge of contemporary human society.

### **HIV/AIDS as Entry Point**

The choice of HIV/AIDS as the entry point in demonstrating this new approach was the outcome of a combination of factors. By 1990, it was already four years since the first case of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria was reported. The HIV zero-prevalence level had risen to about 4% and increasing, and indeed, approaching crisis levels. However, despite the fact HIV/AIDS had become a big crisis in East Africa and providing big lessons for the rest of the continent including Nigeria, by 1990. It was still remote in the consciousness most Nigerians, The ignorance was palpable and even among those who were aware of the problem: many were living in denial as they continue to engage in all forms of risky behavior believing that it could never happen to them. At the same time, the devastating consequences of the disease were already beginning to manifest as the society had begun to Witness the stigma of people living with HIV/AIDS while there was poor support for them. The disease had also started to produce orphans with the increasing mortality rate among its victims.

In general, the response of the various agencies of government at both the federal and state levels was very poor. The only bright light on the horizon was the initiative of the then Federal Minister of Health, Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti, who mobilized the government to launch an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign. Professor Kuti also used his influence with the Lagos State Government to get some commitment preventive activities on the part of that state government unlike what obtained in most other states of the Federation. However, it was at this time that emerged the first set of civil society organizations that took programming interest in HIV/AIDS with the emergence of the Nigeria chapter of the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAAN, STOP AIDS and other non-governmental organizations. Whatever gains were gradually being recorded on the HIV/AIDS front were virtually wiped out with the descent of the country to authoritarianism in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections and the takeover of government by the Abacha administration, During the next six years the civil society - which had led the non-governmental response to the HIV/AIDS crisis – was fully engaged in the struggle to enthrone democratic rule in the country and the fight against HIV/AIDS took a back seat The restoration of democratic rule in 1999 produced a welcome change as the new civilian government of President Obasanjo answered the wakeup call with the complete reorganization of the national response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. The new political goodwill towards HIV/AIDS intervention work coincided with massive injection of international funds into the country both through the Global AIDS Fund and various international funding agencies that supported different civil society led intervention programmes in the country.

However, as at 1990 and in the months leading to the establishment of CLP, following the global pattern, the response to HIV/AIDS was concentrating on the so-called ‘high risk groups’ including long distance truck drivers, commercial sex workers, men and women of the armed forces, intravenous drug users and the like. Even SWAAN had concentrated its efforts on addressing the challenges presented by the HIV/AIDS crisis solely as they affect women. However, in Mrs. Iwere’s thinking, the problem of HIV/AIDS is not so much about high risk groups but rather and more appropriately about high risk behavior.

In any case, the members of the so-called high risk groups interfaced sexually, socially and in various other ways with other segments of the society that didn’t fall within the high risk category. Moreover, HIV/AIDS was already showing itself to be larger than a sexually transmitted disease, larger than a public health issue and gradually assuming the dimensions of a development problem as the problem of East African countries had shown and as the Nigerian face of the crisis was soon to manifest.

Apart from the concentration on the so-called high risk groups, the approach adopted towards preventing and reducing the risk of spread also had methodological problems. The heavy emphasis on condom use as panacea to the problem had distorted the essence of the HIV/AIDS prevention message. While in theory, the various agencies dealing with HIV/AIDS preventions

felt comfortable with and adopted the ABC approach. I.e. Abstinence, Be Faithful and Condom use, the emphasis was actually on condom use.

However, of the three options contained in the ABC approach, condom was the least effective in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS through heterosexual sex. The excuse for placing so much emphasis on condom use is the unproven and unsubstantiated argument that people, particularly adolescents could not abstain and that condom was the only realistic option. This is nothing but an attempt to foist the preferences and values of certain individuals on the society. Condoms were being freely given but Mrs. Iwere was convinced that this free distribution of condoms could not be sustained for too long. Even when the condoms were still being distributed freely, it was clear that they could not meet the real needs of the people. A pack of condoms, containing usually a maximum of three pieces, certainly could not be enough for a low income family that would need to buy more if they were to depend solely on that method for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. What such a family needed was information that could help them make informed choices.

The national response had also treated faith-based institutions with something akin to disdain. The preference of religious institutions for abstinence as opposed to condom use had met with hostility from various institutions including operators in the development and service delivery sectors. Indeed, religion and religious institutions were considered obstacles in the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, Mrs. Iwere was of the opinion that while the opposition of faith-based institutions to condom use could be some form of setback, the role of these institutions in the other two areas deserves attention and commendation. Religion, like culture, should not be seen as obstacles in tackling development problems; rather, they should be considered allies. In any case, faith-based communities are important stakeholders in the struggle for the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

While not much investment was going into the fight against the scourge in the early Nineties a number of faith-based institutions were already taking steps that confirm their foresight even as they began investing into tackling the problem. For example, the Sisters of Charity of the Catholic Church started a Care and Support programme for people living with HIV/AIDS. Thus, while the church was opposed to condoms, it was active in the two other areas of promoting abstinence and faithfulness to one partner in the context of marriage. The important thing, therefore, was to engage the church and other faith based institutions positively, work with them, share information with them with the overall goal of tackling the problem with all resources that are available. At that stage when faith-based institutions were perceived as problems by much of the organizations working in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and care, our attitude of positively engaging them sounded rather heretic, And we needed to prove that it could work.

Despite the frightening dimensions that HIV/AIDS was taking in various parts of the world, it was clear that it was still a remote thing in the senses of the people in the country and as such

people had continued to engage in risky behaviors without as much as giving thoughts to the possible consequences. A casual enquiry from Mrs. Iwere's auto-mechanic about the latter's knowledge of HIV/AIDS was met with a blank but another direct experience brought home the reality of the challenge of confronting the HIV/AIDS scourge in the country Sometime in 1991, Mrs. Iwere had accompanied a friend whose son was sick to the hospital. Right there in their presence, the boy was injected with the same needle that had just been used for another patient. That was not all; living in a densely populated community had exposed Mrs. Iwere to a lot of what was going on in terms of personal health and social behavior of the people. At the hairdressing salon, at the barber's shop, at the beautician's place, people everywhere were just carrying on as if HIV/AIDS was a figment of the imagination. Barbings, manicure and pedicure instruments were being shared at random without as much care for the health implications. At that point, Mrs. Iwere decided that the stage had come where everybody had to be reached with HIV/AIDS information. Each time Mrs. Iwere got home at night, she would pour out her frustrations with the way individuals were living without as much as giving thoughts to the implications for their lives. The listening ears to her stories belonged to those of Chuks Ojiodoh, who had only recently completed his mandatory national youth service and was job hunting.

### **HIV/AIDS: Towards a New Paradigm of intervention**

Mrs. Iwere's thinking called for a new approach to addressing this problem. The concentration on high risk groups had meant that intervention and education programmes as well as funding had concentrated on specific groups identified as high risk, But it is clear that tackling the problem segment by segment cannot produce a meaningful result; For example, any attempt to address the problems of AIDS in women could only be useful if such approach addresses the male dimension. Suggestions that for intervention activities to be effective, they should cover or at least attempt to reach everybody were met with disdain by development work specialists who insist that each programme must have a focus and a target population. A community-based approach had built-in potential to reach men, women, youth and children. No community is composed of just a single segment either of only youths or of only adults.

A community based approach to HIV/AIDS work will also guarantee that the message being passed across is reinforced as it would be reaching the target audience from various sources. Effecting behavior change is made much easier if the target population hears the same message from different channels over and over again. For example, if a particular young man should receive a message on HIV/AIDS from his school, in his church and is reinforced at home without the messages contradicting each other, he would realize that it was not that either his parents or church was trying to prevent him from enjoying his life.

The immediate nudge for starting CLP could not be separated from Mrs. Iwere's work with the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa Nigeria chapter (SWAAN), of which she was the founding Secretary and served as that capacity for five years. During this period, she became

even more familiar with the nature of the national response to HIV/AIDS crisis a pattern that found expression in SWAAN's own attitude. Indeed, Mrs. Iwere's work with SWAAN had convinced her of the need to adopt a new paradigm in tackling the advancing HIV AIDS scourge in the country.

In addition, the selection of HIV/AIDS as the entry point for a community approach to development and service delivery was facilitated by the need to demonstrate that the proposed paradigm of intervention was not dependent on the presence of felt needs for it to be successful in addressing perceived challenges. Unlike water or roads or sanitation, HIV/AIDS was not what was considered a felt need, what with the massive state of denial in which the country was still living at the time. Most people did not even know about the existence of AIDS let alone feel that it was their problem on which they need to take decisions or need to act. If the people could be made aware of the importance of the issues before them, they would not deliberately neglect their own health. HIV/AIDS was a pressing and urgent need and we needed to respond; the thinking behind the founding of CLP was that a community-based African response to the advancing scourge was necessary.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Getting Started**

#### **Stepping out**

Sometime in September 1992, in response to the various urges, Mrs. Iwere decided to start Community Life Project as a vehicle for promoting her pet vision of popular participation in the development process and, in the immediate, reaching everybody in an identified community with life saving information on HIV/AIDS. About this time, a team from the United States concerned with HIV/AIDS work was visiting Nigeria. The team had been referred to SWAAN by the international Women's Health Coalition (IWHC) of New York. The team met with the leadership of SWAAN on a number of occasions to discuss the HIV/AIDS situation in the country, In the course of these discussions, Mrs. Iwere, who was Secretary of SWAAN, expressed her frustrations and expressed her determination to start something but that her approach may not be popular with funding agencies given the prevailing paradigms of intervention not only in Nigeria but even in other countries as emphasis seemed always to be on focused responses in terms of who to reach or target with a particular intervention. Despite her expressed pessimism about the possibility of receiving donor funding for the proposed approach to tackling the HIV/AIDS crisis, members of the visiting team encouraged Mrs. Iwere to share her vision with Andrea Irvin, the Africa Program Officer of IWHC and indeed promised to pass on her ideas to Ms Irvin upon their return to New York. Mrs. Iwere was encouraged to put her ideas down in writing and overnight she put together in a handwritten form the key elements of her ideas on community level participatory intervention to stem the HIV/AIDS advance.

#### **Choosing a location for intervention activities**

About the time, the then Federal Minister of Health, late Professor Olikoye Ransome-Kuti launched a national initiative on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. It was big event that attracted big media attention. However, the information being disseminated remained essentially esoteric. The information was being passed across either on pages of newspapers which the regular masses of the people could not afford to buy, or on the television which the few who could afford to buy television sets could not watch because of the perennial power outage. This further fired the imagination of Mrs. Iwere who then decided to explore with Chuks Ojidoh, ways of reaching organized groups in the community in which they were living, that is Isolo in the Isolo-Oshodi Local Government of Lagos State. As a civil society organization, the proposed project could only have direct impact on a limited geographical area. Non-governmental organizations by nature do not have the reach or the capacity to carry out direct intervention activities on national scale; that is the preserve of governments and the proposed project could not pretend otherwise.

The choice of Isolo was fairly straightforward. Having decided to adopt a community-participatory approach, it was important that those at the vanguard of the intervention should be familiar with that particular community for the programme to be successful and worthy of being replicated. The project leader must be a part of the community Mrs. Iwere had lived in the Isolo community for several years and was well known to the locals and equally important, she also knew the community. The approach also required working through the established channels of communication within the community particularly the various civic and professional associations; reaching those groups could only be facilitated by personal references to their leadership and being known in the community is important to securing such references. As we shall see below, the first intervention carried out by the new organization was facilitated by the personal relationship that the Project coordinator had with her automobile mechanic who introduced her and the proposed project to the leadership of the automobile technicians association. The same pattern was repeated in forging partnerships with other organizations either by direct or cross referencing.

However, Isolo was an ideal location for the proposed work of the new organization, Despite being part of a larger urban agglomeration (i.e. Lagos) HIV/AIDS was remote in the senses of the inhabitants of the area. As in most other parts of the city, not much HIV/AIDS education work was being done in the area. While many people in the area had heard about 'AIDS', not many believed that the disease could actually affect them directly and many continued to live their lives without much care. Thus, high risk behavior was prevalent in the area and the same patterns of sexual networking that obtained in other parts of the country existed prominently in Isolo. Brothels thrive while casual relationships accompanied by casual, unprotected sex, were taken for granted,

The first step was to identify the various organized groups and channels of communication and information sharing in the community. In every community, there are channels already existing through which people get information on virtually any subject. In identifying such existing channels of communication in the community, the Project sought ways of reaching various segments of the population including men and women, young people and even the sex workers. The groups and channels identified included schools, vocational centres and youth clubs for young people; social clubs, market associations, hairdressing and barbing salons for women: professional and vocational groups, social clubs, hotels and barbing salons for men: and brothels for the non-itinerant commercial sex workers. Health facilities, neighborhood associations and religious centres were identified for both men and women. Many of these groups had multiple memberships by many individuals; thus, the essence was to reach people through diverse channels to which they have commitments. All 'of these channels already had independent and sustainable existence; the associations among them had their own goals, objectives and primary interests for which they exist. The aim was to reach out to these groups, create awareness and start discussions. The project had no intention of creating new, parallel channels; rather the

people were to be reached through their own existing groups to which they had already committed themselves.

### **A Makeshift Office**

Mrs. Iwere discussed with her husband, Ted, who granted permission for a room to be designated as the office for the project in their home, and together with Chuks, the CLP office was set. All the preliminary work was done with their own resources. Until then, Mrs. Iwere had continued to work as Consultant to various organizations and Chuks had functioned more or less as her personal Assistant. She then talked to a friend of hers, Bose Iriogbe, a Nurse/Midwife, to determine if the latter would be willing to join her in the adventure. Miss Iriogbe came on board. Mrs. Iwere also reached out to a former colleague when she was a journalist with Guardian newspaper to serve as Administrative Assistant. The colleague had left the Guardian to work with SWAAN but the pay was not so good and could hardly cover the cost of transportation to work. The fellow then moved over to join Mrs. Iwere`s new Project. The initial core team also included another staff that would simply be identified as Monica, a former commercial sex worker with whom Mrs. Iwere had struck a friendship from the time they were introduced in the course of a national SWAAN project on trans-border prostitution which Mrs. Iwere coordinated.

Monica was a young widow who had tertiary level education but who apparently had financial difficulties and had become involved in commercial sex work. Mrs. Iwere managed to persuade her to leave the trade and team up with her on the CLP project. Because the Project came to life independent on the personal resources that Mrs. Iwere could muster, the pay was low and so only those who were personally acquainted with her and those who were loyal to her for one reason or the other were able to work with the new outfit.

### **First Time Out: Reaching the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA)**

The first outing carried out by the new Project was the HIV/AIDS session held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1992 with the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA) at Okota. Mrs. Iwere was quite familiar with the workings of the automobile technicians who had a very strong association that hold regular meetings. Indeed, NATA had been identified during the course of the survey of possible channels of communication in the community by the Project team only shortly before. Mrs. Iwere and the Project were introduced to the association by her auto technician, If the Project coordinator had not enjoyed the confidence of the auto technician, it is doubtful if the team could have made any headway in reaching the auto technicians. For one, this was a period when the Advanced Fee Fraud phenomenon was getting rampant and the Isolo/Mushin/Oshodi area was notorious as a den for fraudsters. It was difficult to believe that some group will come on a completely altruistic motive trying to reach out to groups in the community.



What was more, the Project had no name; it was just a group of people who had a concern for the community and were reaching out to groups with life saving information. The auto technician had displayed complete ignorance when he was asked if he knew anything about HIV/AIDS and had affirmed that most of his colleagues were similarly ignorant.

Mrs. Iwere discussed her Project ideas with him and interest in working with the association of automobile technicians. The man agreed to introduce her to the leadership of the association. Mrs. Iwere and the leadership of the Project thereafter met with the executive committee of the technicians association who immediately warmed up to the idea but declared that a final decision would have to wait a larger body but first the Project team had to be introduced to the Patron of the association who was simply known as 'Baba' but whose real name was Chief Matthew Orimogunje. The Project team met with 'Baba' in his workshop on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1992; Baba also liked the idea and thereafter "Baba" and the executive members introduced the Project to the Whole house at a general meeting of the Association.

The introductory meeting went very well with the Project team stating the purpose of their interaction with the association and the importance of HIV/AIDS awareness. Members of the house warmed up to the idea and nominated some of them to work with the Project team on organizing the first HIV/AIDS awareness session for the association at a forthcoming meeting. The details of the session were worked out with the associations' nominees and the session was eventually held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1992. The education, awareness session involved a film show and discussions on the various dimensions of the HIV/AIDS crisis including the implications of infection, modes of transmission and prevention mechanisms. In the discussion that followed, it was agreed that there was an urgent need to create awareness about the problem through publicity and information sharing. The Project team then suggested the printing of posters that could be pasted in the Workshops of the technicians and other places but automobile technicians suggested instead the production of ear stickers. This suggestion was almost instantly dismissed by the Project team who wondered aloud why the preference of the mechanics for stickers since most members of the association do not own cars, to this, the members replied that the stickers were not meant for them or their cars alone but for pasting on the cars of customers that come to their workshop. The members of the association thereafter charged the Project team to come up with a message for the sticker. Thus the very first session held with NATA produced a commitment on the part of the prospective partner to become engaged in disseminating the information and raising awareness of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The automobile technicians were ready to do something. Some members of the association were also designated to work with the Project team to plan immediate future activities including the design and message for the proposed sticker.

Back at the makeshift office in Mrs. Iwere's home, members of the Project team engaged in a brainstorming session to decide on the appropriate message for the sticker as the NATA members of the planning committee had asked the team to come up with a set of messages for

the consideration of the group. In the course of the discussion session, several messages were considered many of which were turned down. A curious one which stated simply: “Share Love, Not AIDS: Avoid Casual Sex” was added after a lengthy debate. Ironically, it was the message that received the blessing of the NATA officers. The NATA officials also came up with the proposed shape and size of the sticker a piece of paper which had been cut out from the association’s calendar. This experience provided the nascent Project staff with some of their first lessons in community or people centred work: the Project implementers must be accountable to the people and their partners. It is worth pointing out that even at that early stage of CLP’s relationship with its first partner; the involvement of the partners was very crucial to moving forward. Upon committing themselves to working with CLP to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in their community:

- The partners decided that something should be produced to create awareness
- The partners decided that the awareness vehicle should be car sticker
- The partners decided the size and shape of the stickers, and
- The partners chose the message for the car stickers.

With the shape, size and message of the sticker decided. CLP went ahead to produce the sticker in large numbers and these were delivered at the next awareness session held with the group early in 1993. This session was arranged in order to mobilize those members who had missed the first session in December 1992, it was a much fuller house and during the course of the awareness session and review of the activities, a member of NATA pointed out a deficiency in the sticker as it did not contain any Contact details for anyone who might desire additional information. The members were convinced that the stickers would be widely circulated in the community but that they would not be in the position to answer the questions from interested members of the public whose curiosity might have been aroused.

The ‘Share Love Not AIDS’ sticker was a remarkable success and it helped in no small way to create awareness of HIV/AIDS in the community. Within a few days, the sticker could be found in virtually every part of Isolo and adjoining Mushin and other locations in the area. It was pasted on the gates of people’s houses, on refrigerators, on cars, on motorcycles. In barbing and hairdressing salons, grocery stores, on trucks and all sorts of unexpected places. The first batch of stickers were soon exhausted and more had to be printed. If there was any proof needed that reaching the community through their own institutions work, the first initiative of CLP in the work with NATA provided abundant evidence.

The work with NATA was not just the Project’s first activity; it was also its first learning opportunity. The NATA experience demonstrated the crucial position of the partner in the whole process an experience that was to be repeated again and again in all of the partnerships that CLP developed in subsequent months. The experience also produced another lesson; a lot of knowledge exists in the community that can benefit those who consider themselves agents of

change in the society such as CLP, The tendency is for the educated elite to assume that they have all the answers to the problems of the people, If the people should get the impression that the project people have no regard for their knowledge; they will not waste time withdrawing from the partnership. NATA's identification of the ideal approach to awareness generation about the new disease they were hearing of for the first time and the efficacy of the approach suggested confirmed that people at the community level had a proper of grasp of their environment and of what touches and/or tickles the people. In the months following, all the educational materials developed by CLP were taken back to the community for field testing and for their input. In addition, why conducting HIV/AIDS educational awareness sessions. CLP facilitators have learnt to find out first what the people know and not assume that they do not know anything. Awareness that a particular knowledge has emerged from among them encourages the people to identify with that knowledge.

## **Developing Partnerships**

### **Proceeding from the NATA initiative**

The NATA work gave CLP a good introduction to the community. However, since there were no financial resources yet to hire an office space, the coordination was still being done from the makeshift office in the residence of the Iweres and it was there that those who needed information were directed. The volume of the human traffic moving to the Iwere residence began to pose practical problems as the immediate neighbors in the compound were worried about the possible security implications. Meanwhile, the Project team continued the awareness campaign by moving from place to place including shops, barbing and hairdressing salons, markets, etc. carrying with them the HIV/AIDS awareness message. This further aroused the curiosity of the community as more and more people began to show active interest in getting more information. Even at that early stage. It was already clear that the Project had outgrown the temporary office in the private residence of the visionary and that it was only a matter of time before a full office space had to be acquired.

### **Towards funding stabilization**

Meanwhile, things began to happen on the funding front that would enable the new Project to operate with a little ease. Up to this time and including the work with NATA, all the funding for the new organization's activities came from the personal resources of Mrs. Iwere, who continued to be driven by her desire and life ambition to make a change and make a difference. However, it was clear even then that this drive could not sustain the new organization for long. In the course of other previous work as consultants to various international development agencies, Mrs. Iwere had become familiar with many officials of the donor bodies and it was not particularly difficult to establish a reputation for the new organization that she was heading.

While still dealing with the fallouts of the successful work with NATA, Mrs. Iwere one day received a surprise package in the post, a courier letter from WHO headquarters in Geneva requesting that she should put in a formal proposal to apply for funding assistance for the proposed Project. It emerged that IWHC had sent out copies of the handwritten note sent by Mrs. Iwere to its Africa Program Officer a few months earlier to various international agencies and potential sponsors and the WHO had been captivated by the proposed approach to tackling the HIV/AIDS issue. However, the WHO letter had specifically requested that the proposal from the Project should indicate a northern technical partner through whom the funds would be channeled. This caveat did not go down well with Mrs. Iwere who was convinced that evidence from similar arrangements in the past already ruled out her involvement in that kind of arrangement. When funds for a developing country agency are passed through a northern technical partner, a good percentage of such funds go towards such items as consultants' fees, hotel, air and local travel

costs such that actual money left for project implementation is nothing near what had originally been provided for. Rather than get involved in such arrangements. Mrs. Iwere preferred to continue managing with whatever resources she was able to muster on her own. However, not long after she received the letter, Mrs. Iwere received a visit from the IWHC Program Officer who naturally asked how far with the WHO proposal, Mrs. Iwere explained that she was not interested in sending a proposal given her reservations about the manner of implementation and her wariness of going through a northern technical partner. Upon reflection, the IWHC officer asked if she would have a rethink if the IWHC would offer to serve as the technical partner for the Project.

Mrs. Iwere was extremely touched by the offer but her innate political instinct still caused her to reject the offer. Her reasoning was that when the Project has been successfully put in place, the success of it is likely to be attributed to the presence of the so-called northern technical partner and the outcome of the hard work being put in by the implementing staff on the ground. Rather than work and have another agency given the credit, she would prefer to continue with whatever resources she could muster and see how many people could be reached within the limit of those resources. The conversation ended there and Mrs. Iwere thought that was the end of the whole matter until a few days after she received a call from the IWHC asking her to put in a proposal for financial support as the organization had decided to support the Project with a seed grant. It was a most pleasant surprise and what was more. IWHC made a grant of 521000, the biggest grant the organization ever made for such project in the country at the time. The manner in which the grant was made explains why CLP remains eternally grateful to the IWHC. IWHC had bought into the idea without attaching its own conditions, it allowed CLP to do its thing its own way and it never pressurized the young organization to move in any particular direction to suit preconceived perspectives!

With the grant, CLP was able to rent an uncompleted building located at 9 Ilori Street Ire akari Estate, Isolo, for two years and move its office space and information centre there. What the location provided was a location to be developed; CLP had to complete the building gradually with the newly provided resources. The construction work on the premises included plastering, plumbing and electrical works, all of which were necessary to make the office habitable. Members of the public began to drop in at the new centre which was styled a 'drop in centre' for HIV/AIDS information. It did not matter how many people turned up in any particular day, an awareness session would be conducted. It became even easier when the Project started to screen the film "Dawn of Reality" which gave the basic information on the realities of HIV/AIDS the nature of the disease the consequences, and the mode of transmission and prevention strategies. However, while the funding from IWHC enabled the Project to embark on the path of stabilization, it did not fully cover the needs of the young organization. The Project Director still did not earn any salary and was only paid some form of honorarium. IWHC gave a renewal at the end of that grant year although there was a gap of about two months during which the Project

Director had to source funds privately to pay the staff in order ,not to give the project staff the impression that the whole venture was a mere flash in the pan.

IWHC`s support for the financial sustainability of CLP was not limited to its direct contribution. More importantly, IWHC provided CLP with crucial reference to the MacArthur Foundation as sometime in 1991 the Project Director received a call from the Mac/Arthur Foundation in which the latter expressed delight at what CLP was doing and requested that it should send a proposal for funding. MacArthur gave a two year grant which turned out to be the core fund for CLP. The Macarthur grant enabled CLP to employ more staff and to start paying salaries instead of honorarium. Relief came in other fronts too. With the additional funding, CLP had money for transportation and so the personal car of the Project Director was released from doing all the runs; CLP was able to acquire its own generator for use in outdoor education and awareness sessions, as well as its own video and television sets. Until then the fledgling organization had depended on making use of the personal home equipment of the Iweres including computer, telephone and fax machines, and even post office box. Despite the progress made none of the grants provided for office furniture.

Support for the Project also came from other unexpected quarters. One such was the support given by the Threshold Foundation a group of wealthy women that support charitable projects. Grant from the Foundation enabled CLP to carry out the activities marking the 1994 World AIDS Day. Two of the guests at the event were Catherine Bickersteth of the Lagos office of the then British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) now the Department for international Development (DFID), and a colleague of hers from the Netherlands Embassy in Lagos. A few weeks earlier, Catherine Bickersteth and Anne Bamisaye, also of the ODA had paid a visit to the CLP office. During their visit, they met a whole group' of commercial sex workers from a nearby hotel who were watching an HIV/AIDS awareness film and they were quite impressed with the level of activity and sensitization going on. They then arranged to visit at the time of the World AIDS Day programme but before the date, Anne Bamisaye had been redeployed back to England. To support the CLP work, the ODA donated an Apple Mackintosh desktop computer while the official from the Netherlands Embassy asked CLP to put in request for some basic office equipment including photocopying machine, television, generator and a video player, All the items proved invaluable in CLP`s educational awareness work and its held activities. CLP was able to carry its HIV/AIDS awareness sessions to various places including hotels, town halls and schools.

### **Expanding the network**

Just before the pilot scheme with NATA was conducted marking the taking off of CLP, the Project had identified a number of groups to be reached as part of the pilot scheme. The Project identified five vocational groups it wanted to work with twelve barbing and hairdressing salons and about five schools. The social mapping done at the inception of the organization confirmed

there were several groups and associations in the target area but the ones specifically identified as listed were the most prominent. The decision was to work with just five groups at the initial stage. After identifying the various groups, the Project decided to approach various groups for possible partnership and once the number required was reached that was it.

### **Reaching Schools: Boy Nnamdi and Okota High School experience**

It took little time for the CLP office to become a beehive of activities with several individuals, young and old, trooping in to come and watch the film and attend the accompanying educational sessions. In all its activities with the emerging partner groups, CLP had consistently emphasized the various components of its work and that it has programmes for all segments of the society including youths. The adult participants who were parents were encouraged to send their teenagers and adolescents to the new Youth Centre which had been created in the CLP office premises and many young people had begun visiting to participate in the various educational awareness sessions that were being held regularly. One neighborhood youth who visited and attended the HIV/AIDS awareness session was Nnamdi Ezieofolam, a student of Okota High School. One day: Nnamdi came to the office and said he would like CLP to come and conduct an HIV/AIDS awareness session for members of his club in the school, the Interact Club (a variant of the Literary and Debating Society which is so popular in Nigerian secondary schools), which was holding its end of year programme. We asked him to obtain the consent of the school Principal. He went to his principal who requested to meet with the staff of the organization that was to conduct the proposed programme. The Project's delegation to the meeting with the Principal was led by the Project Director who explained the mission of CLP and the reality of the new disease called HIV/AIDS. After listening intently to the explanations from the CLP Project Director the Principal wondered why the educational session should be limited to only the members of Nnamdi's club who were just about 32 and requested that it should be extended to every student in the school if it were to have a meaningful impact. The Principal there and then nominated two teachers to work with CLP to plan the programme. One of the teachers nominated was Mrs. Jane Anwo, the Biology teacher, who subsequently became instrumental to the expansion of CLP's work in another direction and a volunteer for CLP activities in the community.

Conducting HIV/AIDS educational and awareness sessions for all the students of Okota High School was a hectic process. The first stage was to train the teachers after which some students from the senior secondary, classes were selected and trained as peer facilitators. The peer facilitators worked with the CLP team to conduct the class-by-class awareness sessions. A roster was prepared to determine which class would be reached in a particular session. It was agreed that the sessions would take place on Fridays over several weeks at the period allotted in the school programme for extracurricular activities and about three hours were blocked off on each day that the programme was held. The method for reaching the students was essentially participatory with various exercises conducted to determine the awareness levels of the students.

The exercises were followed by the information dissemination sessions in which the CLP team passed on basic HIV/AIDS information to the students and then the distribution of educational materials. Because the sessions were conducted for several classes and over several weeks. It was not possible to screen the accompanying film as this would have involved setting up and dismantling the necessary equipment several times over. The students and staff were therefore encouraged to visit the CLP office for additional information and possible viewing of the film.

The Okota High School experience was very successful and ultimately became the stimulant for CLP's Work with young people. In the several weeks that followed, the CLP office was swarmed with young people who wanted to watch the film. Throngs of students were coming to the office once they closed from school and they brought along their colleagues from adjoining schools. As Okota High School is located in the School Village in which there were sixteen secondary schools at the time (now over 30 with the splitting up of the schools into separate Junior and Senior Secondary schools each with independent administration), what had happened in the school easily became public knowledge in all the adjoining schools. Their colleagues from the other schools were curious about the leaflets that students from Okota High School were carrying that gave basic HIV/AIDS information and they were keen to obtain copies. For several days, indeed weeks, staff of the CLP office had to cope with the multiple throngs of students visiting daily. The congestion of CLP offices by students wishing to watch the film on AIDS and to obtain information ultimately began to affect the pace of work in the office and it was decided that the activities should be streamlined. First, it was decided that CLP would accelerate its work in schools so that students can get the primary information from their schools and reduce the pressure on the office. Secondly, even for the sessions that would be conducted in the office, these had to be restricted to two specific days in the week, i.e., Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The decision to organize the awareness sessions for the youths at the CLP office marked the beginning of the CLP Youth Club. The activities targeted at youths at the CLP office were concentrated on those desiring additional information beyond what was available to them in the school. For instance, some young people wanted additional information on the linkage between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. It was not until CLP started its information dissemination that it realized the extent of drug abuse among youths and adults in the community. Despite the awareness that marijuana use was a common thing, it was only when the link between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS was being emphasized in various sessions that victims of drug abuse began to seek help by first seeking additional information. This was to subsequently inform CLP's work with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). In view of the emerging issues and the interests expressed by the visiting young people, CLP had to develop a curriculum that would incorporate the emerging diverse issues and "provide the youths with health and development information.

### **From School to Church**



Our Work with Okota High School was coordinated from the school end by Mrs. Anwo who later invited us to organize a programme for her group in the Power Pentecostal Church, Okota and opened the door to our first activity with a faith-based institution. A programme was organized for the women`s group who subsequently invited us to do another programme with the youths in the same church having realized that their young people in the church would benefit tremendously from the lifesaving information that was being disseminated in the HIV/AIDS educational awareness sessions.

The work with the Power Pentecostal Church was followed soon after with the organisation of a programme for St. Mary`s Catholic Church. CLP was invited to conduct an HIV/AIDS awareness session during the harvest programme for youths and children in the church, This particular meeting featured a talk on HIV/AIDS and the reception was such that CLP was invited to conduct another session at one of the church`s house stations, a meeting place that allows for more in-depth discussion of issues as there are fewer people unlike the setting in the main church where there are a lot more people and where it was usually more difficult to ask questions or have better attention. These preliminary activities were to be the beginning of a process of sustained interaction between CLP and St. Mary`s Church. The activities were targeted at the youths as they were coordinated by the parish`s branch of the Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria (CYON). The Youths Organization had desired something extra and CLP agreed with the leadership to conduct a series of awareness sessions over a period of several weeks for which purpose CLP developed a syllabus around the key concepts contained in the National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Nigeria, which had been developed and approved only a few months. Coincidentally, Mrs. Iwere had been part of the team that developed the National Guidelines, the work with CYON of St. Mary`s Catholic Church turned out to be a pilot project for church-based sexuality education programme as the project was soon extended to other parishes of the Church and was subsequently endorsed by the pastoral council. Even at St Mary`s Church, the programme, which was held on the third Sunday of every month, soon extended to other groups in the church. On the days that the educational sessions would be carried out, all church meetings scheduled to hold after the service were cancelled so that the people could participate and refreshments were provided in order to sustain the interest of the participants.

### **Reaching Commercial Sex Workers**

While in most instances, our work with groups and association was the outcome of the community referencing system. One of the direct initiatives we took was to reach out to commercial sex workers in the community. An initial contact was made with the sex workers at a brothel called Oyinla Hotel where the CLP team met with the brothel`s barman and the chairperson of the sex workers and introduced the Project and its interest to work with them on the rampaging disease called HIV/AIDS. After managing to persuade the barman and the chairperson of the sex workers, the CLP team was introduced to the Manager and then the

proprietor of the brothel. CLP had reached the sex workers through one of its own staff who had once been a commercial sex worker herself and who appreciated the nuances of the trade and the challenges of persuading sex workers to adopt new attitudes towards their work. Naturally, there was reluctance on the part of the brothel manager to permit the new organization to work in the place because there was the apprehension that patronage may decline if the customers were asked to use condoms. He was concerned that the proposed intervention should not hinder business in the premises or project the sex workers in a negative light in their trade community.

The CLP team appreciated the fears of the brothel manager but decided to emphasize the need for the hotel to take the lead in responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis. The team let it be known that sooner or later awareness about HIV/AIDS and its consequences would increase greatly within the community and it could only work in favor of the hotel and its sex workers if they are seen to already know about the disease and have taken the lead and responded to it already. This would enhance the confidence of their customers who would appreciate the fact that the sex workers in the hotel had already acted on the matter. After convincing the manager of the importance of the information that CLP wanted to pass on, he arranged for the educational awareness session. The work at Oyinla Hotel was successful but as expected, the sex workers were worried that the HIV/AIDS prevention strategies to which they were exposed, particularly the need to use condoms; since obviously sex workers could not abstain, could end up causing them to lose customers to rival brothels. Thus, the Project was advised that if the campaign was to have the desired impact. It must extend to the adjoining brothels with similar information.

Hence, from Oyinla Hotel CLP was introduced to Endurance and Temidara Hotels and other brothels in the community. Sex workers in the brothels that were first reached actually went out of their way to introduce CLP to other brothels highlighting the benefits of the information that they received in the various educational awareness sessions.

### **Going into the Community: Isolo Community Day**

It was not enough to reach pockets or segments of the community as CLP had successfully done with its outreach to the professional associations, school and church groups. The process of securing acceptability in the wider Isolo community came with the celebration of the Isolo Community Day. The Isolo Community Day is the premium venue for social interactions among the various groups in the community. The suggestion to reach the community particularly the sexually active segments through the Isolo Community Day activities actually emanated from one of the sessions CLP held with market elders. The market leaders, who were mostly women over fifty years of age, said that they thought that the information being shared with them by CLP would be more suitable for younger people as most of them had passed their sexually active years. The market elders then suggested that CLP should try to carry the message to the next celebration of the Isolo Community Day at which many young people in the community would be present. Apart from community leaders and chiefs, most of the social groups and associations

in the community normally seek to register their presence at the occasion; it would therefore be a great idea if CLP to take the HIV/AIDS awareness message to the programme. The wisdom of the suggestion was immediately apparent to the Project leadership who immediately decided to register a presence at the celebration.

However, we needed to make contact with the authorities responsible for organizing the event in order to secure permission to lecture in the programme for the day as any group desiring to put up some activity needed to obtain consent from the community leaders responsible for putting the programme together. Making contacts for the purpose of participation in the Isolo Community Day Celebration was a big eye-opener for us at CLP. After fruitlessly trying to reach the chief in charge of the programme who never seemed to be at home, we returned to the market elders who suggested the event to us and explained our frustration. There and then the market leaders took the CLP team out and pointed them to a tree under which were seating some elderly people, and were told to ask for one Alhaji Muniru. The CLP team was told to specifically mention that it had been referred by the market elders and then state its mission. It worked like magic. Of course, people at CLP including the Project Director had always seen people sitting under this particular tree which was beside the neighborhood mosque but they had never realized that the tree was an institution of its own. Members of this Group of elders are a significant force in regulating the affairs of the community. At the CLP, we have since named the group of elders meeting under the tree as the “Under the Tree Group”. Once the team from the office mentioned who had referred them and the mission, it took only a few minutes for CLP to be put on the programme for day, indeed, Alhaji Muniru himself came personally to the CLP offices to drop copies of the programme of activities for the day. The organizing committee agreed that the CLP team should put up a- drama show as well as have its own stand where it could exhibit other educational materials on HIV/AIDS. CLP’s experience with securing participation in the Isolo Community Day Celebrations provided a useful lesson on the importance of having, the right reference if you are to work successfully in a community.

The CLP volunteer drama group put up a good performance that highlighted the dangers of HIV/AIDS, the means of transmission and key prevention strategies and from then CLP became a permanent fixture of the annual celebration of the Isolo Community Day.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Within a few months of launching out, CLP had successfully established itself as an agent for the dissemination of lifesaving information on HIV/AIDS in the community, operating through programmes that fully take the partners' into consideration. At inception, its programme had five major components reflecting its work with youths, women, men, commercial sex workers and faith-based institutions. Specific programmes were being carried out for each component but not long after, the practical difficulties of separating men totally from women became apparent and the work had to be restructured. CLP found that many of the channels identified for a particular

gender had overlapping membership by people from the other gender. For instance, it was discovered that men were prominent members of market associations contrary to the hitherto held notion on which earlier interventions were planned that CLP would reach women through the market networks. At the same time, even though they were few, more and more women were found to belong to occupational groups thought to be the exclusive preserve of men such as automobile electrical and even technical works. Among the tailors, there were just as many men as women. So, rather than retain a rigid separation, CLP decided to combine men and women into what was called community groups in which everybody could be reached. Thus, the work of the organization became crystallized around four thematic work areas which was being anchored through its partnership with key institutions and associations. The four thematic areas were its work with young people (i.e. its youth work), work with community groups, work with commercial sex workers and work with religious or faith-based institutions.

## **Working with Community Groups**

From inception, CLP was conceived as a community-centered organization and over the years it has retained its focus on community groups, organizations and institutions as channels for reaching marginalized groups with lifesaving information on HIV/AIDS and on their reproductive and sexual health. Working through reference systems, CLP saw community groups and associations as viable channels for reaching grassroots people especially men with HIV/AIDS information. The relationship with these groups has evolved over the years beginning with the first intervention activity the Project conducted in December 1992 with the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA). In the months that followed, particularly during 1993, CLP expanded its reach rapidly to cover allied groups including the Nigerian Vulcanisers Association, the Battery Chargers Association, the Furniture Makers Association and then the United Tailors Association. These five constituted the first set of community groups and associations with which CLP was able to launch itself its programme of intervention and developing a model of community-based partnership for social service delivery and community development.

### **Goals and objectives**

CLP's goal of working with community groups was very straightforward: to actively engage these groups in sustaining reproductive health and HIV/AIDS intervention programmes at the community level. The objectives were:

- To increase the access of members of the different community groups and associations to information on HIV/AIDS as well as on sexually transmitted diseases and sexual and reproductive health;
- To increase the awareness of the grassroots members of the various partner associations of the relationship between STDs, drug abuse and HIV infection;
- To increase their knowledge of the relationship existing between sickness, disease and family income; and
- To help them acquire skills that will empower the community people to adopt responsible sexual behaviors.

Activities to support the pursuit of these goals and objectives consist largely of creating awareness by organizing workshops conducting one-on-one education sessions that include film shows for community groups and institutions, production and dissemination of HIV/AIDS educational materials, provision of counseling services including pre- and post-test HIV counseling. CLP's relations with the groups, associations, institutions and individuals have continued to evolve on a gradual basis over the years. With the passage of years, CLP became better known and more firmly rooted in the community even as it continued to create greater awareness. More

and more groups began to reach out to CLP requesting the Project to conduct education sessions for them because they realize that by so doing they would be enhancing their own health and general well being. The groups involved in partnerships with CLP can be categorized as follows:

- Educational institutions
- Community/vocational associations
- Market associations
- Hairdressing and barbing salons
- Hotels
- Health institutions, and
- Religious institutions and faith-based communities.

### **Guiding principles**

As work with the various groups evolved, CLP developed a set of guiding principles in relation to its work with community groups. Some of these are;

- Protecting and sometimes projecting the self-esteem of these community groups in such a way as to enhance their resourcefulness, their self-esteem, their sense of collective strength and their resourcefulness, and in a way that encourages them to take actions and plans and accept responsibility for following up;
- Relationship proceeds on the basis of genuine partnership: groups are seen and treated as partners and are referred to as such;
- Use of existing channels for reaching the groups: educational sessions are held for a group at a time it normally meets, at a venue where it normally holds its meetings, thus ensuring that groups are met in their natural environment rather than being uprooted to meet elsewhere;
- The work with and through the community, like CLP itself, is people driven. The Project works at the pace of the community people and the form and scope of sessions to be conducted is as determined by the groups;
- Involvement of the partner groups in the design, planning implementation and review of programmes implemented with them;
- Conduct of educational sessions are learner centred not teacher centred; and
- Involvement of the community groups in the development of educational materials on different issues of health concern. Such materials include posters, pamphlets, stickers, pin-ups, etc.

The detailed process of working with the groups varies, but in almost all cases, the following elements are present;

- Meeting to establish partnership: this involves first identifying the potential partner groups and meeting first with the executive/leaders and then with the members to introduce the Project and explore the possibility of establishing a partnership. This usually involves 21 series of visits;
- Declining issues of interest: the Project facilitates a definition of the issues of interest in respect of its partnership with the particular community group(s)
- joint planning of educational/intervention programmes with the partner groups to determine identified needs and logistics for 21, particular session; this involves determining the appropriate methodology to adopt including language, resource requirement, defining the role and responsibilities of both CLP and the partner group;
- Conducting the educational sessions on the date agreed, at the venue agreed; and
- Meeting periodically to review programme implementation and to decide on the way forward.

### **Agenda Setting**

In all instances, the entry point for the partnership is HIV/AIDS. In this regard, CLP always conduct basic HIV/AIDS education followed by counseling for those who require additional information. CLP also engages in advocacy and leadership training and runs a referral system for HIV/AIDS and STI testing. However, HIV/AIDS was not an end in itself because as a community-driven institution, CLP was conscious that the partners may put other issues on the agenda table and it would have to respond to such placement of issues. As one community group after the other identified issues of concern, CLP was `forced` to expand its agenda to include reproductive health and sexuality education. Thus, over the years, the health issues that have been of concern to the community groups have been identified as including but not restricted to;

- HIV/AIDS
- STIs/STDs
- Family planning
- Teenage pregnancy
- Abortion
- Domestic violence
- Resource management
- Parent-child communication
- Occupational hazards
- Self awareness/self esteem
- Goal setting
- Drug abuse
- Child upbringing and good parenting
- Nutrition

- Personal hygiene

### **Profiles in Partnership**

When CLP started its educational and information dissemination activities, it identified separate forums for reaching men and women in the community. However, even at that early stage, it was clear that many of the groups and associations had overlapping memberships and as it continued to implement intervention activities, it became even clearer that men and women could not be so easily compartmentalized for intervention purposes. Thus, the broad term, 'community groups', was adopted for all these groups.

Our discussion in this chapter concentrates on the community, vocational associations, market associations, hairdressing salons and government health institutions because CLP's works with the other categories are the subjects of other chapters.

### **Partnership with Community Associations**

Work with community associations started in 1992 with the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA). Between June and September 1992, the Okota Branch of NATA, along with the Lagos State Vulcanisers association had been identified as potential partner groups for reaching the community with vital lifesaving HIV/AIDS information and sexuality education. Following the successful work with NATA, CLP reached out easily to the Vulcanisers and between 1993 and 1994 more community associations were identified and reached with HIV/AIDS information. These included the Battery Technicians Associations and the Professional Carpenters (Furniture Makers) Association. These were soon joined by the Barbing and Hairdressing Salons during the same period. While working with these groups, CLP continued to receive requests for educational sessions from several other groups and associations.

The reference system was crucial to the expansion of CLP's work with community associations. Usually, after working with a particular group or association, one member or the other with link to another group would mention what had happened and encourage the new group to consider reaching out to CLP. Thus, in 1994, following a request from a member of NATA who had been involved in CLP's activities, the Ifelodun/Okota Building Materials Suppliers Association was reached by the Project. Similarly, while conducting an IEC activity for the Starlet Better Life Society, a cooperative society, CLP received a request to work with the Community Development Associations (CDAS), which are groups formed by citizens in different communities. At that particular time, while there were nine CDAs in the community, only three were functioning, i.e., those at Ishagatedo, LSDPC and Low Cost Housing Estate. CLP was able to work with the three, Apart from the Starlet Better Life Society, CLP also worked with the



Better Life Women`s Cooperative Society, which was the second of the two cooperative societies that CLP worked with at the time. However, following the exit of General Ibrahim Babangida, whose wife, Mrs. Maryam Babangida, had initiated the Better Life Programme, the two Better Life-linked cooperative societies became defunct. During those early years, CLP also worked with the Matbeny Car Hire Drivers Association.

However, conducting educational sessions for the group proved rather difficult because of the mobile nature of their work and CLP had to reach them in batches, conducting sessions on HIV/AIDS for them in the Project office as they were available.

Work with the vocational and community development associations witnessed significant expansion between 1995 and 1996, in terms of both the groups reached and the scope and focus of activities. A workshop was organized for the executives of the six vocational groups and the CDAS with which the Project was working to review the work so far and identify the health concerns of the community. The Project believed that if the groups identified the issues themselves their interest and commitment to the implementation would be enhanced. The review meeting identified the issues of concern and work plans were developed for carrying out educational activities on them. The Project also believed that community groups would be further empowered if they were exposed to different education and information forums beyond CLP initiated forums, where important sexual and reproductive health issues are discussed. This informed the Project`s decision, to invite three members of the executive of each partner community group to a symposium organized by the Campaign Against Unwanted Pregnancy (CAUP) in August 1995.

The Project also seized the opportunity presented by the invitation extended to it to intervene in the dispute between members of the National Automobile Technicians Association and the police to reach men and women of the Nigeria Police with HIV/AIDS information. CLP served as arbitrator in the dispute between the two sides over the matter of stolen vehicles in which the police accused members of NATA of aiding and abetting the theft of vehicles, while NATA members accused the police of using the matter as an excuse to unnecessarily harass their members. In the course of the discussion during the arbitration meeting, CLP raised the issue of working with the police on HIV/AIDS education and information. The acquiescence of the police led to the organization of education sessions. an activity that helped to improve the Projects relationship with the police in Okota.

By the end of 1996, CLP`s work with community association had taken a firm pattern and it had 12 community groups as partners and through; these groups it has increasing the community people`s access to sexuality education and reproductive health information. By 1997, the twelve groups were invited to another action-planning meeting at which new efforts were made to identify the health issues of concern to them. Present at the meeting were:

- The Battery Chargers Association
- Community Development Association, Ishagatedo
- Ifelodun/Okota Building Materials Suppliers Association
- Obada Market Women's Association/Igbo Market Women's Association
- Ire-Akari Market Women's Association
- Hairdressing Proprietors Association, Isolo
- LSDPC Residents Association, Isolo
- Ishagatedo/Isolo United Tailors Association
- National Automobile Technicians Association. Okota
- PCF, Ilasa
- PCF. Isolo
- LSV A, Isolo

With the identification of the health issues of concern, a work plan for the next three years (1997 - 1999) was drawn up and the Project continued to implement this plan using the usual participatory approach. Another review meeting was conducted with the groups in 2000 to explore new issues of concern. If any, This review identified the need for training in leadership skills for their executives as a major area of concern but in addition, they promised to mobilize their members to participate in all the educational sessions.

With the success of the work with the community groups and associations in Isolo, it was inevitable that their counterparts in the adjoining Oshodi and Mushin communities become aware of what was happening. Requests from existing partner groups to extend the work to their counterparts in the adjoining communities led to the first replication efforts embarked upon by the Project. However the replication was a planned one that targeted specific groups, limiting the total number to 12 in the two communities. These were four grassroots groups, four schools/educational institutions, two markets and two religious groups. As at December 1999, work with the new .groups had commenced and HIV/AIDS education activities were carried out with the following groups in Mushin and Oshodi:

- National Automobile Technicians Association, Oshodi Zone
- Lagos State Vulcanisers Association, Mushin Zone
- National Automobile Technicians Association, Mushin
- LECAN, Mushin.
- Lagos State Vulcanisers Association, Oshodi
- National Automobile Technicians Association, Oshodi
- Oshodi Market Association
- Women in Health Group
- United Tailors Association, Oshodi

- Market Leaders, Mushin.

In addition to the above groups, CLP also works with educational institutions in the two communities including three schools in Mushin and four in Oshodi for a total of seven. Work with the new groups has followed the pattern of work with earlier ones; Members of the groups also make inputs into identifying other health issues of concern to them beyond HIV/AIDS which CLP carries out with all its partner groups as routine. Among the identified is drug abuse family planning, nutrition, sexually transmitted infections, eye problems, heart attack, and parent-child communication, avoiding conflicts in the family, how to make business grow, how to sustain Self-help projects, child upbringing, occupational hazards and juvenile delinquency; CLP has continued to work with the various groups to tackle these issues and others of concern and interest to the members.

### **Partnering with Hairdressing and Barbing Salons**

CLP started work with salons shortly after its inception in 1992. A series of meetings with the managers and proprietors of six hairdressing and six barbing salons prefaced the work with them. The meetings were designed to introduce the Project to members of the group and fix dates for educational sessions on HIV/AIDS with the hairdressers and barbers working in those salons. The work with the group also followed the participatory approach that is characteristic of all CLP interventions and its relation with partner groups. In particular, the design of educational materials that would be distributed through the salons involved five women and four men from within the community, and three others who were not from the community. The materials are placed in the salons for customers to read either while waiting or while receiving their services. It was also naturally expected that many would be taken away by customers who develop interest in them.

CLP's initial work with hairdressing salons was an example of an approach that did not achieve the desired results. CLP started conducting HIV/AIDS education workshops and training for salon workers in the expectation of reaching the patrons of the salons, that as the clients were being served, the salon workers would be talking to them. But the approach did not work for two reasons. First, we found that the salon girls/workers were moving from one salon to another. So, it was possible to conduct training for six workers in a particular month and found that by the next month only one or two would be remaining. Secondly, even for those remaining, CLP did not take cognizance of the social stratification in the society, that is, the fact that the salon workers are/were not on the same social level with the clients. It was difficult for salon girls, plain hired hands, to start asking the upper class clients to engage in safe sex by using condoms. By the time the programme was reviewed, it was concluded that it was a failure and that it was better to use the salons as distribution centres for information and materials on HIV/AIDS. With the new target for the work with the salons well defined, it was easier to achieve better results.

By the end of 1991, the Project had worked with 12 hairdressing salons along with the hairdressers and the association of proprietors of salons. The Project found the female hairdressing salons effective channels for the distribution of HIV/AIDS awareness literature and for reaching women with HIV/AIDS information. With the observed high labor mobility and high turnover of apprentices and workers, the Project continued to identify more salons to work with and to educate new Workers in the old salons it was working with. The barbing salons that took care of men similarly served as effective channels for reaching men. As' at the end of 1994, the Project was already working with 53 barbers in 15 barbing salons. Moreover, just as was the case with the hairdressing salons, many of the barbers relocated at rapid rates and the Project had to identify new ones.

Apart from serving as points for the distribution of literature on HIV/AIDS messages, the work with the barbing and hairdressing salons also involved directly reaching the workers themselves with information on HIV/AIDS prevention and control particular as these affect their-work, and how they can adopt safety measures. The salon owners agreed that the barbers, hairdressers and their clients were all at risk of infection from their use of skin piercing equipment. The Project has continued to carry out follow up visits to both hairdressing and barbing salons to reinforce the HIV/AIDS messages among hairdressers and barbers and their apprentices as well as to replenish their stock of educational materials and to monitor the response of their clients to the materials, The visits were also used to observe the practices of the hairdressers with respect to sterilizing their manicure and pedicure instruments and discuss ways of effecting safer of sharp work instruments.

Evaluations of the partnership and the activities are also carried out in order to determine the continued effectiveness of the salons as channels for dissemination of HIV/AIDS information in the community and to assess the response of the clients to the information they were receiving and to know if they were complying with the safe practices identified. The process of continuous review and evaluation of the work with the salons was the outcome of the Project's decision to work directly with salon owners themselves to find out the effectiveness -of the intervention strategy adopted in CLP's intervention work with them. It was obvious that the strategy was good and the Project was requested to continue placing HIV/AIDS educational materials in the salons for clients to both read and take away and that the materials should be replenished at intervals. On occasions, however it was found that some salons were not placing the materials in strategic positions for clients to pick and read; indeed, in some salons, there were no traces whatsoever of the IEC materials. The problem was due in part, to the high mobility rate of apprentices and workers which was not accompanied by proper handover of the materials and relevant information to incoming workers. There was also manifest lack of interest in the issues on the part of some salon owners.

Apart from organising HIV/AIDS awareness sessions for the salon owners and managers, CLP has also been involved in strengthening the association of proprietors of these salons. In 1997,

CLP organized leadership training for the Association of Proprietors of Hairdressing Salons because the group was enmeshed in a leadership crisis that prevented it from functioning effectively. For several months, the association could not meet, a development that directly affected the partnership with CLP because CLP could only reach them during their meetings. Eventually, the crisis besetting the association was formally brought to the attention of the Project, which was also asked to intervene. This had followed enquiries from CLP on why the association was not meeting. The Project leadership felt that it was more appropriate to build the capacity of the executives of the association for leadership work in their association rather than just settling quarrels. If the leadership could be made aware of what is required of them as leaders, it would be easier for them to relate to the problems and seek to find solutions for them. The approach worked and the association was able to come back and work together against for which the group was grateful to CLP. The continued involvement of the managers and proprietors in defining and setting the agenda has facilitated continued interest in pursuing the agenda set for the partnership. CLP has continued to find ways of addressing the issues raised even as these issues emerge.

### **Partnership with Market Associations**

At the inception of CLP, market associations were identified as channels for reaching women in particular with HIV/AIDS information but it was not until August 1993 when work with the market women started. Even then the work was almost immediately interrupted by the political crisis in the country in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election result. The annulment was followed by massive popular uprising and the application of repressive measures by the military government of the day. While the government of General Babangida was forced to depart from the scene, the repression continued unabated. Citizen action in the form of strikes, street riots and sit-ins made general life and movement virtually impossible and August 1993 was a particularly inauspicious time to commence a programme such as the one that was initiated by CLP with the market associations. Indeed, it was not until March 1994 that the Project identified leaders of the market associations in the community and introduced the Project to them. There are two markets in the community: the Obada and ire-Akari Markets and the leaders of the two agreed to work with the Project.

While the leaders agreed that IEC activities should be implemented for their members, planning actual activities was difficult and time consuming because the meetings of the association were rather infrequent possibly due to the nature of their business which would require closure if they were to go for any meeting for any sustained length of time. However, the partnership was set in motion, the market leaders proved worthy collaborators. Indeed, it was the market leaders who linked up the Project with the Osolo Day Celebration Committee in 1994 and afforded CLP the opportunity to meet with the traditional community leaders and secure an inroad into the community to share the HIV/AIDS message with the people of the Isolo community. Indeed, the

Project was able to elicit the commitment of the ruling traditional elites in Isolo towards HIV/AIDS prevention and control.

While CLP was able to reach the Ire-Akari market leaders by 1993/94, it was not until 1996 that the Obada Market Leaders indicated willingness to work closely with the Project in disseminating HIV/AIDS information to members of the community. They informed the Project that there were different market groups based on the type of wares the member traders were selling. With the help of one of the leaders, the Project identified the leaders of all the groups as well as the days, time and venues of their group meetings.

Armed with this knowledge and working with the leaders of the various subgroups. CLP was able to plan and implement educational sessions for six market groups from that time in 1996. These were:

- Meat Sellers Association
- Elewedu Association`
- Onibata Association
- Fish Sellers Association
- Ologunbebi Association
- Elero Market Group

As was the case with other community groups with which CLP has partnered, the Project explored other issues of health concern with these groups beyond HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The Project has continued to address such other concerns till date. In addition, as with the other community associations, the work with the market groups is being replicated in Mushin and Oshodi, the adjoining communities to Isolo. CLP met with the market leaders from the two communities introduced- the Project and its missions and conducted educational sessions on HIV/AIDS for them. While the different market sub groups similar to those identified above for Obada Market in Isolo were identified, working with them has been rather difficult unlike what happened in Isolo.

### **The Community Action Committee (CACOM)**

One of the good outcomes of the work with market leaders was the acceleration of the emergence of the Community Action Committee (CACOM), a group of volunteers working with CLP to achieve the goals of the “Project” to reach the community with lifesaving information on HW/AIDS and comprehensive sexuality education.

CACOM started in 1994 as the Women Action Committee (WACOM) and. as the name implied. It comprised initially only of women in the community. All of them were individuals who were interested in the Project’s work and were willing and ready to use their time to work with the Project to promote the health and well-being of people in the community. The first person to have expressed interest to serve as volunteer was a retired magistrate and Social Worker.

Mrs. Theresa Suleiman, who had met with Mrs. Iwere at a function in Badagry and expressed interest in the work that CLP, was doing. Mrs. Iwere had given her business card to Mrs. Suleiman almost casually and thought nothing further of their discussion until the woman showed up at the CLP office and indicated her interest to serve as volunteer. A number of other women also showed interest in the work and an attempt was made to bring them together as a group being coordinated by Mrs. Suleiman.

The initial composition of the group included two leaders of women cooperative societies, the President of the Association of Proprietors of Hairdressing Salons. a senior secondary school teacher. the secretary of the Igbo market Women`s Association and Mrs. Suleiman. They all fell between the 33 - 67 years age bracket.

The opportunity to demonstrate their presence came with the Osolo Day Celebration in 1994 when CLP was given permission to make presentations and put up its own stand. Following deliberations with the Project staff, the volunteers decided to put a drama presentation as part of CLP's activities for the day. The outing was quite successful and it facilitated the setting up of the Women Action Committee. Members of the group became actively involved in CLP's programs and featured in such events as the World AIDS Day and other community level activities of the organization. Following suggestions that the group should reflect the fact that CLP is also working with men, some of whom were also ready to serve as volunteers, it was decided that the name of the group should be changed to Community Action Committee.

The major goal of setting up CACOM is to encourage community participation in health intervention programs and to facilitate the transfer of ownership of community. Intervention programs to community people. CACOM also seeks to encourage the spirit of volunteerism in community development work. CACOM also exists to empower and equip the members to serve as peer educators in the community. This facilitates sustainability and continuity of health intervention programs and ensures wider coverage as members are expected to continue propagating the message and spreading the knowledge they have acquired in their various communities and wherever they find themselves. CACOM members serve as back-up educators to the community people because they live within the community and because they are associated with CLP they give greater visibility to the Project thereby encouraging community people to seek more information directly when required.

CACOM's activities include participating in planning and implementation or community programs staging drama presentations, mobilizing community people for programs and activities and participation in staff meetings. Their activities are defined within the framework of the goals and visions of CLP and the Project's priorities at any particular time. Thus, at their meetings which usually hold on every third Wednesday of the month the members are briefed on current developments in CLP's work so that they can define their priorities and activities within the identified priorities; CACOM members participate in workshops organized by the Project and those organized by other organizations to which they are sponsored by CLP. They are also trained as sexuality educators so that they could be involved in community level sexuality education and reach the people with vital lifesaving information through such forums as wedding

ceremonies, funerals, house warming and other parties organized either by themselves or by members of their families or their friends.

Members of CACOM have demonstrated that it is possible to have active volunteers partnering with programming organizations to bring development and social services including lifesaving information to the people and doing so without expecting any financial returns. Most of the members have remained fully committed to the Project since they first joined shortly after the inception of the organization. Their presence has been a source of added strength, inspiration and motivation to the Project. Indeed.

CACOM members have shown that when properly challenged, members of the community can contribute significantly to promoting the general welfare and work for the common good. Unfortunately, however there have been instances when it was difficult to keep the group focused on CLP's vision as they have come up with programs that are either irrelevant or even directly conflict with CLP's defined focus and vision. But they have remained a source of inspiration and clear vision that there are still people in the community who can be trusted to pursue the people's good *cui bono*.

### **Challenges of work with Community Associations**

As would be expected, working with community associations has its challenges, some of which are rooted in the nature of the work and of the approach.

- First, given the community driven approach of the programming and the need for CLP to respond to the community needs, often the Project does not have control over what issues and needs the community or the people might want intervention efforts. While this is an avenue for a programming organization to be resourceful, it is also a challenge because many times the Action Planning and Review Meetings yield issues that have nothing to do with health and these are what the partners consider important. Given CLP's commitment to respecting the wishes of its partners, this poses a great dilemma as the question arises on how to justify committing financial resources to purposes that have no bearing to why the funds were raised in the first instance. Sometimes the request may appear health related such as the request for toilet facility in the mechanic village, however, while CLP is concerned with health. It is not funding body but a health education organization. Other requests have even nothing to do with health; United Tailors Associations request for assistance with procuring ban on second hand clothing, or the Market Associations request for the construction of a road to the market. When requests come out in interactive forums that have no bearing with the purpose of the partnership, it is always a struggle letting the partners realize the limits of the partnership. But CLP never makes the mistake of giving the impression that it is going to do something about the request; what the Project does when there is the opportunity, is to teach the partner on how to go about their need. CLP has conducted workshops for partner groups on how to generate funds among themselves and how to raise funds in their community. It has also taught partners how to lobby their local governments to make them alive to their responsibilities to the community. Showing concern for issues that are important to the partners, even when the Project is unable to do anything directly about such issues has always proven an effective way of securing their continued interest



in the partnership. When you address the issues that are important to them, it is easier for them to open up to those issues that the programming body considers important and wants to bring to their attention.

- The second major challenge is funding particularly in relation to meeting donor's demands in the face of the complications of working at the community level. Donors generally have strict requirements for reporting and program implementation. However, work at the community level does not always proceed as planned or in a mechanical fashion. It is possible after all the planning and advocacy for a particular scheduled activity not to hold due to an unforeseen development such as the partner group losing a member or the executive is enmeshed in in-house problem which has taken over their agenda for the day. The fact that arrangements had been firmed up in the days leading to the scheduled date does not guarantee that a particular activity would hold. Sometimes, the activity might be postponed and successfully conducted later; at times it may never be possible to hold it again. Thus setting fixed targets is difficult and if funding for the activity has come from an organization that is rigid with adherence to approved spending profiles it might give a wrong impression of organizational incapacity or inability to plan properly. The other end of the spectrum is when a particular number of sessions has been planned and at point of implementation. It becomes necessary to conduct additional ones. Many times at the completion of a particular educational session the partner groups would request that supplementary sessions be conducted because not all of their members were present and that there were probably more members absent than present. Given the fact that organization is responsible to the people at the community level, it could not insist that it could not do anything about the request or that it has funding for only a particular number of workshops.
- Third, the program is held intensive in the sense that scheduling a particular session with a partner group requires a lot of visits and interactions with the executives and even with the members. The programming organization cannot depend on merely sending letters to the partner groups executive because many times the letter might come when the recipient is preoccupied with other pressing issues and the letter might just be discarded somewhere. At other times, the one who is receiving the letter on behalf of the group may not be as interested in the issues as others and might not bring up the issue at either the executive or general meeting of the house. Thus, it is always necessary to pay follow up visits and sometimes to take the request directly to the general meeting of the house and deliver in the presence of everybody. Usually, when a letter is delivered that way and members realize that it is addressed to them, their curiosity is aroused and it is difficult to bury such requests under such circumstance. However, this affects the work place in the office because valuable time is spent following up what ordinarily should be taken for granted; but that is the nature of community work which any programming body should take into consideration.
- Fourth, the challenge of building trust in the partnership: this is usually a slow process in a society where there is so much fraud, hardly anyone believes that it is possible to conduct a program just for the sake of sharing knowledge. When CLP started and after conducting its first HIV/AIDS awareness session many were waiting for it to spring the catch particularly for it to request for its partners to come and buy something from it. There is always that initial suspicion when the partnership is initiated and building trust

takes time and a programming organization should always bear it in mind that it does not happen overnight. It will take the implementation of planned activities and sustained relationship before trust is fully established and until then, the relationship could be a little strained.

### **Lessons**

Apart from demonstrating the crucial role of the partner and the people in community level intervention and/or educational activities, the work with community groups yielded a number of other lessons some of which follows:

- It is necessary to get the commitment of the leadership of any group that one seeks to work with. Without the concurrence of the leadership it may not be possible at all to reach the members of the group or association.
- If while you need the leaders to get the commitment and approval of the group to make any headway, subsequently. Sometimes it is necessary to move beyond the leadership to give the decision making to the followership because it is possible to get the commitment of the leadership and still not have a successful programme. After reaching the followers the project initiators need to be sensitive to the internal workings of the group to determine the extent to which the leaders are carrying along the members. To move forward on occasions, it might be necessary to get the members to force a decision on the leadership. A good example is when CLP has written to a group or association with a request; sometimes the Secretary fails to present the letter to the whole house for a variety of possible reasons. The way out is for CLP to take letters to the meeting place when the association is meeting and then submit in the presence of the members. This way the members are curious to know the contents of the letter and are encouraged to make a commitment one way or the other irrespective of the feelings or views of the Secretary.
- Community people value information and knowledge greatly. After the first work with NATA the Project kept receiving requests for more activities for further enlightenment and to reach those members that were not present. They demonstrated their commitment by renting a more spacious venue which had electricity because they wanted to have the film shown. They also rented the required number of chairs and publicized the programme among their colleagues inviting more people in the process. Ultimately because of the people's desire for knowledge, it was possible time and again to hold more workshops than previously budgeted for because many of the related costs such as hiring of venues and public address system are taken care of directly by the partner groups themselves.

The level of community participation in CLP's activities over the years has demonstrated that the model of working with the grassroots and community groups and institutions as partner is a very effective one. The groups are not only involved in carrying out the programmes but also in the decision making process and this has endeared the whole process to the community people. HIV/AIDS provide an effective entry point into the community but with the active participation of the people, the agenda has been expanded considerably into the broad area of sexuality and reproductive health education and generally how to make the people live healthy lives. The increasing requests from community groups for expansion of CLP activities to them provided

concrete evidence that the community people have been faithful in spreading the message and generating awareness about the issues in question particularly HIV/AIDS and other diseases and health issues, in their neighborhoods and among their people.

## **Reaching Youths**

The overall aim of the youth-focused activities of CLP is to increase the access of young people to HIV/AIDS information and comprehensive sexuality education. Members of the CLP' Staff including the Project Director were part of the team that developed the National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Nigeria an adaptation of a similar programme in the United States of America the Sexuality information and Education Curriculum for the United States (SIECUS). In the course of developing the National Guidelines, it was agreed that the curriculum was adaptable and organizations implementing sexuality education programmes should adopt and adapt to suit cultural and other circumstances in which they are working. Also efforts were put in place to secure national approval for its implementation in Nigerian schools. Despite the formal approval granted by the National Council on, Education, for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education into the curriculum of Nigerian schools the practical implementation of that decision has been bogged down by various challenges. In the meantime while waiting for the national programme to fully take off. CLP decided to start working with youths at various levels including schools and non-formal institutions to introduce HIV/AIDS and sexuality education within the limits of its reach and capacity.

As noted in the earlier chapters. CLP`s work with various segments of the community had a way of linking with others. The door to our work with young people actually can be said to have been opened by our work with adults, this is because during the course of our first set of HIV/AIDS awareness work with community groups a consistent feature of the presentation by CLP facilitators was to mention that CLP`s work plan entered every segment of the society and that just as it was reaching adults. It also made provision for young people, Participants at the various programmes were encouraged to send their children particularly adolescents and teenagers to the fledgling CLP Youth Centre where they could obtain information that would not only save their lives but also equip them for an outstanding future. One of the outcomes of this approach to CLP`s work with adults was the regular visit to the Youth Centre by a student of Okota High School, Nnamdi Ezeofolam, who later invited the Project Staff to conduct an HIV/AIDS awareness programme for members of his Literary and Debating Society in the school, an invitation which CLP accepted and the consequence of which was the extensive work with the school lasting several weeks and the introduction of CLP to several students in adjoining schools. Thus, CLP`s work with youth could be said to have its roots directly in the first series of HIV/AIDS educational/awareness sessions conducted for adult people.

### **Expanding the school work**

The Okota High School experience led to a massive awareness of CLP work among in school youths in Isolo and adjoining communities where the several pupils in Okota school village were drawn. Not long after, CLP received invitation from another school, Holy Saviours College. The Principal of Holy Saviours had given a talk on HIV/AIDS to his students which prompted one of the students who had visited CLP information centre to approach him with a request to invite CLP. The Principal obliged and at the meeting, the experience of Okota High School was shared with him and it was agreed that the approach should be replicated in his school. The first phase was reaching teachers and the Vice-Principal with HIV/AIDS education. While the students had

their own phase when they resumed from the long vacation, the same exercises were carried out in other schools and all these raised awareness levels among students in the community and increased the pressure on CLP resources at its office.

The inability of CLP to cope with the demands on its space and resources at the Youth Centre consequent upon the invasion of the premises by students in uniform, usually after the close of school each day at 2.30 p.m. led the organization to intensify efforts at expanding its work with schools. The rationale was simple if students could get as much basic information as possible directly in their schools, the pressure on the Youth Centre for basic would drastically reduce. The Youth Centre could then concentrate on the provision of additional information and reinforcing what had been learnt in schools rather than starting all over each day with new set of students coming to the place. Thus, a major rationale for expanding the school work was the need to reach young people with HIV/AIDS and sexuality education and the schools, with their concentration of students were a good place to carry this out.

The school based programme comprises of two different components: the Pre-Adolescent Programme and the Sexuality Education in Secondary Schools, the Pre-Adolescent programme started as the outcome of a Elm show at the Jack n' Jill Nursery and Primary School Ilasamaja. CLP had been invited by the school management to show a film on HIV/AIDS to its Guests who were mostly adults) at the Schools 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary programme. After the programme, the School sent representatives to the symposium organized by the Project to mark the 1995 International women`s Day and it later decided that an HIV/AIDS awareness session be conducted for its pupils in Primaries five and six who were mostly between the ages of 9 and 13. The success of the awareness session encouraged CLP to work on developing a pre-adolescent sexuality education curriculum to prepare the pupils for at healthy and responsible lifestyle even as they approach their adolescent years and adult life.

Jack. N Jill Nursery and Primary School was joined by Ire-Akari Nursery and Primary School to serve as pilot schools for the implementation of the programme. To ensure the sustainability of the programme, CLP along with the schools management decided on the strategy of maximally involving the teachers. The teachers were trained by CLP and they in turn conduct classes for their pupils. In 1999, 21 teachers (9 from Jack n Jill and 12 from Ire-Akari Nursery and Primary School) were trained on the issues that were jointly articulated. At the end of the training, all partners developed a guide covering all the ten issues which the teachers were expected to teach, to help them implement the programme.

CLP staff continues to visit these schools to monitor the progress of implementation and periodic review meetings are held to assess the programme and suggest ways of sustaining it. CLP is presently trying to involve more-private and public Nursery and Primary schools in the process especially as the Federal Government has in principle approved the integration of comprehensive sexuality education into the school curriculum at every stage in primary and secondary schools in the country.

The second element of the school-based work is the HIV/AIDS and Sexuality Education programme in secondary schools. Towards expanding its school works at the secondary level.

CLP conducted sensitization and advocacy with all the principals of schools in the community on the importance HIV/AIDS and sexuality education. This was sequel to the formal approval given to the Project on 22<sup>nd</sup>, February 1994 by the state Ministry of Education to visit schools to educate teachers and students on HIV/AIDS. The outcome of this activity was the several invitations extended to CLP to come and conduct educational sessions in various schools. This also gave birth to the systematic CLP school-based programme. A pattern was soon established in the work with schools. The first stage was to establish contact with the school during which CLP meets with the Principal to introduce the Project and its activities and explore the possibility of partnership. Usually, a contact person is appointed by the school to work with CLP on the project and the Project would then hold a series of planning meetings with the contact person. This is followed by identification of issues of interest for the education sessions.

The primary issue is usually HIV/AIDS which is crucial to CLP work with young people, the largest single group of people affected by the disease. In some of the schools, the HIV/AIDS sessions are followed by sessions 'on adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues. With the identification of issues, the Project and the schools plan together the modalities for successfully carrying out the educational sessions including the appropriate time the venue mobilization of students and the provision of technical assistance such as generators, television and video sets, educational materials, etc. Prior to the conduct of the sessions, the Project-carries out reminder visits to firm up the arrangements and the sessions are then carried out on the agreed dates. The methodologies employed include talk or lectures, video/film show, discussions, role plays, exercises etc. After the sessions had been conducted follow up actions are taken by the Project in the form of in-house meeting to review the process that had just been concluded and the lessons from the experience are discussed with a view to replicating best practices and overcoming identified deficiencies. Today, CLP is working with over 30 schools in Isolo Oshodi and Mushin communities.

### **The CLP Youth Centre**

The success of the work with Okota High School provided the immediate backdrop to the formalization of the Youth Centre activities. As noted earlier news of what happened in the school soon spread to the sixteen schools adjoining it in the Okota School Village and soon enough the CLP Youth Centre began to be swarmed with students in various school uniform who throng to the Centre each day after closing from school. The population was such that regular activities at the CLP offices were affected and it became virtually impossible to move around. Several sessions of film shows and other documentaries were conducted for the students but then it was clear that' the facilities at the Youth Centre. Indeed, the Whole of the CLP premises, were not adequate to meet the needs of the young people. To regain normally in the office while satisfying the thirst of the young people for HIV/AIDS information, It was decided to streamline activities at the Youth Centre by restricting educational and awareness sessions for youths to three specific days of the week, and secondly by intensifying efforts at expanding the work being carried out in schools. Indeed it was clear that the only way to reduce pressure on the Youth Centre was to increase the access of the young people to the information they need directly in their schools. However one thing emerged clearly from all this- experience: the ability of the young people to network and spread messages that affect their lives quickly.

In order to meaningfully retain the attention of the young people thronging to the Centre and to address the various questions that they were raising, CLP decided to develop S curriculum for the educational sessions that would be taking place at the Youth Centre.

The sessions at the Youth Centre are open to all young people and not just to members of the CLP Youth Club which was soon to be established. Education sessions are carried out on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while drama rehearsals are held on Fridays. During the drama rehearsals, young people develop plays and songs around the different themes covered by CLP programming. Youth Club activities are conducted on Saturdays; these are restricted to the registered members.

### **The CLP Youth Club**

Although the educational sessions were restricted to three days of the week, some youths expressed interest in coming to the Centre on Saturdays to discuss other issues of concern and interact with each other, The concerned youths' were requested to obtain the consent of their parents before CLP could permit this, it was this group of young people that formed the nucleus of the CLP Youth Club, which has been central to CLP's activities targeting youths.

The principal aim of the Youth Club was to provide an avenue for its members to pursue their personal development through educative activities and working with CLP to help fulfill the Project's mission. The club is also meant to empower young people to become engaged in either HIV/AIDS prevention or in promoting adolescent reproductive health. Towards this end, CLP designed a series of educational and awareness activities which were developed around the key concepts in the National Guidelines for Sexuality Education in Nigeria. The aim was to produce in them the total woman and the total man.

The Youth Centre activities soon became popular with young people in the community and interest in the membership of the Youth Club expanded meteorically. The Project team was fully aware of the need to carry along parents even when implementing activities that would improve the lives of their children and would not want to take them for granted. Besides, CLP was careful not to permit possible truants to use the Youth Centre as an excuse for not being present at home. In view of this we designed at Parental Consent Form which parents and guardians were to fill and which contain information about the time the young people were expected to be at the Youth Centre. CLP also made clear that it would not take the young people outside of their base without the express consent of the parents.

However Project staff soon discovered that many of the young people were filling the forms themselves. To counter this, project staff undertook to visit the families of every Youth Club member or aspirant to ascertain the veracity of the claims in the Parental Consent forms being submitted to the office. This step enabled CLP to obtain proper consent from parents but at the same time it introduced the project staff to those parents that were not yet familiar with CLP and its activities, because they were being carried along in the process. Parents opened up to their children and this facilitated an enhancement of parent-child communication in several homes. In addition, many parents decided to visit the CLP offices directly to observe things for themselves. Many of these later became strong advocates for CLP programmes.

One key activity initiated by the Project in response to the activities of the Youth Club was the Holiday Programmes convened regularly around the themes of health and sexuality of young persons and their total development. The Holiday Programmes run regularly between June and September every year when students are expected to be on long vacation. Participants formally register for the programme and part of the requirement for admission to it is parental consent. The programme is run over fourteen modules each divided into sessions. Sessions are held daily during the period. Students register in batches which are conducted over the entire vacation period, the peak being the month of August.

Many parents helped to recruit new members for the Youth Club by informing their friends of the benefits of membership as experienced by their own children and encouraging their friends to send their children to the Club too. The CLP Youth Club really provides an avenue for total youth development while adding great value to CLP programming efforts. Apart from the regular educational and awareness sessions, the members of the club are trained in diverse skills including drama, songs, poetry and dance. They are also taught such other skills as computer literacy and tie-and-dye. Probably the greatest value the Youth Club has added to CLP programming is its contribution to projecting the goals and values of the organization through the involvement of its members in the activities of the drama group. The Youth Club has been at the nerve centre of the Theatre for Development initiative of the organization, we shall return to this in a later chapter.

### **Vocational Centre Activities**

CLP's outreach to vocational centres started about the same time as its Youth Club activities commenced. We found that through the school work, CLP could only reach a limited number of young people." Of the eight million new entrants into Nigerian secondary schools each year under the 6-3-3-4 educational system, only one million are graduating from senior secondary classes each year. The implication of this is that about seven million youths, on the average, are dropping out of the school system virtually annually. In addition, because of the limited number of spaces available in the Nigerian tertiary education system less than 40 percent of senior secondary school graduates are being absorbed into higher institutions. Taken together with the drop outs from the school system along the line, this is a large number by any standard and any programme targeted at youth that ignores them cannot be said to be achieving its goals.

However, for the purpose of its work with young people CLP realized that it does not have the capacity to reach the large mass of high school drop outs and those that have completed their senior secondary education and awaiting absorption into higher institutions, it therefore decided to concentrate on those carefully described as "out- of- school" youths that is, those young people who have finished their senior secondary education but are not yet in higher institutions and are not working. This category of youths are people who are getting more mature physiologically and are prone to all sorts of risk; behavior partly because of the large amount of time on their hands and the fact that they are not meaningfully engaged. Many of them both to while away the time and to prepare themselves for the entrance examinations into higher institutions attend JAMB/UME (University Matriculation Examination conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB) classes in various coaching centres. Others attend



schools running diploma in computer science programmes, various vocational centres' secretarial schools and others. CLP decided to organize intervention activities aimed at reaching the youths in these locations.

In the same way through which it reached other partners, CLP approached the proprietors' and principals of these institutions and centres to introduce the Project and its programmes and seek their approval to conduct HIV/AIDS awareness sessions for their students. Once approval was granted CLP carried out its activities deploying the same strategy adopted' for its work with other youths, i.e. design a curriculum developed around the key concepts in the National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Nigeria. These educational sessions were incorporated into the work schedule of the various vocational centres although they were facilitated by Project Staff.

The usual entry point for the activities with these Centres was HIV/AIDS education out then this was soon extended to cover other health and development issues which usually arose in the course of implementing the HIV/AIDS programme for groups. Among other issues that are covered are cultism, drug abuse and activities at enhancing the self esteem of the participants.

### **Youth Rally and Street Outreaches**

CLP also seeks to reach some category of out-of-school youths through the Youth Rally and Street Outreaches. Unfortunately unlike the in-school youths, out-of-school youths in general are not concentrated in one location where they can easily be reached. Some of them are apprentices in various trades and professions; some are bus conductors and even drivers of commercial vehicles, some are hawkers, some are commercial motorcyclists (famously known as Okada riders), and many others are simply touts and lay-about. In general, people in these categories are difficult to reach not least because they are very mobile and could hardly be followed through with' any programme that requires several sessions over many days. A lot of these young people are usually found in bus stops, motor parks, markets and similar places. Under the Youth Rally and Street Outreach programmes, HIV/AIDS and sexuality education programmes are carried out on the road, whereby CLP reaches youths in motor parks, playgrounds, bus stops and other places. The outreaches also cover adolescent reproductive health issues. The outreaches are carried out on days that have been marked out in the international calendar such as the Day of the African Child, the International Women`s Day, etc. Outreaches involving drama and song presentations, poetry recital and other enlightenment activities are carried out usually focusing on the theme that had been adopted for the day. CLP tries to carry out this activity at least two to three times a year.

### **Reaching Apprentices: the Out-of-School Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme**

One group of out-of-school youths that we have been able successfully to aggregate are the group of apprentices of the professional and trade groups that CLP works with on a consistent basis. Because of the stratified nature of the working environment, the apprentices are technically not members of the various professional groups including mechanics, vulcanizers, tailors, hairdressers; etc. that we work with. Thus, they are not allowed to participate in the education sessions and other intervention activities that we conduct with the various community groups. Besides, the various masters of these apprentices could hardly afford to permit them to

join in the education sessions meant for them because that would mean leaving their workshops locked up throughout the period,

Usually, it is the apprentices that hold forth in the workshops and this is the case many times when the masters are even present. However CLP managed to persuade the vocational and trade groups of the need to reach their apprentices with the same lifesaving information that they were receiving in the various sessions. That they were apprentices did not exclude them from the same pressures nor does it shield them from the same risks that their masters are learning how to avoid or overcome. CLP is thus able to work with apprentices through the Out-of- School Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme.

The apprentices from different Professions; hairdressers, mechanics, vulcanizers, tailors, etc. are brought together to a single location, usually the CLP office or a location in Mushin or Isolo. They go through a course of study over a period of a few weeks. This is done in batches so the absence of the apprentices does not cause friction either between them and their masters or between them and CLP management. They are taken through basic HIV/AIDS and Sexuality education sessions. They also receive supplementary educational materials and those who desire additional information are encouraged to visit the Youth Centre - just as is done with other partner groups.

### **Challenges of Youth Work**

The CLP work with youth at various levels has produced various challenges. Some of these include:

- Challenge of sustaining the information flow to the point of producing behavioral change: the focus of the youth work is not merely to conduct activities to engage the young people; rather the purpose is to give them information to enable them to adopt healthy behavior. School based programmes take place several months apart because it involves taking the attention of the students away from their primary work and school principals and teachers are unlikely to welcome too much intrusion into their pupils' works. By the time another round of activities are being conducted in a school the pupils (except those who have followed up by seeking more information at the Youth Centre or took up membership of the Youth Club) are most likely to have forgotten what they have learnt. In other instances. Some of the students might have moved on either by leaving the school upon graduation or transferred to other locations or simply dropped out. CLP's response to this challenge is to slow down on direct education activities in schools; instead; CLP now trains teachers and peer educators in the schools who can then take up the subject as often as convenient without involving CLP facilitators; The downside of this is that many times teachers are trained in a particular school but then they get transferred to a location that is far away outside the local government and community, while many peer educators also similarly move on. Thus, there is never any real guarantee of continuity.
- Another challenge thrown up particularly by the in-school work is that of securing a supportive environment for the I-HV/AIDS education work, to a large extent, whether or not CLP is welcome in a particular school is dependent on the personality and the whims of the principals. In instances where there were progressive principals (as in the case of

Okota High School), CLP was heartily welcome and even assisted with its work among the students by making teachers available who would plan with the organization, creating time 'on the timetable to permit interaction with students, etc, But in many other instances this was not so. The disposition of the principal also determines whether or not the school authorities would be committed to sustaining the programme upon the departure of CLP from the scene.

- Inability to reach all necessary locations: even within the Isolo and its adjoining communities, CLP is unable to organize programmes for all the schools as well as the several others multiple channels for reaching in-school and out of school youths. There are well over thirty secondary schools in the school village in addition to the several public and private ones that are located outside rite village. Except the schools develop their own capacity to run the programme for their students. it is hardly possible for one non-governmental organization to go to all these schools. Much can be achieved if an individual is exposed to the information that CLP seeks to pass across to youths consistently for the six years of secondary education. Under the present circumstances. This is only possible if the person had joined the CLP Youth Club and remained a member consistently throughout this period. However, not many young people have the opportunity and the opportunity to reinforce what is learnt in schools is not there for those who are outside the club.

### **Success Factors**

A number of factors facilitated CLP's work with young people. These include among others: The active support of parents which could be explained in part by the fact that many of the parents themselves are active participants in other CLP activities and partly by the convergence of interests between the values promoted by CLP and the aspiration- of parents for their children. CLP, for instance promotes good parent-child relationship, open communication between parents, self awareness and self esteem, goal setting, responsible behavior including respect for parents by teenagers. Obedience to parents and helping at home particularly with domestic chores, Parents were quick to notice more responsible and friendly disposition towards them from their children who were members of the club und this encouraged them to give full support to the Club, the young people themselves and to extend the support to other activities of CLP. Not only the young people but also the parents are clear about the values that CLP advocates and promotes through its various programmes. Both the parents and the young people involved are very clear about the values that CLP promotes so they know what they would be receiving when they choose to participate in CLP programmes.

The values that the programme promotes are crucial in another respect as they empower the individual to take control of their own lives. Every education session is prefaced by a session on self esteem during which the fundamentals of the programme are laid. Participants are encouraged to realize that they have the power within themselves to develop and that they are unique and should learn to value themselves. When the individual is sufficiently empowered and has high self esteem the tendency for him/her to value him/herself is higher than when the person just participates in an HIV/AIDS awareness session. The individual is encouraged to promote him/herself when he/she places a premium on his/her life, By promoting the complete

development of the individual CLP has been able to arrest the attention of the young people who not only keep coming back but also introduce their friends and colleagues to the Project.

- The methods of communicating the message to the young people facilitated the success of the work. For each educational session CLP facilitators adopt a participatory approach that gives the participants a sense of involvement which makes them to want to identify with the process. The use of True and False Exercises ignites the interest of the young people and this is followed by their favorite event the film show whenever the logistics permit this. Another component is the talk which focuses on the thematic issue for the day and this is followed by a discussion and question and answer session. To reinforce the learning for the day pamphlets and other educational materials are distributed which participants take home with them. In many instances, these educational materials serve to attract the interest of other youths who usually see them in the hands of their colleagues and many are usually encouraged to join and become part of the programme.
- CLP's respect for the young people is also a crucial factor in the success of the youth work. After giving them all the information they need to make informed choices, the youths are given the responsibility to decide what they want to do eventually with their lives. They cannot and they are not being forced to move in a particular direction and the sense that their lives are in their own hands and that the decision is ultimately theirs to make has encouraged them to see that CLP has no hidden agenda to make them conform to one particular way or the other.
- Similarly, the youths are encouraged to accept responsibility for their conduct of their activities. They are left to run the Youth Centre on their own and the fact that there has been no untoward incident is a confirmation that the trust has not been misplaced. However, entrusting them with responsibility and respecting them has enabled them to develop themselves and challenged them to commit themselves more. They realize that they have the capacity in themselves to do something good and they are thereby challenged not to abuse the trust in a way, this has also been beneficial to the organization because rather than engage permanent staff to run the Youth Centre at additional cost, the youths have done a good job of maintaining the place at no cost.
- The opportunity for young people to develop their talents has also facilitated the success of the youth work. Through their participation in youth centre activities particularly the drama and song presentations, many talents have been discovered and nurtured and. Indeed given the first breath of life through the avenues presented by the Youth Club. One of the talents discovered in the course of Youth Centre activities is the famous musician KC Fresh who recently won the Stars Talent Award and secured a recording contract worth over two million Naira. While participating in the Youth Club activities, he had indicated that he would like to become a musician and CLP gave him the opportunity to exhibit his talent by allowing him to rehearse at the Youth Centre and to perform at the organizations public functions particularly during international celebratory days such as the World AIDS Day when a lot of performances are put up. KC Fresh recently visited the CLP office to express his appreciation for the opportunity given him. By not killing the initiative of the young people with restrictive rules, CLP has enabled them to develop confidence in themselves and in the organization.

There is no doubt that the CLP youth work is making a great impact although it is certain that the impact would be greater if the environment were to be more conducive. The Project is touching lives in a quantifiable way as many people in the community do affirm that they owe what they are in life to their association with the organization. In a particular family, three brothers have passed through the Youth Club all of them getting elected to the executive at one time or the other. All have passed on to higher institutions and do come back occasionally to assist with the work of the Centre by facilitating education sessions. In recent years, between 80 and 90 percent of the sessions conducted during the holiday period are facilitated by the young people themselves mostly those who have passed through the programme and are now in higher institutions. Participation in the activities of the organization has boosted the confidence of many young people and helped to straighten out their lives. Many who would have gone round the bend recall how participation in CLP activities helped them to develop a new focus. More importantly, many of them are helping others to discover themselves and bringing them back to the path of sanity.

In terms of the future, there is a limit to what CLP can do without a supportive national environment. If the approved national curricula for HIV/AIDS Education were fully and faithfully implemented this would greatly reduce the need for organizations like CLP to engage in school work their intervention being limited to assist the government train the teachers for the work.

## **Partnering with faith-based institutions**

### **Seeing it differently: working with faith-based institutions**

A prevalent trend among NGOs involved in development work and social service delivery but particularly among those working on HIV/AIDS issues is the suspicion with faith-based institutions are held. Many NGOs give the impression that they consider faith based institutions particularly churches as barriers to the HIV/AIDS prevention work rather than potential collaborators. In particular the position of churches on such matters as sex outside marriage typically classified as adultery or fornication, and the position on artificial family planning, notably use of condoms are considered major obstacles to HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

From inception, CLP has always sought to tap every available resource in the community in order to advance the cause of development and social service delivery in that community. CLP was convinced that with their reach and resources. Faith-based institutions particularly churches, could make a significant impact if they could be convinced to intervene in an issue. CLP's location in Isolo necessarily brought it into contact with both Islamic organizations and the Catholic Church which are the dominant worship groups in the community. Most of the native Yoruba people in the community are Muslims while the greater proportion of the non-native people; mostly Igbo are members of the Roman Catholic Church. If the Catholic Church, For instance, should decide to print an educational pamphlet or circulate information on any issue, the information is bound to reach millions with relative ease.

In particular with regard to the Catholic Churches involvement in HIV/AIDS, it is on record that the first hospice opened in the country for children living with HIV/AIDS and the only one so far in Lagos State is owned by the Catholic Church, The hospice is located in Ajegunle where clinics' are also run for HIV/AIDS patients particularly those from the low income groups. However, it is not just the Catholic Church that has a thriving HIV/AIDS programme; the Redeemed Christian Church of God has a well funded HIV/AIDS education and intervention programme. Even at that early stage of its work in the area, CLP was convinced that what faith-based institutions really needed was information and motivation and it was clear that once they decide to intervene in a particular issue, they are able to make remarkable impact and are more able to sustain such programmes than most non-governmental organizations. The churches in particular have the resources, they have the reach that most non-governmental organizations don't and more importantly, they have the moral authority to back up whatever positions they take Thus, it is always good to have the faith-based institutions on the side of popular development and social service delivery activities such as most non-governmental organizations engage in.

### **Origins of CLP work with Faith-Based Institutions**

CLP's work with faith-based communities has its root in the pioneering work did with the women's Fellowship of Power Pentecostal Church. Okota facilitated by Mrs. Jane Anwo the Biology teacher at Okota High School. It will be recalled that Mrs., Anwo had worked with CLP to coordinate the educational sessions held for students of Okota High School which had

involved the training of teachers and peer educators and the conduct of HIV/AIDS awareness sessions for students of the school on a class-by-class basis.

Mrs. Anwo happened to have been an active member of the Women Fellowship at Power Pentecostal Church and it was not long after the work at Okota High School that CLP received an invitation to give an HIV/AIDS education talk to the women's Fellowship at her Church. The initial talk to the Women's Fellowship was followed by invitations to address various other segments of the church particularly youth groups and house fellowships, which was a confirmation that the original talk had impacted greatly on the audience and they were spreading the message. In any case the overlapping nature of the membership of church associations had ensured that members of the Women's Fellowship were easily able to reach other groups in the church with the outcome of their education session. In the weeks and months to come, CLP started receiving invitations from other churches and groups and it was only a matter of time before the pattern of the Project's work with faith-based institutions and communities became formally established. As for Mrs. Jane Anwo, she subsequently joined the group of volunteers working for CLP in the community and she has remained a volunteer since then.

At the planning stages; churches and other faith-based institutions were already identified as potential channels for reaching the community with lifesaving information on HIV/AIDS and as potential partners for long term sustainable CLP Work in the community. Faith-based institutions have a very wide reach and they command a great influence on their members. In this particular case, CLP decided to partner with them so that they can help to break the silence on HIV/AIDS in the community, particularly faith-based communities. The goal was to get church leaders and other leaders of religious communities to talk and agree that the HIV/AIDS problem is real rather than persist in the illusion that it is a sinner's disease that is far away from the church. If the leaders could begin to talk openly about the disease it would be easier for their members who are eager for information to seek such information from legitimate channels. Churches and faith-based communities generally also represent a powerful vehicle for attacking fatalism and stigmatization. If church and other religious leaders advocate forcefully or even just openly for the HIV/AIDS community and come out openly against stigmatization a giant stride would have been taken in tackling the problem. Thus, the challenge was to secure the support of faith-based institutions and communities for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights of people and human development in general.

The evolution of CLP's work with faith-based institutions and communities followed a slightly different pattern from its work with community associations. While building a partnership with community associations required the commitment of not only the executive officers but also of the general members the situation is different with faith-based institutions. The consent or commitment of members of the congregation is not enough to guarantee the development of a partnership it is important to secure the consent and full commitment of the leadership. Usually, when CLP was invited by a church society or organization, the church leader would demand to meet with the Project staff before giving their consent to the work. A CLP staff would introduce the Project to the church leader and in every circumstance. CLP was granted permission to work in the church and conduct the educational session. And in most instances participants usually requested that the educational session be extended to the rest of the congregation.

### **Advocacy Meeting with Religious Leaders**

However, building a sustained work with faith-based communities could not continue this way. It was clear that CLP could not wait for leaders of other churches and religious groups and associations to hear about what was happening and then extend an invitation to it to come and do an educational session for them or be extending invitation to cover the whole church after a group in the church had been reached. It, therefore, opted for a proactive approach by electing to conduct a sensitization session for religious leaders to facilitate bringing HIV/AIDS issues into the forefront of discourses in the community. After almost six years of working with individual faith communities on an invitational basis.

CLP conducted an advocacy meeting in October 2000, to engage religious leaders in a more systematic and sustained manner in matters pertaining to HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Many of the religious leaders that were invited already knew about CLP and its work with groups within their churches. However, apart from the leaders of churches with which CLP had worked before the Project also invited the leaders of other churches within the community. Eventually, the programme was attended by fifteen religious leaders from eleven churches and nine denominations. These represented orthodox Pentecostal and spiritual churches including the Anglican Church, two Catholic Churches, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Assemblies of God and the Celestial Church of Christ, a famous white garment church which has widespread following in the community and a very large congregation. The goal of the advocacy meeting which had as its theme "The Role of Religious Leaders in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control" was to secure the support of religious leaders in breaking the silence on HIV/AIDS and attack the denial and stigmatization of people infected with the disease. The advocacy session involved a presentation, film show, group work and the making of commitments by participants on steps they would take at the end of the programme to move the situation forward. Without doubt the session served to engage the religious leaders and each leader made a specific commitment to the activities they will undertake in their respective churches. The commitments included the mainstreaming HIV/AIDS prevention into their sermons, holding vigils for the healing of AIDS infected patients and organizing HIV/AIDS educational awareness sessions. An Action Planning Guide was utilized to guide the commitments of these religious leaders to action and the meeting agreed to hold the Religious Leaders on HIV/AIDS forum every six months.

The advocacy and sensitization of religious leaders on bringing HIV/AIDS issues into the forefront had a good impact as many of the leaders proceeded to deliver on the commitments they made during the programme. It soon became a common thing for church leaders to address HIV/AIDS issues directly on the pulpit either with their own speeches or reading articles on the subject to their congregation. At St. Mary's Catholic Church, it became a tradition that the priest gives a message on HIV/AIDS on World AIDS Day every year. In addition, CLP continued to receive invitations to churches to conduct educational sessions for congregations. Indeed on many occasions the Project Director, Mrs. Iwere was asked to feature during regular worship service and to give a talk on HIV/AIDS in place of the regular sermon for the day and directly from the pulpit.

CLP continued to reach more and more people through these activities; indeed, between 1994 and 2002 the Project had organized 66 educational sessions in 17 churches involving 9,391



participants of the 66 sessions. 32 were directly on HIV/AIDS and involved 5,376 participants. The method for reaching the people varied from church to church but typically each session ran for two hours and involved a talk or lecture, a film show and a discussion session. In some instances, logistics problems made the film show impossible so the sessions were limited to the talk and discussion which usually involved a question and answer session. In some churches only groups were reached such as youth or women's fellowships, while in others whole congregations were addressed. However, whether the programme targeted only a segment or the whole church, each session also featured the distribution of educational materials which usually reached beyond those who obtained the copies initially and always ended up introducing CLP to another group.

### **Comprehensive Sexuality Education in faith Communities**

In 1999, CLP conducted educational sessions with the Catholic Youth Organization of St Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Oke-Afa, Isolo. The sessions generated further interest on the part of participants and a demand for a series of talks on sexuality and life skills issues. Following the demands, CLP held a meeting with the parish priest, Rev. Fr. Jan Pelczarski, at which a curriculum was adopted. The curriculum was adapted from the *National Guidelines on Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. The key issues that were selected were Family Planning, Abortion and Sexual Behavior. Under the Family Planning, the course tackled all methods of family planning including how they work, their effectiveness, advantages and disadvantages. The curriculum included the church's position on artificial contraception and this was fully taught. It also included a promotion of natural family planning methods while discouraging abortion and premarital sex. This was in line with CLP's position on respect for their core values of partner groups and institutions, an approach that has facilitated the success of CLP's work not only with faith communities but generally with all its partners. Hence, CLP has been able to work with all denominations and to invite their leaders to joint planning and review meetings without provoking tension or conflict.

The sexuality education curriculum implemented for the CYON of St Peter and Paul Oke Afa, addressed such issues as family relationships, personal development and sexual and reproductive health, the educational sessions became institutionalized into the church programme as they were held every third Sunday of the month. While the programme was initiated by the youth organization the benefits were shared by virtually all the parishioners including parents, youth and children as they all turn out in large numbers for the sessions. The Church Council subsequently adopted the programme as an official church activity and all church society meetings were cancelled on the days for which the educational sessions were scheduled to facilitate participation by parishioners. The project was implemented over a two-year period.

This experience was proof of the collaboration that was possible between faith-based communities and organizations implementing comprehensive sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes. The news of what was happening at SS Peter and Paul Catholic Church Oke Alfa, soon spread to other churches especially as the parishioners started sharing their experiences with believers from other congregations. The experiences of the church were shared at the Religious Leaders Forum held in June 2001. Following which the Parish Priest

of Regina Mundi Catholic Church, Monsignor Okodua requested that a similar programme be carried out for his parish and other leaders present made similar requests. It was this prompted the decision that CLP should train sexuality educators from the churches to implement the comprehensive sexuality education programme in the various churches. After setting the criteria, the churches themselves would select the candidates for the training. Towards this end the Project trained 32 sexuality educators from nine churches and six denominations during the last quarter of 2001. The majority of these educators are already implementing these programmes in their churches and many of them are adopting innovative methods including drama and other presentations to pass the message across to their audiences.

CLP's work with faith-based communities was not limited to churches even though the work has not been at the same scale, the Project has worked with mosques and Muslim communities. An advocacy similar to that which was conducted for church leaders was conducted for Muslim leaders in 2001. Muslim leaders were reached with HIV/AIDS information and urged to intervene to break the silence that surrounds the issue in many areas and the stigma with which people living with AIDS are treated. Following the holding of the advocacy session for Muslim leaders, CLP conducted HIV/AIDS education sessions in about four mosques in the community. In addition, CLP trained sexuality educators from Muslim groups. The participants who were mostly teachers were nominated by their various communities for the two-day sexuality education workshop. During the training, they were introduced to the concept of sexuality education and the Project staff and trainers explored with them the modalities for carrying out sexuality education session in mosques.

### **Success factors**

- Crucial to the successful implementation of work with faith-based institutions is CLP's respect for the core values of these organizations. Rather than condemn the teachings of these organizations that were considered unfavorable or unhelpful to the HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts, CLP preferred to work with those values that are acceptable to them and adopt those values that they promote while encouraging them to permit access to those ones they oppose so that their people can make informed choices.
- CLP's emphasis on the need for faith-based communities not only to care for and protect the souls of their congregations and members but also their bodies, CLP seeks to make the programme fit into the mission of the faith-based institutions. It would be worthless if the religious groups concentrate on feeding the souls of their members while ignoring their physical wellbeing and if the people are dying in the process due to either ignorance or false teaching. Thus, CLP was able to successfully present the work with faith-based communities as an effective complement to the mission of these communities to promote the welfare of their members, and ensuring that they have healthy and spiritually balanced individuals, CLP's messages were helping the members to prevent diseases that could cut short their lives; CLP holds that it's not enough to say that members should not fornicate but they should be made aware of the possible consequences of fornication not just in terms of sinning against God and possibly going to hell but also that life could be endangered and early physical death could result.
- The positive response of parishioners to the programme made the leaders of the faith communities realize that they were being relevant to the lives of their members through

active support for and promotion of the HIV/AIDS education programme. When members of the congregation began to come out and inform their priests of their positive status and share their burden with them the priests realized that the programmes were touching lives directly and deserve support.

- The programmes also gave their faith community leaders a sense of empowerment realising that they were connecting to the real needs of the people.
- The realization that CLP was authentic and had no hidden agenda was very helpful to the success of the programme. The sensitization programmes brought together different denominations with some shared and many conflicting positions, CLP never attempted to aggregate their doctrinal differences; rather, the Project focused on the theme of the advocacy programmes and subsequent meetings. Once the groups realized that CLP was genuinely interested in giving lifesaving information and not after any proselytizing work, they readily came along. The various faith communities were allowed to develop their own curriculum within the context of their values and preferences. No syllabus was imposed on any group that could suggest interference with their belief systems; all CLP did was to work within the laid down parameters in each organization.
- Fitting of educational sessions and other intervention activities within the existing framework of the partner faith communities was quite useful. CLP did not create new channels of communication or intervention designed especially for the purpose; rather, it worked within existing structures and channels to reach the people.

The churches did not have to bear additional burden of scheduling the activities or any encroachment on their time. CLP was prepared to work with individual churches on their own terms. For some, CLP had to conduct its programme during the 8 am mass; for some it was at the 5 pm mass; yet for others it was immediately after service in the afternoon. By working with existing structures and time preferences of the partners, the churches were able to virtually guarantee maximum attendance at the programmes. This flows from the same principle that was adopted in dealing with community groups: not creating new or parallel channels but working with existing ones and fitting into their regular schedules.

### **Other lessons of work with Faith-Based Institutions**

CLP's experience in its partnership with faith-based institutions was a clear testimony to its foresightedness in seeing these institutions as worthy partners rather than obstacles in social service delivery matters not least in the area of HIV/AIDS education and prevention activities.

The lessons from the experience are instructive:

- For a successful partnership, it is important to transfer the ownership of the programme. Faith-based institutions are positioned in such a way that granting them programme. Furthermore yielding ownership to the faith-based partner virtually guarantees that the cost of programming would be borne by the partner. For example, each time CLP had to conduct training programmes for the Catholic Church, all the cost that it had to bear is that of transporting its staff to the venue, the cost of participants is borne fully by the church including the cost of hiring venues and whatever equipment was required. Once the church buys into the programmes and deploys its resources into it sustainability is assured. However, the NGO must be ready to yield ownership totally and function as technical advisors.

- It is better to partner with faith-based institutions creatively engage them while working through their reservations with understanding. Ultimately, faith-based institutions are partners rather than barriers for promoting good health.
- Respect for the values espoused by the particular institution is important. When CLP started working with Muslim groups, it had no Moslem on its staff. But realizing the need to reach people through acceptable channels. The project recruited a practicing. Muslim on its staff and his presence has been instrumental to reaching Muslim groups. When conducting programmes for Muslim groups, CLP staffers ensure that they respect all aspect of Islamic values particularly with regard to dressing and conduct in worship places. Once the partner recognizes that the programming organization gives the necessary respect, it`s always easy for them to come along. Overall, despite the success of its work with faith communities, CLP still believes that more could have been achieved and that the potential reach of faith communities much more than has been exploited so far. The challenge is to deepen the relationship with a view to achieving a greater result.

## **Reaching Commercial Sex Workers**

### **Why work with CSWs**

Commercial sex workers (CSWs) fall into the category of people that are outside the mainstream communication channels that and who needed to be reached with the HIV/AIDS message that is so crucial to CLP programming efforts. The importance of reaching this group becomes more glaring when one considers their high risk lifestyle and the ignorance and outright misinformation about their sexual health in which they live.

Indeed, commercial sex workers and their living abodes, the brothels were among the groups and avenues identified for dissemination of information on HIV/AIDS at the time CLP was taking off in 1992. However, it was not until 1994 that work started with the group. The Work with CSWs was one in which CLP did not benefit from the referencing system that had Worked so well with other groups; yet CLP felt awkward introducing itself and its mission to CSWs.

The opportunity to commence work with CSW Came when CLP was represented a workshop conducted for CSWS in Badagry in 1994. There CLP met with sex workers who had been reached by other NGOs and seized the opportunity to invite them to share their experience with their counterparts in Isolo as a way of motivating them and allaying whatever fears they might have about going into a partnership, The Project identified Oyila Hotel at Ilasamaja for its first intervention initiative. Oyila was the most popular accessible brothel which commanded high patronage at the time and had many sex workers. The presence of a former CSW on its own staff also facilitated the outreach to CSWs in the brothel. After meetings with the manager, the proprietor and the chairlady of the sex workers and having obtained some baseline information including the number of sex workers and the type of services offered in the hotel CLP was able to organize its first education session with the group. More than with any other group, CLP allowed an extensive question and answer period at the end of the educational session. Educational materials including stickers, t-shirts, posters and handbills were distributed to the participants at the end of the exercise.

The successful work with the CSWs at Oyila Hotel provided the opportunity to reach other sex workers in other brothels in the community. During follow up meetings the CSWs requested CLP to replicate the IEC activity in other brothels in the area before engaging in reinforcement activities at Oyila. This was because they had started losing clients to CSWs in other brothels as a result of their insistence on the use of condoms. Thus, CLP targeted four other brothels namely:

- Endurance international Hotel. Ilasamaja
- Gbolinton Hotel, Ilasamaja
- Mayo Hotel. Ilasamaja and
- Oludare Hotel. Ilasamaja

IEC activities similar to those carried out at Oyila were implemented in all these hotels reaching hundreds of CSWs, the managers and barmen and some of their clients.

However, not long after, Oyila and Mayo Hotels closed down. The Project identified two new hotels. Temiadara and Success Hotels, while Temiadara agreed to work with the Project. Success

Hotel declined; thus. CLP has continued to work consistently with four hotels in reaching commercial sex workers in the community. The partnership has continued for over ten years.

The goal of CLP's work with commercial sex workers is to empower this group of people with the knowledge and skills needed for healthy living in their trade and eventually to effect positive transformation of their lives. The objectives include increasing the sensitization of CSW's to the risks of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and encourage consistent use of condom.

### **The Peer Health Education (PHE) workshop 24- 26 March, 1998**

After the initial education activities with the sex workers in the different brothels, CLP decided to conduct a more intensive work with them with a view to equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to reach their own colleagues. Thus, it decided to conduct a training of trainers' workshop, the Peer Health Education (PHE) workshop, in which 20 CSWs were to be trained as peer educators who will in turn reach their colleagues to encourage them to adopt safe sex practices. Five CSWs were selected from each of the four brothels with which CLP was working. The choice of participants was based on the following criteria:

- Residency in the hotel with knowledge of the manager/director/proprietor as appropriate
- Respect by the peers
- Demonstrated interest in educating peers
- Willingness to learn
- Ability to organize programmes/ leadership quality
- Ability to teach others
- Average command of English, pidgin or the local language

As the objectives of the PHE workshop it was expected that at the end of the training the participants would be able to:

- Describe the different types of sexually transmitted diseases-
- Discuss the relationship between STDs and HIV/AIDS
- Demonstrate proper use of condoms
- Name at least five safer sex methods
- Describe how to spread information on HIV/AIDS STDs
- Identify institutions for STD treatment and HIV screening and counseling, and
- Identify and begin the process of establishing a mechanism for condom supply sustainability.

Apart from talks on HIV/AIDS and STDs. the curriculum for the training included:

- Male and female reproductive systems
- Sexual practices and their hazards
- How to prevent STDs and HIV/AIDS among CSWs
- How to use condoms (practical demonstration and discussion)

➤ Negotiating safer sex (including role play)

The participants also discussed the issue of constant police harassment as well as action plans for replicating what they have learnt in their respective brothels. In preparation for the workshop, CLP prepared a Peer Education Training Module which it shared with the participants. The topics in the module included the curriculum for the training but also the following:

- What to do if you are HIV positive
- Healthy living for HIV positive people
- Spreading information on HIV/AIDS and STDs'
- Sources of information and counseling
- Goal setting, and
- Self esteem

The PHE workshop was followed by mini-workshops in the various hotels from which the participants were drawn. The mini-workshops were held between 24<sup>th</sup> April and 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1995. The mini-workshops covered all the topics mentioned above in the discussions at their various locations. A total of 85 CSWS, 11 barmen/managers and five clients were reached during the mini-workshops. Apart from providing the CSW`s with vital information and building their confidence on how to practice safer sex and healthy living, the workshops enabled the CSWs to develop trust in the Project and the partnership. It became clear that CLP had no ulterior motive in reaching out to them but rather had a genuine interest in their welfare and healthy living.

### **Securing Access to Condoms**

If the work with CSWS were to have meaning, the adoption of safer sex practice, particularly the use of condoms, is crucial. However, it was not enough for the CSW`s to know how to use condoms; they needed to have steady access to it at little (affordable) or no cost if they were to be encouraged to use them consistently and faithfully. The CSWs themselves had raised this issue in the course of various educational sessions as well as during the PHE workshop noting that it would motivate them into safer sex practice

In response CLP reached out to Population Service International (PSI), an organization that was concerned with widespread distribution of condoms in the community. Indeed, PSI had until just shortly before then been distributing condoms free to commercial sex workers but had to stop because of spiraling production and distribution costs. CLP reached PSI through one Mr. Wale Adedeji who was already familiar with its work with CSWs. CLP explored with the organization” the possibility of obtaining free condoms for demonstration purposes during IEC activities, and to give a talk on the problems of condom use. PSI was impressed with the progress of CLP work with CSWS in the short period since it started but while it was agreeable

to giving free condoms for demonstration purpose, it could only give a few free boxes of condoms on one-off basis because the organization had stopped giving free condoms.

During education sessions, the PSI representative discussed the possible problems associated with condom use and the poor quality of some of the condoms available in the market. He discouraged the use of oil based lubricants which would cause the condom to burst and recommended water based lubricants if they must be used at all. However, while oil based lubricants like Vaseline, olive oil, or paraffin are easily available, water-based lubricants like K-Y jelly are difficult to procure. He also discussed the storage and handling of condoms such that they are not damaged. While CLP could not procure free condoms for the CSWS through PSI, it was able to guarantee them a good and steady source of supply of high quality condoms for some time. PSI agreed to use motorcycle outriders to distribute condoms to sex workers in the hotels with which CLP was working CLP provided the list of the hotels with their addresses to facilitate PSI's movement to those locations. Unfortunately, the arrangement could only work for a ten weeks as PSI could not sustain the arrangement due to logistics problems.

### **Follow up and review**

CLP continued to conduct follow up activities after the 'mini-workshops because it could not assume that the peer educators were carrying out expected duties faithfully. In the course of following up, CLP discovered that some of the trained peer educators had moved on while a number of sex workers that had been reached in a particular location had moved to new places. At the same time, a number of new sex workers had moved to these hotels.

The peer educators and sex workers remaining had requested CLP to conduct new educational sessions for the sake of new people, particularly for them to know the importance of consistent use of condoms. The Project thus decided to be conducting HEC activities twice a year in each of the four hotels to ensure consistent access to HIV/AIDS and STIs information by the sex workers.

The follow up activities also included reinforcing of message with additional health talk. Part of the message of the additional health talk includes advice to the sex workers to avoid working if they have infections or sores. They were advised to treat their infections before returning to work and should not engage in sell medication because while infections may appear to have similar presentation, they do not have the same root source. While some are bacterial, others are fungal and the treatment is not the same. They were thus advised not to use past experience to treat new infections, indeed the sex workers confirmed during evaluation sessions that after starting work with CLP they stopped coming down with sexually transmitted diseases as often as they used to prior to that time. Another element of the follow up work was the introduction of referral system whereby CLP was referring those of the sex workers who contract sexually transmitted infections to the infectious Diseases Hospital, Yaba. The reference letter from CLP encouraged the CSWS to go for treatment knowing that they would not be stigmatized at the health facility



and they were encouraged to complete their course of treatment for infections. The arrangements ensured that relationship with hotels and their CSWS was not a one-off thing.

### **Towards rehabilitation**

One of the issues that came up in the Projects work with the CSWs particularly during the mini-workshops was the desire of some of them to leave the trade for a more dignifying and fulfilling vocation. They expressed their difficulties in seeking to leave the trade particularly in relation to a take-off grant that would enable them to meet their immediate needs before their' new vocations could begin to settle their bills. They also expressed apprehensions about reintegration into normal life and society and fear of stigmatization.

CLP explored the issues involved with CSWs in the four hotels with which it had continuing relations during TEC activities and decided to hold a one day workshop to discuss the issues further. However, as the planning progressed and the issues to be discussed became concrete, the programme was planned for two days and the workshop was held on 25 and 26 August 1999. CLP invited CSWs who had shown interest in leaving the trade and those contemplating to attend the workshop which was held at CLP offices in Isolo. The programme was attended by 12 CSWS from Temiadara Hotel and two from Endurance Hotel. The programme consisted of lectures and practical exercises and among the issues explored were self awareness, self esteem, and goal setting starting a new trade. The programme sought to help them understand the implications of the decision they were about to take. After the workshop was concluded the CSW's were asked to go back home and reflect deeply on the issues they have explored during the two days and make up their minds on what they would like to do upon disengaging from commercial sex work. They were given- notebooks in which to write down the step-by- step ways and means of achieving their set plans and goals.

A follow up meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1999, with ten CSW's from Temiadara Hotel; nobody turned up from Endurance Hotels. The meeting reflected on the issues discussed at the August 1999 workshop. The participants assessed the impact of the training received in the areas of self awareness, self esteem and goal-setting on the lifestyle of the CSW's und how far they have internalized the information. The meeting discussed the goals written down by the participants the feasibility of those goals and how to achieve them. There were discussions of the financial feasibility of the goals put down by individual participants and the implications of the capital they had in hand (or their lack of capital. The discussion also explored what sources the funds for the proposed activity would come from; what sacrifices they were ready to make and the skills they currently possess and how these could be effective deployed towards fulfilling their dream of leaving the commercial sex trade it became clear at the end of the meeting that the CSW's had not fully thought through their decisions and the issues they were asked to reflect upon and so they were encouraged to go back to do their homework properly.

The CSW's agreed that it was difficult for them to save money sufficiently to enable them to achieve their goals and one in particular requested that the Project should help them to open savings accounts. To further encourage them in this decision the Project promised to contribute five hundred Naira to each new account opened as its own contribution. Almost immediately, four of them started saving towards opening an account.

Another follow up meeting was held about four months later. On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2000; this meeting had six CSW's all from Temiadara Hotel. In attendance by this time, it was clear that some had lost interest because all they were expecting were financial support from the Project and this was not forthcoming. For those who came, none had written anything reasonable or achievable with regard to their goals and plans for leaving commercial sex work. The Project assisted them again and a practical plan was written for one of them in order to give all of them a clearer understanding of what was expected of them and how to come up with their own. The four CSWs who had started contributing towards opening an account were encouraged to continue while those who were not saving were encouraged to start. They were informed that they had to work towards their rehabilitation especially because the Project did not have any money to give them as take off grants for a particular business or trade although it could solicit support for them from people or other organizations. They were also encouraged to identify particular skills which they could acquire and they expressed interest in "Tie and Dye" and baking and CLP promised to assist with the skills acquisition.

CLP agreed to help those who were making contributions towards opening an account to open the account and the Project paid for the passport photographs requested by the Bank. Accounts were soon opened for three of those contributing. CLP decided to start a vocational skills centre for CSWs and it bought a sewing machine and other materials needed for the "Tie and Dye" work for the Centre. Fourteen CSWS started the "Tie and Dye" skills acquisition training in August 2000 but only a few were consistent. The situation got worse as the trainers came several times without meeting anybody to train. Eventually the trainers stopped coming. It was obvious that the sex workers were more interested in, financial grants rather than skills acquisition. However, CLP continued to mobilize for their rehabilitation and towards this an advocacy workshop was organized with some religious leaders working with the Project. The Project Director informed the religious leaders about the CSWs who were willing to leave the trade but had financial difficulties which were doing hindering them. One of those present, the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Mushin Rev. S.O.S. Sodipe, was touched by their plight and donated some money through CLP towards the rehabilitation of the sex workers.

Ultimately the decision to leave the trade or continue belonged to the sex worker herself. But the society needs to understand the challenges confronting these sex Workers desiring of leaving the trade. Some sex workers just wanted their rent paid when they leave the trade so that they can leave the hotels and start new lives all over; although some only wanted to shift base to start

using the new homes for the same trade. But the society should not use this as excuse to ignore the sex Workers altogether. Some have stalled at the point of decision-making; however, the serious ones have been resettled. As at the end of 2005, two CSWS had completely left the trade and were fully rehabilitated. With assistance from the Project one of them paid for a one-room apartment and a shop and is already operating a hairdressing salon while the other is running a foodstuff shop in Benin- City, Edo State. Two others were in the process of being rehabilitated.

### **Challenges**

As is clear from the above, the work with CSWs has been replete with challenges. These include:

- Manifest lack of interest on the part of many CSWs in educational programmes: many times, upon learning of planned educational activity, some of the CSWS would react as if the Project had come to disturb them and that what they do is nobody's business. Yet, prevention and control of HIV/AIDS requires continued and sustained work with the CSW's who are more prone to being infected and spreading the infection if they persist in unprotected sex with their clients. Any future attempt at replicating this aspect of CLP's work must bear this potential source of frustration in mind.
- CSW's are fairly highly mobile; many are constantly on the move and new ones continue to join the trade. The implication of this is that work with them has to be continuous and consistent as there is need to reach new ones as they join in order to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs among them.
- There are too many brothels harboring the CSWs and it is virtually impossible to reach all of them with HIV/AIDS information. However, every un-reached CSW is a potential source of continuous spread of the dreaded disease.
- Many CSWs showed lack of interest in the educational sessions because of fear of losing customers and money while the sessions lasted. To compensate those who make themselves available. CLP always found it necessary to give them money which, if persistent could not be sustainable.
- The rehabilitation programme has not been encouraging due to financial constraints. The society is quicker to condemn prostitution and unwilling to dip their hands into their pockets to facilitate their rehabilitation and salvage the lives of these people. Although not all the fourteen CSWS that started the programme has followed through those who did and have entered into new trade and professions have become role models for their peers. This has motivated some others who are pleading vigorously for the Project to assist them financially to go into other trades. However, the Project faces the problem of raising funds for them from other sources. Raising funds to facilitate the transition of erstwhile commercial sex workers to new lives remains a major challenge confronting this element of CLP's work.

### **Achievements**

Despite the challenges working with CSWs has yielded some achievements.

- Reduction in rate of infections being reported among the CSWs after they entered into partnership with CLP; with increasing awareness of the value of condoms, STIS were experienced less and less in hotels and that reduced the amount of work that CLP had to do.

- Hundreds of CSWs were reached with HIV/AIDS and STIS information in direct educational sessions and workshops; in addition twenty were trained as peer health educators thereby enhancing their capacity to reach themselves with information on their health.
- Realization of the importance of use of condoms by the CSWs; this realization became glaring when they requested for female condoms in response to the reluctance or outright refusal of some clients to use condoms.

CLP has been working with CSWs in the community for over twelve years and it has succeeded in establishing rapport with the brothel management and the sex workers themselves. The sustainability of the programme is fairly guaranteed; this is especially as the CSWS themselves are assisting the Project to reach out to other hotels and sex workers elsewhere. Already, many of the sex workers have been equipped with the necessary information to assist them in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and they have been trained in how to reach others with this information. The greatest challenge to the work is funding assistance for rehabilitating those who have expressed interest in leaving the trade. If this could be adequately tackled, so much would have been achieved because it will greatly reduce the work that programming organizations like CLP have to do in this regard.

## **Building Families**

Families are the nucleus of every society and by consensus when families are happy and united; it promotes the general harmony of the larger society. One major accomplishment of CLP's activities over the years has been its; contribution to the promotion of solid families in the community. This element of the programme, like many others, was never really pre-planned in the sense of having in one master drawing board that at some stage we would be working with families. CLP's contribution to building families has been at two levels; first, its Couple's work and secondly, its pre-marriage course for intending couples and post marriage course for couples that have been married for some time.

### **WORKING WITH COUPLES: THE LOVE FEAST**

#### **The background**

The genesis of CLP's work with couples could be traced to its HIV/AIDS work with men and women's groups. Usually, every education session incorporates a feedback and question and answer session during which participants express their views and what steps they intend to take to actualize the lessons they had learnt during the programme; One thing that emerged clearly was the lack of control by women over their sexual and reproductive health. In the various sessions with male groups, it was observed that men, after assessing their personal risks were able to take immediate decisions on what step to take. It was common to see the men tap themselves on the shoulders and saying. "My brother, it's enough o; I have to take precautions;" "Ah you better watch out with the way you are going;" "From now. it's just me and' my wife;" "unh no more: it's over from today;" or "I am going to reduce my partners." The men did not shy from admitting their promiscuous tendencies and infidelity in marriage: indeed, many were wearing it to conduct a preliminary survey, in the course of conducting the preliminary survey; CLP confronted all of its partners with the apparent resignation of women and their perceived helplessness to utilize the information at their disposal and take action even when the know what is required. Our standard question is this: "We have observed that women feel helpless and resigned and unable to use the information acquired here to protect them; this is unfair. Why is this so and what can we do about it?" We found that men were generally touched and moved when they hear about the vulnerability of women and were eager to do something and in certain "instances, there was evidence of guilt feeling on the part of the men; The preliminary survey revealed that economic factors had little to do with the inability of women to have control over decisions relating to their sexual and reproductive health because most of the women that were interviewed were actually breadwinners themselves and they were not really dependent on their husbands for their income or daily living indeed, some were the financial heads of their families; One major explanation for the difficulty over women's ability to negotiate safer sex was the low level of communication in most families in sexual and reproductive- matters.

Because of the cultural inhibitions and the culture of silence over sex and sexuality; husbands and wives hardly ever discuss issues relating to sex. When sex is discussed, it is usually in relation to the infidelity of the husband. Thus, if sex is not-discussed how can the wife accost the husband with the risk factors or request decision or action from him?

The discussions also yielded some explanations and rationalization for men's sexual behavior and it emerged that a major reason why men engage in extramarital affairs was that they were not enjoying sex with their wives. On this, CLP decided to probe further.

When men were asked why they were not enjoying sex with their wives, some of the responses given were revealing. Some men claimed that their wives did not know "different styles" (referring to sexual positions) or that their wives did not care. The question then is, why did the women not know about the different sexual postures that are so appealing to their husbands? Could it be that they really did not know nor were they just pretending so that their husbands would not brand them tarts? Some respondents claim that women by are different and that women do not have the same sexual urge as men.

From the survey, CLP established two basic issues; first, it is desirable for couples to have fulfilling love lives even in the face of the HIVAIDS pandemic. This is despite the fact that condom use is neither a realistic nor a sustainable option for many husbands and wives. If men continue to practice extramarital affairs and refuse to use condoms either at home or with the outside partners; the legal spouse is being put in-jeopardy and needs to protect herself. How do you persuade the husband not to engage in risky behavior that could create unnecessary problems for the family? Secondly, in order to bring about a fulfilling love life. It is important to understand why the situation is how it is. Even at that stage, it was clear that communication is the major key to unlocking this problem and facilitating a harmonious love life.

### **Understanding women's inability to practice safe sex**

At various review meetings with our partners, CLP presented the findings of the survey and as a way of moving forward and seeking evidence based answers to these questions. We decided to carry out a survey to examine the socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors that are militating against women's ability to practice or to negotiate safer sex. What were those factors social, Economic, environmental. e.t.c. that are stopping women from adopting on their own or at least negotiating safer sex with their spouses? The aim of the study was to identify factors which influence women's ability, both positively and negatively, with a view to reinforcing the positive ones and eliminating or drastically reducing the negative ones. CLP was persuaded that given its model of partnership would provide an opportunity for an open discussion of the problems and concerted action to reverse the situation.

The study was conducted in 1995 and involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study involved in-depth interviews and twenty- five focus group discussions were organized with young people, men and women in the reproductive age group, and for post-menopausal women, around the issues affecting women's ability to negotiate safer sex. The study involved men and women of all faiths, both Christian and Muslim. The quantitative element of the study employed a community-based household interview of 800 persons. In the tradition of CLP work, Community representatives were part of the planning, design and conduct of the- study. They were responsible for recruiting respondents for the focus group discussions and community

representatives were trained by CLP as interviewers and FGD facilitators. A total of 1,012 members of the community were involved in both our preliminary survey and the formal study as respondents, discussants or as researchers.

The study generated great excitement and interest in the dynamics of sexual relations within the community and even beyond. It helped to break down barriers in sexual relations between couples and through the open discussions that took place, Sex and sexuality was successfully placed on the community agenda. This was not a mean achievement given the culture of silence and mystery that surrounds matters pertaining to sex in the society. The sense of mission that pervaded the conduct of the study further encouraged commitment on the part of the participants. The mission was clear to all; CLP and its partners were going to gain more knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of sexual relations to enable them plan the actions needed to enhance the position of women, promote sexual fulfillment and thereby enhance the quality of their own lives. It was clear to all involved, even from the planning stages that they were not engaged in mere research; rather, they wanted -to empower themselves to collectively design an intervention programme that would work.

The quantitative study was designed by Dr.E.E. Ekanem, an epidemiologist of the Department of Community Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, and his team. The group also analyzed the data. The qualitative element of the study was conducted by Professor (Mrs) B. Olufunmilayo Oloruntimehin of the Department of Sociology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Representatives of the community groups; the Oshodi-Isolo Local Government and commercial sex workers met with the Project staff at a local restaurant to review the findings of the study.

The study found that the psychological condition of the women and socio-cultural factors are more relevant to their inability to have safe sex than their economic dependence or independence. It also found:

- A strong desire in women to preserve their marital status or to become married;
- The fear of the unknown, emotional and social insecurity about a future life without a man/husband;
- The fear of losing custody of their children in the event of a separation; the desire to have children, all of which combine to inhibit many women from asserting their interests and rights in sexual matters;
- Sexual pleasure and sexual rights were viewed largely by both men and women as an insignificant part of a woman's fulfillment in life; and
- Both male and female respondents considered the enjoyment of sex as a male prerogative.

Again, communication was considered a major key to addressing many of these problems. It was suggested that CLP should begin working with couples and that the promotion of a more fulfilling sexual life should be incorporated and mainstreamed into CLP's programmes with its various partners. The need to work with couples in order to promote communication in sexual matters in the homes was brought graphically home to participants when it was noted that while it is true that CLP was working with both men and women, the women groups that it was working with were not the wives of the men that were being reached and vice versa. So, the question was how to bring husbands and wives together.

### **Bringing husbands and wives together: the Love Feast**

Before this time, on 8 March, 1995, during the activities marking the International women's Day, it had been suggested that programmes should be organised for fathers to promote active male participation in domestic responsibilities and in family life. The Review meeting revisited the issue and suggested a modification that the proposed Intervention should be redesigned to extend the focus beyond men. The proposed programme would focus on strengthening the fabric of the family by promoting solidarity, cohesion and collective responsibility for a fulfilling family life including marital love.

One thing was clear: it is important that sex and sexuality be put clearly on the community's agenda. CLP had known virtually from inception that it is impossible to improve and sustain sexual and reproductive health without addressing the social and environmental context within which such sexual intercourse occurs. However, it was not until 1995, with the publication of the findings of the study, that this became a shared philosophy through the very dynamics of CLP's work with its partner groups and institutions. While those present at the review meeting where the findings were presented were easily persuaded of the need to adopt this new approach, it was still a big challenge to persuade more people to come on board such that the discussion of sex and sexuality would become a social norm and not remain shrouded in mystery.

For CLP to reach the spouses of individuals who were members of its partner groups, It was suggested that the Project should invite several couples from each of the partner groups and institutions including the faith communities to a couples' event during which those present would be sensitized on the need for improved spousal sexual relationship and a more fulfilling family life. CLP's response to this suggestion was to organize a party-like event to which the 'couples would be invited on a Saturday afternoon. In line with CLP's approach of taking the partner groups into consideration in determining what to do, it was important that the event fits into the routine lifestyle of the couples being invited. CLP realised that if it were to adopt the traditional approach of inviting the participants to a workshop, it would be difficult to secure their attention. This is particularly so if the CLP partner is a woman who is inviting her husband to join her for the occasion. In the environment in which CLP is operating; it is hardly thinkable for a man to leave his workshop to follow his wife to go and listen to a talk on sexual fulfillment



in marriage, However, packaging the event as a party, scheduled for a weekend, to hold in a hotel gave the impression of a public outing for the couple and couples were readily persuaded to attend the programme, Nigerian couples love social functions such as weddings, house warming naming funeral and other ceremonies, to which they usually dress fancifully with many of them wearing similar clothes.

The CLP's party was tagged "Love Feast" and the first of it was held on March 21, 1998. In order to keep the number at a manageable level and because it was the first one, each partner group was asked to nominate about ten couples to attend the event. Nevertheless, seventy-seven couples were present at the programme which took place at Century Hotel, a popular watering hole in the neighborhood. The event truly took on the form of a party with food, drinks and music but also it incorporated the purpose of the event as it featured a drama presentation on the theme of communication in sexual issues at home and this was followed by a discussion in which the couples present contributed meaningfully sharing experiences that revealed that they understood the message. From the interest, demonstrated, it was easy to discern that many of those present would be interested in more sustained work and when the suggestion was put up, about thirty three couples volunteered to join CLP to plan the sustained work that was envisaged.

During the planning meetings that followed three concrete things were agreed upon:

- The Love Feast programme would be held on a sustained basis, at least twice a year;
- A more regular programme would be conducted in a workshop format that would hold about once every month; and,
- A pre-marriage course should be built into the programme.

The suggestion for the incorporation of a pre-marriage course into the work schedule emanated from members of the delegation from the Catholic Church who were present at the Love Feast. The reasoning behind then suggestion was simple; many couples were entering into marital life without having a clear understanding of the requirements for a successful marriage, and that many of the problems were actually avoidable if the couple had been adequately forewarned about what to expect.

### **After Century Hotel**

The work of CLP with couples was fully defined by the decisions taken by the continuing committee. Subsequent editions of the Love Feast were held about twice a year and the dates chosen were selected to coincide with the celebration of one international day or the other such as the international Women`s Day; The International Women`s Day usually holds in the last quarter of the year and CLP also seizes the moment to celebrate what it calls CLP Day; thus, the programme retains the atmosphere of a party and celebration.

Couples are invited to celebrate with CLP and they see it as a natural invitation as they had been working with the Project through their various groups and associations over the months and years. Thus, the occasion not only brings the couples together but participants also celebrate the partnership between CLP and the various groups. The event usually features a talk or lecture on the theme selected for the day, drama presentation focusing on the same theme and then discussion forums during which participants reflect on the issues raised in the various presentations. Issues discussed over the years include domestic violence the girl child, sexuality education at home and generally on hour; to improve communication on sexual issues among couples and in the home.

The second element of the couples work is the sustained programme being carried out at the Youth Centre for couples who desire additional information. Here couples attend a monthly workshop which features various issues for lectures and discussion. Participants formally register and the courses are taken in batches in order to allow for more intensive discussion and active participation by the couples. Participants are selected from among the members of the various partner groups including community associations, faith-based institutions (churches and mosques) and professional/trade groups.

### **Pre-marriage (intending couples) course and the Marriage Forum for Young Couples**

The third element of the couples work is that introduced at the instance of the participants from the Catholic Church which is the pre-marriage course. In its original form, This programme was developed specifically for St. Mary's Catholic Church which ordinarily runs its own pre-marriage course for intending couples in line with the tradition of the, Roman Catholic Church. At the 1998 Couples Feast, participants from St. Mary's Church suggested that most of the issues being raised, particularly those relating to sexuality education and marital love life could best be incorporated into a pre-marriage course as they would be more beneficial to the participants who would then avoid at least some of the pitfalls associated with ignorance about the demands of marital life. The pre-marriage course was designed taking into consideration the key concepts in the National Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Nigeria and a sixteen-week programme has been developed with this syllabus. Within at couple of months, the curriculum was adopted by the national secretariat of the Catholic Church for incorporation into the pre-marriage course in every Catholic Church in the country.

In the usual CLP approach to the implementation of such activities, The Project relied on the use of existing channels within the Church to reach the target participants. Thus all that was done was to modify the existing intending couples' course to incorporated topics drawn from the key concepts contained in the National Guidelines-on Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Nigeria. Thus the course contents have three core components: church doctrine the sacraments of marriage ceremony and sexuality education issues. The first two are solely within the purview of the Church while CLP handles the third. The sexuality education issues deal with five major

topics that are taken in sessions: challenges of family life; marital love life under which HIV/AIDS education is taken; domestic violence; managing family finances and parenting. As a rule HIV/AIDS is not taken as a topic on its own but is addressed as one of the consequences of the problems of marital love life. For instance extramarital love and infidelity are taken as part of the problems of marital love challenges and challenges of family life. These phenomena expose the family to various things including STIs and HIV/AIDS all of which can endanger not only the life of the guilty one but that of the entire family. But beyond that, intending couples are taught how to enjoy sex in marriage. The values that are taught are taught within the context of what the church- allows which is why the contents are agreeable to the leadership of the Church. All the sessions are conducted in an interactive way which allows full participation on the part of the participants and ensures that they are carried along. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and raise issues for discussion along the line.

One consequence of the intending couples' course is the introduction of another programme called the Marriage Forum for those couples who had been married for five years or less and who never had the opportunity of undergoing the redesigned pre-marriage course. It was realised that the contents of the intending couples' course were such that they would benefit both newly married and not-so-young couples. The Marriage Forum is a sixteen-week course designed to meet' the needs of those in this category. Under the arrangement, those couples who have been married for less than five years are brought together to share experiences on their marital experiences so far. Following its successful implementation at St. Mary's Catholic Church, another parish of the Catholic Church in Mafoluku has also started the Marriage Forum where they bring those who have attended the pre-marriage course together to share experiences of marital life. Both the intending couples's course incorporating the sexuality education elements and the Marriage Forum are the process of being scaled up following the adoption of the syllabus by the Catholic Secretariat for use in Catholic churches throughout Nigeria.

### **Achievements and Failures**

The couples' work has produced mixed results; while elements of it have been successful; indeed, very successful, other aspects have been struggling. The Love Feast has been very successful not only in terms of attendance but also in terms of impact. The impact is measured by the number of participants willing to proceed to the intensive phase of the couples' work. Time and again, over the years we found that the Love Feast always whet the appetite of the couples for more as they become keen to know more about communication within marriage and marital fulfillment. During review of programmes with CLP partners, many participants cite the Love Feast as one particular activity from which they have benefited most and one which they would like to see continue and if possible participate in again. Many women report that after the Love Feast. Their husbands had become more family oriented, more understanding of their sexual feelings and desires, and generally couples report that relationships in their homes have become more relaxed. One advantage of the programme is that both husband and wife are present at the

same time; so it is never necessary for one to have to report what transpired at the meeting to the other because the two would have received the information directly. This was unlike the situation which prompted the programme in the first instance in which wives usually lamented that they wished they -Could find ways of getting their husbands to participate in the programme.

Again, the success of the Love Feast is manifested in the frequent demand of participants for the organization of more sessions. While it is usually difficult to schedule an acceptable time, once they participate. Couples always wanted to have more sessions and were always wishing that they had taken part in the programme earlier as that would have averted some mistakes they had made in dealing with their spouses or it would have facilitated better understanding of their spouse`s position.

Similarly the pre-marriage or intending couple`s course has been very successful, between 1996 and 2005, more than 3000 intending couples had passed through the programme and virtually all reported that the programme has yielded them lifetime benefits. Such is the sheer size of those who have participated through the programme, that if only 30% adhere to the message and do what they can and are helping to replicate the effect, then a lot could be said to have been achieved.

### **Success Factors**

- The design of the Love Feast, holding' it in the form of a party and avoiding the formalities of a workshop, has been critical to the success of the programme. Participants never imagine they are going for a workshop, rather, they see it as an opportunity to celebrate with CLP; This fits squarely into the African culture of socializing and partying and it was not uncommon to find several couples wearing the famous "and co" that is husband and wife wearing the same type of fabric, to the programme. Many husbands and wives hardly go out together and the invitation cards issued never failed to describe the event' as a party. Each programme is organized along the lines of a party with food, drinks, music, dance and all that are usually found in parties. Thus, it was never really a burden to get the primary member in partnership with CLP to invite the spouse to-"a party" rather than saying they are going for a workshop.
- The organisational format of the event is also an important success factor. The programme deploys the use of theatre, drama, songs and presentations to arouse and sustain the interest of the participants. Thus, communication in the programme is not just verbal or limited to the formal talk or lecture and discussion. Indeed discussion is preceded by various presentations in which the theme of the event would have been highlighted in various forms by the presenters. While the party format is expensive, it has been instrumental in achieving the aims of the programme. Nigerians love fun and the use of entertainment to reach the people has been very positive, creating a non-antagonistic atmosphere and enabling the people to open up to share their views and

experiences without inhibition because they are easily able to relate to the issues as presented in the drama and other performances of the day.

- The success of the pre-marriage course is due crucially to CLP's decision to allow the church to own the programme. The pre-marriage course is run as a programme of St. Mary's Catholic Church with CLP providing guidance and defining the curriculum only in relation to the sexuality education contents. Giving of full ownership of the programme to the Church has ensured that responsibility for sustenance and continuity is that of the church. It is not seen as an imposition from outside; rather CLP is seen helping to implement the Church's own programme where the church does not have the requisite skills. The transfer of ownership of the programme to the church is also seen in the implementation process. Initially, all the sexuality education contents of the programme were handled directly by CLP. However, after some months, CLP began to train instructors drawn and nominated by the church to handle aspects of the programme. It is expected that it would be possible in the near future for CLP to withdraw completely from the programme after the church would have been adequately empowered to run the programme on its own. This is the aim of CLP, to empower its partners to take over and assume responsibility for programmes being implemented in collaboration with them.

The lesson in the above is clear; any attempt to replicate this effort in future must recognize the need to give ownership of the programme to the collaborating partners and depend on the institutions and channels of the partner for implementation rather than developing parallel structures. The planning must involve the leadership of the partner particularly in determining the best way to reach the group because in almost cases they understand their groups better. Secondly, the programming agency should not approach the partnership with a preset model but rather seek to integrate the core concepts into existing channels of communication of the partner. CLP was certain that if the pre-marriage course had not been implemented within the context of the Church's existing course for intending couples; it could not have achieved the same success as it did. The church already has sanctions for intending couples who default in attendance of its programmes a minimum of 90% attendance is required before the couple could be wedded in the church; CLP has no capacity to implement such a sanction. Thus, the existing structures of the collaborating agency should not be discountenanced because it is a veritable tool for reaching the target beneficiaries.

### **Challenges and Lessons**

The Couples work has not been without its challenges which have affected the pace of the work and its success rate; two of these are the most important:

- The challenge of timing and scheduling of activities: this has been a very big problem. It was agreed by all at the planning meetings that a weekday should be avoided in hosting the Love Feast because it would give the impression of a formal programme. More

importantly, not many people would be well disposed to leaving their work for a "party" during the week since it was agreed that the programme would be presented as a formal workshop. However, scheduling a particular date for even the Saturday programme has always been a major challenge. To pick a particular Saturday that would be acceptable in terms of target participants not having too many social commitments is a challenge to contend with. Then, even when the day is decided, there is the challenge of determining what time would be most suitable; morning, afternoon or evening. On many Saturdays, many couples have wedding ceremonies or other social engagements that take their time. Eventually, it was decided that the programme would hold in the afternoon in the hope that having attended whatever other social engagements in the morning, the participants would feel less burden committing themselves to an afternoon programme.

- Coping with the large numbers of couples interested in participating in the intensive workshops. At times the Love Feast featured as many as 150 couples but while it was possible to reach 300 persons with talk and drama presentation in a party-like atmosphere, it was meaningless trying to engage in intensive-discussion with such a large number in the sustained couples work. CLP's preference was for a more manageable, smaller group of participants and it was decided that those interested should be grouped in batches of 30. Six sessions were to be organised for each batch using the same curriculum. Even then this presented its own challenges because of the large number of interested participants. While the arrangement was suitable for the participants, it made a heavy demand on CLP staff and resources because several batches had to be taken care and the exercise became seemingly endless. As more and more couples participate and realising the benefits they were encouraging others who also became interested. The logistics of handling all the participants became a real nightmare, An alternative that was considered was to run various batches concurrently but that does not in any way reduce the pressure on staff and resources. Thus many couples had to wait several weeks, indeed for some, up to six months before it could get to their turn. The long wait after initial enrolment usually impacts negatively on the enthusiasm of the intending participants and: CLP is yet to find away round the dampening of the spirit of the participants occasioned by the need to organize meaningful sessions that the intensive workshops require. Ironically, it is the same factor that has facilitated the success of the Love Feast programme, i.e., the fact that it is held only twice a year, that has been the bane of the intensive programme. The intensive programme requires more frequent sessions than the Love Feast but overcoming the logistics of organizing those sessions has been a major challenge and hindrance to success.

For the foreseeable future, CLP expects to continue working with couples with a view to building solid families for our society. The Project intends to involve the partners more in designing the format and determining the issues that would be addressed during the Love Feast. CLP continues to pride itself as an organization that carries its partners along with it in defining

the agenda for the partnership and for the various interventions. However, so far, the organization of the Love Feast has left much of the planning in the hands of the organization such that the partners are presented with an already worked out programme, Coordination with nominees of several partner groups, institutions and associations has made the process more hectic and left CLP with an aggregating role in which it determines the issues for consideration. CLP also expects to be more systematic in determining the schedule for the Love Feast in relation to exact days which would be determined well ahead of time. This should enable participating couples to plan their schedules to fit into the programme.

Overall, the comments of participants, expressed during a gathering in July 2002 of couples who had undergone the pre-marriage courses say it all. Here are the samples:

- "I learnt a lot from the marriage course. I learnt not to invite third' parties to settle our differences and that it is not odd for a husband to assist his wife at home."
- "Sometimes I do the cooking and washing for my whole family. She is my wife, not my slave, I also learnt that sex is very vital in marriage; It is advisable to sweet talk your partner in sex and ask her if she is fulfilled before going off to-sleep. And we have agreed on the number of kids we want and we will space our children by three years."
- "Since the marriage course my husband has been helping me in domestic work. He treats me more as his wife and gives me a 'free hand in the house.'"
- "I learnt that husbands and wives are to sleep on the same bed always not separately and that husbands must help their wives especially in washing their clothes and other tasks" .
- "I learnt that I must not always force my wife to have sex with me because sometimes she might be tired thanks to the marriage course. I also learnt to listen to my wife's advice on things that I want to do. Her contribution helps a lot."
- "It is necessary for couples to amend the marriage course, since we attended the course. I and my husband have not been quarrelling again."
- "It is of importance that I should assist my wife in domestic affairs."
- "Extend the programme to married couples. and have an on-going education and counseling for them "

Need we say more?

## **Theatre for Development**

### **Background to adoption of TFD**

The introduction and practice of the concept of 'Theatre for Development' in Nigeria dates back to 1975 when it was introduced into the country by Michael Etherton. The concept aims at conscientising people using drama to bring about people-centred development. TFD productions aim at both entertaining and educating the people and they usually challenge the audience to analyze the situation just enacted in play form and take self-improvement actions. TFD drama shows usually elicit audience participation and reaction which is probably why it is called "drama of the people, by the people and for the people."

However, while the concept of TED can be traced back to only 1975, the use of theatre has long been a way of life for Africans. This is seen in the daily engagements of the people: in their work, in their ceremonies while relaxing, etc, Theatre and drama are deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the people and has always been a tool for information, education, communication, and preserving the norms and values of a people and in character formation.

CLP has been aware of the value of theatre as a communicating its message to target audiences and disseminating information on HIV/AIDS/STDs and other sexual and reproductive health issues within the community where it is based. The use of theatre in CLP programming began in 1994 with the World AIDS Day celebration at which three drama presentations were made by three different groups working with the Project the Isolo Hairdressers Association Igbo Market Women Association, and a dance troupe from the palace of the Oba of Isolo. All the presentations were highly appreciated by the audience. Realising the value of drama and without the benefit of an in-house theatre, the Project relied mainly on its partner groups and a local comedian group known as Easy Locoloco. For drama performances during its early years, particularly between 1994 and 1998, the major challenge at this stage was that these drama groups' were not deeply entrenched within the ideological framework of the Project and they had a limited understanding' of the Project's mission. It was always necessary to educate the groups before they put up any drama show on any issue. To further ensure that they were faithful to the key message. A staff was assigned to participate in their rehearsals and make any necessary connections.

### **Acquiring the tools of TFD**

The need to develop the Project's capacity in the area of theatre became more glaring as the years progressed and the opportunity for this came in 1998 when as part of a Ford Foundation sponsored initiative; a staff member was trained in a two-year programme in basic TFD skills. This initiative had two main- phases. Each lasting one year. The first phase was the training



programme while the second was the implementation period. During the first phase, in 1988, the Project staff, along with the staff of three other participating NGOs, was exposed to various theatre skills such as acting, costuming. Make-up, devising and directing, the various types of theatre, and the basic techniques of TFD: During the training period there were two minor productions in addition to a major one, including solo productions by the NGO trainees. The second and concluding phase, which took place in 1999, witnessed the application of the knowledge and skills acquired the trainee into the Projects framework of operation. During this period, the trainee undertook three major activities.

First; during the first three months, the staff immersed himself in the Project's mission by participating actively in its in-house activities including attendance at regular staff and planning meetings, and participation in in-house training and in held activities. This provided the TFD staff the opportunity to understand' how to effectively utilize and adapt TFD techniques to suit the needs of the Project, Secondly, two theatre troupes were formed during this period. The first was from the Projects Youth Club and its members were drawn mainly from the rank of secondary school students within the community. Part of the aim of the Youth Club is to see how far its members could assist the Project in attaining its goals of reaching various segments of the population with lifesaving information on HIV/AIDS and sexuality education and on adolescent reproductive health. The formation of the Youth Club theatre was a fulfillment of their vision for the club in assisting the Project. The second troupe was made up of CLP staff and members of the volunteer group. CACOM Members of CACONI had always shown interest in drama presentations to bring home more vividly the message of educational sessions; the formal establishment of the troupe was again a vision fulfilled. Finally, four plays were produced during the year, namely. "Save the Children of Today" "Sad Realities". "The Endangered Generation" and "it could be you." Each play reflected on various components and themes of CLP's work with the community and was produced to mark various landmarks in the international calendar including the Day of the African Child and the World AIDS Day. Some were presented on other occasions such as the End of Year Party for parents of Youth Club members and the gathering of religious leaders within the communities where the Project is working.

#### Mainstreaming TFD into CLP's initiatives

The successes recorded during the year expedited the process of mainstreaming TFD into the routine educational sessions being held with CLP's partner groups and institutions.

Thus, it was in 1999 that TFD was formally integrated into the Projects activities and it soon took the shape of a programme standing on its own with its goals and objectives.

The CLP goal in using theatre is primarily to address societal ills through the forum of drama with a view to stimulating positive behavioral change and transformation. The theatre is used specifically as part of the Projects organised events as:

- A vehicle for providing sexuality education
- A mechanism for the transmission of messages
- A means of reinforcing the key messages of the paper presentations and talks at forums organised by the Project and
- A mirror for instruction as it challenges the audience to self examination and self criticism.

The objectives include:

- To enhance working in partnership with community groups and local institutions and to use local talents and resources to improve the general wellbeing of the community;
- To highlight the day-to-day realities and clarify myths
- To stimulate participants to make decisions to improve their lives
- To serve as an avenue for discussing sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS /STDs, gender inequity, domestic violence, cultism, open discussion of sexuality issues. etc.
- To provide an enabling environment to effectively pass on messages, and
- To provide a visual presentation of the issues under discussion that would enable the people to easily recall the focus and contents of educational sessions.

The Theatre for Development initiative has emerged partly from the activities of the CLP Youth Club. Part of the aim of the Youth Club is to see how far the members could assist the organization in attaining its goal of reaching various segments of the population with life saving information on HIV/AIDS and sexuality education as well as adolescent reproductive health.

TFD is an easy form of theatre which utilises two main approach to the creation of dramatic presentations; script to stage and stage to script. The ‘script to stage’ method is one in which the drama to be acted is first documented or scripted. This helps the performers to establish and maintain fidelity to the key messages of the production. Most times, the scripts serve as mere guides to; ensure that the key message lines are maintained. The stage to script approach revolves round research and creation by improvisation. Here, the drama is not scripted in any formal sense but is developed around particular issues. The issues are generated by the actors who also develop the story line as the performance progresses. Thereafter, the scripting follows to guide future performances. Most TFD performances follow this second approach as the dramatic episodes are arrived at utilising the research-analysis-creation-stage script method.

However, what method of creation is adopted, whether stage to script or script to stage, the production must entail intent, process and participation. Each play that will engage the audience must have an entry point or opening situation, an initial incident, a climax, a falling action and a resolution.

Over the years, in its TFD experience, CLP has developed the following basic processes in devising a dramatic performance:

- Consideration and application of the theme of the programme around which the drama is to be presented
- Drawing up the story line from the theme and reflecting the Projects focus for the programme
- Development and articulation of key messages
- Sharing of key messages and idea with performers
- Production of sketches by performers
- Fine tuning of sketches at rehearsals; making of corrections, and preview performance for making of further corrections
- Pre-performance rehearsals
- Performance
- Post-performance review

CLP has utilized stage performance using TFD a roach to pass on critical messages to audiences everywhere such that this has become an integral element of the Project's programmes in the community. Theatre has been used to reinforce key messages or paper presentations in the Project's organised events and it is also used in routine educational sessions with the Project's partner groups and institutions. Indeed after 1999 theatre was mainstreamed into the routine educational sessions especially as the Projects work and messages advanced into areas where there are no appropriate films. Audiovisuals have always been crucial to presentation of messages and until theatre took the centre stage.

CLP had always ensured that appropriate films are presented to accompany key messages. TFD easily fills the gap where there are no appropriate video films to reinforce the message of the day.

### **Challenges and Success Factors**

TFD has added great value to the work of CLP as it has helped the Project to deal with sensitive sexuality issues at the community level through drama. TFD presentations have covered such diverse issues as domestic violence, rape, Parent child communication, etc. and they have helped to promote responsible and healthy behaviors on the part of the target audiences. However, while the Project has had a largely successful experience with its TFD initiative, this has come with a number of challenges.

One major challenge is working with in-school youths and young school leavers. While they are willing to, learn and are highly motivated, they also have to take care of their primary assignment which is their school work. For the school leavers among them, they have to prepare themselves for their university matriculation examinations while some have to look for work. Thus, there were occasions when it would be difficult to assemble the necessary number of cast. Yet, for practical purposes, this is the best group to draw from because of their ability to easily relate to the issues.

Another challenge is dealing with the problem of constant equipment breakdown. Many times, the group had to replace so in equipment on the stage and at such times, this constituted unexpected hitch to performance. In addition, the group is faced with the challenge of meeting specific costume needs for particular performances. Some costumes can be very expensive and for a non-profit making group, securing funds necessary for the acquisition or costumes is a daunting task, there are some performances that are put up on invitation and whose costumes are not relevant to the needs other productions; so investment in such costumes would only tie down much needed funds. Finally, there is the challenge of lack of adequate space for rehearsals. The space available at the CLP Centre has never really been adequate; the expansion of the Projects activities in recent years has made the problem more acute and the theatre is one of the units faced with space problem because of the nature of the work.

However, the experience has been a largely successful one due in part to the enthusiasm of the actors mostly drawn from the Youth Club. The TFD experiences give the youth a sense of empowerment and a sense of involvement that they too are educating their Yellow youth and educating the larger community, and so they are encouraged to put in their best. CLP also works with the parents of the youths involved and securing their consent has continued to encourage the youths who are putting up the performances.

The presence of a staff formally trained in the concept of TFD has been quite invaluable and the continuous training in TFD techniques has been helpful for the troupe. The effectiveness of TFD as a mode of communicating messages has also been a success factor because audiences have always been able to relate to the issues. Ultimately, the popularity of the approach with CLP audiences has continued to encourage the Project and the troupe that they are engaged in an effort that is making a real difference.

### **Partnering with the Government**

From inception, CLP realized that it is not a substitute for the government and the organization failed to join the chorus that perceived the government only in a negative light in terms of development work and social service delivery. CLP was convinced that social development is the business of government and government has not only to take responsibility for it but also facilitate it. Other players including NGOs and international development agencies are just partners with government and should be partnering with government to achieve objectives that are set nationally and defined in terms of social development. Indeed, in many instances, interventions become meaningful when it receives the cover of government at whatever level.

In particular, CLP seeks to work with local governments because we believe that they are the tier of government closest to the people. CLP is convinced that the local governments should be involved actively in the kind of work that CLP is doing trying to reach the people in their own domicile and through their own institutions. CLP believes that the Community Development Departments of local, governments should be actively engaged, ns a matter of routine in these activities because as long as there are people and governments, the relationship between them would continue and the people would continue to have needs and governments, not civil society organizations should be at the vanguard of meeting those needs. Hence, CLP sees government at all levels as partners and not plagues to be avoided as some civil society organisations are wont to do.

Over the years, CLP has worked consistently with but agencies till government: the Oshodi/Isolo Local Government Council through its Health Department and Primary Health Care Centre's; the Lagos State AIDS Control Agency (LASACA), the Lagos State Ministry of Education, and the Department of Community Development and Population Activities. The collaboration with the Ministry of- Education has been discussed in the section dealing with CLP's work with school; thus, in this section, we discuss the Project's partnership with the other three.

#### **Parenting with Local Government Health Institutions**

The collaboration between CLP and the Health Department of the Oshodi/Isolo Local Government Area could be traced to the inception of the Project. CLP had identified the Primary Health Care units as viable channels for reaching poor people in the community with viral HIV/AIDS information even as they seek medical attention at these health institutions. Three centres were immediately identified; these were the Isolo Community Centre Health Clinic, the Isolo Health Clinic and the Isolo General Hospital. The project was introduced to these institutions and their management expressed interest immediately in working with CLP to disseminate HIV/ AIDS information in the community. CLP had proposed the integration of HIV/ AIDS education into the existing services being offered in the three health institutions.

However, CLP was advised to obtain permission from the Local Government Council because the health facilities did not have the mandate to incorporate HIV/ AIDS education into their normal services. They however agreed that the Project should educate the health workers in the centre in order to prepare them for the proposed expansion of their services to include HIV/ AIDS education. Between 1994 and 1995, CLP paid several visits to these health institutions to formalize the work and explore the commencement of activities.

At the General Hospital the Chief Consultant invited the Project to conduct HIV/ AIDS educational sessions for senior medical and paramedical personnel as well as junior Staff of the hospital. HIV/ AIDS awareness programmes were conducted for these staff members between April and May 1995. The outcome of the enlightenment programme was the realization of the urgency of the need to integrate HIV/AIDS education into health care delivery services as it was found that the health workers themselves had pretty little or no knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Patients that were found to be HIV positive were already being stigmatized and discriminated against and were not being treated by the health workers because of fear of contracting the virus themselves. When clients tested positive, they were not informed of their status and even the tests were never preceded by pre-test counseling nor followed by post-test counseling on- they could seek help having been found positive. Many women were being screened without their knowledge and there was lack of access to relevant therapy that could reduce or prevent mother-to-child transmission.

Thus, it was clear that the health care providers at the primary health centre (PHC) needed to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively do this work. For this, the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) of the Isolo/Oshodi Local Government Dr. A. A. Adeyemi was contacted and series of meetings were held with him and eventually it was decided that all the health workers in the local government area should be trained. Consequently, all the health workers in the local government from all the different units, Nursing, Environmental Health, Community Health Extension, etc were trained in batches on HIV/AIDS and Counseling Skills between 1995 and 1997. This was to ensure that community people receive information on HIV/AIDS at the Primary Health Care centres in the local government. The first training was conducted from 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 1995 at Isolo General Hospital. For 33 health workers and this was followed in subsequent months with the training of other groups. A refresher course was organized for the health workers from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1996, to review the programme and update the knowledge of the participants.

### **Integrating HIV/AIDS Education into Primary Health Services in Isolo**

The work with the Health Department crystallised around the core objective of reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS, primarily in the Isolo community and secondarily in Lagos State, The strategy is to increase the access of the people to HIV/AIDS information through the primary health care facilities in the community and thus equip them with the skills needed to prevent the

spread of the disease. From March 1997 to December 1998, five quarterly training workshops were conducted for ILt0 health workers in the local government area and an implementation Committee for the integration of HTV/AIDS education into primary health care services in the three facilities was set up on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2006. Membership of the Committee comprised the following: `

- The Local Government Medical Officer at Health (MOH) .
- Chief Nursing Officer (CNO)
- Chief Environmental Health Officer (CEHO)
- Community Health Officer (CHO)
- Chief Health Educator (CHE)
- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (M & E), and
- Community Life Project (CLP)

The committee had responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the implementation programme to ensure its success. At the same time, handbooks on HIV/AIDS were produced for the health workers and more materials were produced for the community people along with enlightenment posters on HIV/AIDS.

The integration programme was officially launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1998 at a fairly impressive ceremony. With the official launching, the 140 trained health workers were mandated to integrate HIV/AIDS education into the existing services at the primary health care level. A monitoring tool which had been field tested was adopted and as the integration proceeded, monitoring visits were carried out to the Primary Health Care Centres to assess the programme implementation. The visits served to ginger into action those Centres where implementation was yet to commence as at the time of the visit.

After almost fifteen months of implementation, a review meeting was held on 26 January 2000. The review meeting confirmed that the integration programme was being successfully implemented in all the primary health care centres, but it was suggested that a refresher workshop be carried out to update the skills and knowledge of the health workers. Apart from this general review meeting, internal review meetings are held at the PHC level every third Friday of the month. These reviews have contributed to the strengthening of the integration programme. Subsequently, two refresher workshops were held in April 2001, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> April and from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April.

Without doubt, the integration of HIV/AIDS education into the work of the primary health care centres in the community is a major accomplishment for CLP. It demonstrated that fruitful collaboration could take place between a non-governmental organization and the government at various levels. From the time the programme commenced, CLP had worked with at least five LG Medical Officer of Health. This is a confirmation of the fact that the programme transcends

individuals and that relationships should be built with institutions and not with the individual. In the process there has been a strengthening of HIV/AIDS education activities in the local government and the knowledge of the health workers on HIV/AIDS prevention and control is regularly updated. There is an increase in awareness levels among community people on the epidemiology and control of HIV and AIDS and this in turn has promoted responsible sexual and reproductive health behavior among the people at the grassroots level.

The major challenge that has faced the scheme is the inconsistent implementation of the integration programme which has been aided by lack of proper monitoring by the implementation Committee. This lack of proper monitoring is despite the presence of a monitoring instrument that was field tested and found to be adequate. Occasionally, implementation was hampered by strike actions embarked upon by officials of the local government council including those of the Health Department. However, despite all these challenges, the integration has proven itself evidence to successful partnership between CLP and the government at the level closest to the people.

### **Partnership with the Lagos State AIDS: Control Agency (LASACA)**

Following the success of its integration programme with the Oshodi/Isolo Local Government Area primary health care institutions, CLP decided to build upon the gains of the programme by strengthening its partnership with other government agencies. The opportunity to do this presented itself when CLP was invited to the meeting of the Lagos State HIV/AIDS Prevention and Management Committee of 5th May 1999. The Committee subsequently became inaugurated as the Lagos State HIV/AIDS Foundation (LSHAF) on December 1, 1999. The Foundation was established as a multi-sectoral approach to stem the alarming increase in HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the state. CLP was invited to join the Foundation to contribute its skills and experience to HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities in Lagos State. LSHAF turned out to be only the precursor of the Lagos State AIDS Control Agency (LASACA) that was set up in 2001 to coordinate HIV/AIDS control activities in the state. Upon the establishment of the Agency, CLP was invited to head its Care and Support Committee and to coordinate care and support activities for people living with HIV/AIDS in the state.

The objectives of CLP in entering into partnership with LASACA are twofold. First to share with other NGOs in the Agency CLP's experiences in HIV/AIDS prevention and control as carried out in Isolo; Mushin and Oshodi local government areas of Lagos State. The second objective is to provide technical assistance to the State Control Agency in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and control. To effect these objectives, activities have been carried out in five major areas:

- Participation in the monthly meetings of the Agency: LASACA organizes monthly meetings of all NGOs working on HIV/AIDS in the state. The meetings serve as an avenue for monitoring the activities undertaken by these organizations and provide an



avenue for networking and cooperation. Participating organizations are grouped into committees that are known as work groups and each workgroup is headed by an NGO with experience in that field. CLP heads the Care and Support Group and through its leadership of the group, it proposed a training of health workers from all the twenty local government areas of Lagos State. This proposal was accepted and the training is already being conducted in batches.

- Training of Medical Officers of Health: CLP has facilitated the training of Medical Officers of Health from all the twenty local government areas of Lagos State. The training was held at the LASEMS Hall of the General Hospital, Lagos, on 18 April 2001. In addition, the Oshodi/Isolo Local Government invited CLP to develop a plan for a workshop on HIV/AIDS for key implementers such as traditional birth attendants, community associations, Commercial sex workers, private practitioners, and Women in health organizations. CLP facilitated this training free of charge for the Local Government and distributed educational materials to the participants. Issues covered during the workshop include: General HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control issues; HIV/AIDS Epidemiology: Modes of Transmission; HIV Screening and, Major Signs and Symptoms of Opportunistic Infections. These were accompanied by a film show on AIDS.
- Capacity building for NGOs in partnership with LASACA; Following CLP's presentation of its model of grassroots partnership, to which the LASACA NGOs were invited, 13 NGOs indicated interest' the replication of the model. These NGOs were invited to a planning meeting held on' 10 April 2003, to discuss modalities for the replication of the model. The Project subsequently visited these NGOs to assess their capacity to replicate the CLP model. The outcome of the visit showed that only two of them had the capacity to replicate the model. Plans are underway to conduct training for these NGOs to facilitate their work in the area.
- Conduct of HIV/AIDS awareness rallies: As part of its partnership with LASACA. CLP participated in the Massive .Awareness Creation Programme on HIV/AIDS organized by the Agency in 2001. The two rallies held in Mushin and Oshodi/Isolo LGAs were carried out on August 22 and 29 2001.
- Development of grant proposals: Also through its partnership with LASACA. CLP provided technical assistance to the Agency in developing a comprehensive programme for HIV/AIDS prevention and control at the grassroots level in Lagos State, The proposal was submitted to the Agency on 30<sup>th</sup> January. 2002. in addition, under the HIV/AIDS World Bank Fund. CLP wrote a proposal for the implementation of a comprehensive care and support programme with the objective of creating awareness on voluntary counseling and testing for members of the community and its partner institutions. The grant was approved and the project commenced in May 2005 providing free access to Voluntary Counseling and Testing for HIV for members of the community in which CLP is working.

The partnership with LASACA continues and CLP continues to provide technical assistance to the Agency and to share experience with the member NGOs.

### **Partnership with the Department of Community Development and Population Activities**

The roots of CLP's partnership with the Department for Community Development and Population Activities (CDPA) could be traced to the time the Project was requested to showcase its model to stakeholders in the field of social development in the country. Present at the meeting, which took place on 26 September 2002, were representatives from Federal and state governments, international development agencies, members of the diplomatic corps the private sector and other non-governmental agencies. At the occasion, the then Director of the CDPA Department called on CLP to work with the Department as a means of accelerating the process of sustainable development in the country.

To facilitate the takeoff of the partnership, CLP held several meetings with key staff of CDPA in both Abuja and Lagos. A key outcome of these meetings was the invitation extended to CLP to attend the 26th National Conference of Directors of Community Development 'in Nigeria held in Akure, from 23- 27 June, 2003. At this meeting the CLP model was again presented to the stakeholders present who unanimously adopted it as model for development work and social service delivery at the grassroots level. They believed that the model would be effective in complementing the activities of the CDPA Department. Six states (one each representing the six geopolitical zones of the country) were selected for the pilot phase of the replication programme. These are Bauchi in the North East, Kaduna in the North West, Niger (North Central), Delta(South-South), Ebonyi (South East) and Osun (South West).

The replication of the CLP model has taken off in Eye states and the FCT. The replication was preceded in each case by a workshop that held as follows:

- Sapele LGA, Delta State -November 10 - 13. 2003
- Raffi LGA, Niger State A December 2 - 5, 2003
- Irepodun LGA. Osun State -January 26- 30, 2004
- Bauchi/Toro LGAS, Bauchi State - April 19 - 23. 2004
- Ezza south LGA, Ebonyi state \_ September, 20- 24, 2004
- Bwari LGA, PCT - January 24 - 28, 2005

While financial constraints have been a major problem the adoption of the CLP model for reaching local communities in the country is a way forward and a positive development. It is likely to take some time before the CD officers would have a good understanding of the model and be able to work effectively with it.

## **Challenges and Lessons**

After almost fifteen years of consistent programming work, CLP has made significant progress in establishing the community participatory approach to development and social service delivery in the country. The CLP experience has shown that the principles and approaches of community based work actually work. The principal value that CLP has added to social development work is that it has actually implemented those principles and values which several organizations and agencies concerned with development programming of various sorts have consistently expressed rhetorical commitment. CLP has walked the wall; and translated theory to action. This experience has not been without its challenges. Here we lay out what we consider the principal challenges and how we have tried to tackle them, and-we also lay out the lessons we have learnt in the process. Here we also lay out the success factors while highlighting those things that should be avoided in any efforts to replicate the CLP model in community based development work and social service delivery. To a large degrees the success factors cannot be separated from the features of the CLP model which is what CLP is seeking to market for replication purposes.

### **Features of the CLP model**

The following are the key elements of the paradigm that CLP has successfully adopted in its intervention activities and would recommend for similar interventions in future:

- The principal feature of this approach is its dependence on and appropriation of the abundant social capital in the society. The CLP approach works with large network of organized groups and local institutions within the given community. This relationship is sustained over the years even as new ones are being added to the group, old ones remain on board. The CLP approach does not seek to create parallel institutions to reach segments of the population within any given society; rather it works with those recognized channels of aggregation already extant in the society. Such include community and neighborhood groups and associations, professional/occupational groups, faith-based, community development groups; etc. All these groups have their own established interests and goals; all the CLP model does is to work within their parameters to reach them and commit them to a relationship that is mutually beneficial.
- The CLP model reaches the people where they are, at their own levels, on their own terms. The model upholds respect for people, the partners and their views, and the views of partners are actively sought and considered in matters pertaining to them. CLP does not pretend or claim that it knows better than the people what is good for them. In virtually all past evaluations of CLP work one factor that has constantly emerged in dialogues with partners on their perception of their relationship with CLP is that CLP respects their views on issues. CLP is prepared to conduct its educational awareness

sessions anywhere as long as it is suitable for the partners and is the place of their choice be it a school classroom, an empty shed, a mosque, a church, an open space a town hall, in the marketplace, an uncompleted building just about any location that the people are where they normally gather themselves.

- Respect for the cultures, beliefs and social preferences of the people including their faith values. CLP, like most other organizations engaged in similar work, operates in a multiethnic, multi-religious and multicultural environment where people hold on to diverse prejudices. Respect for the people`s values is reflected in how CLP does its work with them. It seeks to reach the people at their level. For example CLP would not offend the faith sensibilities of any group. When it is working with Muslim groups, the CLP team usually has a practicing Muslim on it, and in the sessions, the various members on the team, whether Muslim or not, adhere to the preferences of the host organization such as way of seating, wearing of shoes and others. If a facilitator should insist on doing things his/her own Way, whatever message is being passed across would be lost because attention would be drawn away from the message to the way of presentation that offends the hosts` values.
- Further on respect for values of the partners, CLP seeks to adopt and/or adapt the best in the values of its partners and appropriate them for advancing the cause of the partnership. For example the opposition of the Catholic Church to artificial methods of family planning particularly condom use is usually berated by most NGOs working in the reproductive health field. However, CLP prefers to interpret this in the context of available options for family planning and asserting without contradiction that the Catholic Church is not opposed to family planning only that it prefers the natural method which is rooted in abstinence a core element of the ABC approach to HIV/AIDS prevention. What is important is to adopt the positive elements in the values of the partners rather than dwelling on those that are considered negative or unacceptable. Rather than berate the Catholic Church. CLP has concentrated on getting the church to agree to make available all the information necessary for the individual to make an informed choice while making clear the church`s own preference and at the same time encouraging the church to facilitate access to its preferred family planning method.
- Respect for the decisions and predilections of the partners. The CLP model truly respects the bottom up approach and not just expresses rhetorical commitment to it; the people the partners are involved in the planning and decision making processes: they are involved in choosing what they want to learn. As a matter of principle CLP would not go beyond what the partners want and would only take them as far as they are interested although it would seek to expose to them all the available options and encourage them to make informed choices. CLP will never impose its preference on its partners. CLP also respects the right of the partners to change their minds. If, for example, the partners had selected a topic or date and then came back to change either the topic or the date, CLP is always perfectly willing to go along because partnership is not about passing instructions down

to the people but carrying them along at every stage. The important thing is not controlling the decision of the people or hijacking their decision making process but assisting them to make informed, healthy decisions.

- The CLP approach allows partners to develop at their own pace and does not drag them along. The approach recognizes that- each partner is at a different level even though there is a common goal. Working towards the attainment of the common goal is what is paramount and the pace of attainment does not have to be the same with each and every partner.
- The CLP model seeks to make the people to appreciate the benefit that is in the partnership for the partners at individual levels in order to enable them to develop a sense of stake holding in the project. Under the CLP model, the people or the partners as a group are the principal stakeholders: Once the people develop a sense of being stakeholders, it guarantees a better response and better result particularly in the area of behavior change which is the essence of most information, education and communication activities and programmes embedded in the CLP work.
- Under the CLP model, Partnering is done with institutions and not with individuals as this allows for enduring relationships. This is important because community-based work requires working with associations and institutions that are led by officers occupying positions for a limited period. It also involves working with government agencies whose responsible officers could be transferred or replaced at any time. Thus, while a partner group may elect new officers, CLP's work with the group continues because the partnership is not with individuals in office but with the group itself. While the referencing system which depends on personal associations, works in relation to starting relationship with new groups, it does not sustain it. What sustains relationship is the level of integrity displayed in the process of nurturing it and how far the partners can trust the initiator of the relationship.
- Accepting responsibility for outcome of -initiatives and not abandoning the partners is a key feature of the CLP model. Because the organization is working in a community where it is known. It not only has to be responsible and accountable to the community for what it has to do. It also cannot afford to engage in what can be called 'hit and run' activities. It cannot afford to compromise its integrity.

### **Success Factors**

- CLP has a good staff retention record thus permitting continuity in programme development.
- Being people-centred and people oriented has really facilitated the growth and development of CLP. While this involves some loss of autonomy, being people centred makes the organization to be accountable to its partners. In a way, this slows down the

activities of the Project because it has to respond to the identified needs and priorities of the people even as it seeks to lead them.

- Appropriating the cultural assets of the people to drive home its message particularly as reflected in drama and folklore. Nigerian societies particularly the Yoruba group among which CLP has worked successfully in the past several years love drama and folklore. CLP has harnessed this cultural asset by seeking to reach the people through their own media of entertainment by using drama to convey messages. This it did, first, through the use of volunteers, then working with a local comedian group, the Easy Loko Loko and finally, by putting together its own drama group. CLP also employed the local poetry, ewi, that is popular with the people in reaching them with individual and group performances that are used to reinforce the messages being passed on during particular awareness sessions.
- Respect for the people as noted above in the features of the CLP model: respect for their views, their predilections, their preferences, their cultural faith and other values, respect for their decisions.
- Sincerity of purpose; CLP operates in an area particularly noted for fraud. Indeed, when CLP was just being established, it was the time that the area was the recognized headquarters of the advance fee fraud in the country. It was difficult for people including individuals, groups and associations, to imagine that any group will reach out to them for altruistic purposes only and not with any hidden agenda, It took time before the trust finally became established but this was the outcome of the realization that the organization had no hidden agenda in seeking to develop relations with them.

### **Challenges and how they were tackled**

- Human Resource (middle level manpower deficiency): probably the greatest challenge that has confronted CLP in terms of organizational and institutional health is that of human resource development particularly at the middle management level. Over the years. CLP has been able to identify and even attract very competent people who are able to play a leadership and management role but the organization cannot afford to pay such people. Thus, it has not been possible to bring such people on board or retain them. There is a middle level management space but the resources to pay for the quality of people to come and fill up the space are not available to CLP.
- The quality of the training being received in our higher institutions in recent years has dropped considerably and this has affected the quality of human resources available for recruitment. The quality of instruction they receive and the ‘handout mentality’ has not prepared them for leadership role.
- Flowing from the quality of human resource available for recruitment is the challenge of relating to the community and the partners that CLP works with. Many staff recruits find

it difficult to “come down” to the level of the community in their thinking and as such are unable to appreciate the need to wait on the partners when it is necessary.

- Leadership quality and management skills have to be acquired by the individuals themselves. Leadership skills are not necessarily conferred on a person because that person has been placed in a leadership position. The individual who is moving up the ladder would be facing new challenges and has to learn to grow into that position, thus, all good managers and good leaders must learn to educate themselves. Beyond understanding and acquiring the values that CLP works with, occupying leadership and management positions requires a learning process on the part of the affected individual.
- Funding challenges particular in- relation to dependence on donor support for sustainability; at inception, CLP decided that, as a matter of policy. it would not be donor driven in its activities; rather. It would be responding to the needs of its partners as jointly identified (by CLP and those partners). Over the years as CLP seeks to remain faithful to this policy, it has managed to attract a few funders who believe in what the organization is doing and who have allowed it to be innovative and creative and have not forced the organization to go in a particular direction, However, this has also meant that a lot of its work has suffered and the organization has not been able to grow to its full, potential due to inability to attract enough funds to support its work.
- CLP believes that there are enough resources in the country which could make it less dependent on international donor funding. However, CLP is firmly of the view that in Nigeria, advocacy and access to resources is based on patronage, personal networks and connections. Meritocracy has little role to play in securing access and in the absence of meritocracy, not much can be sourced from these sources by an organization such as CLP. CLP has enjoyed a relationship of mutual respect with its funders who agree with the broad outlines of its goals and have left the organization to deal with the specifics and how agreed goals are achieved.
- The funding challenge is also aggravated by the environment of NGO work in Nigeria. The vast scale of corruption hinders access to resources and adhering to the values of integrity and honesty makes things difficult for CLP. Yet if CLP is about change then it-cannot afford to be swept by the tide of patronage and succumb to the pressure to engage in those activities that it is seeking to wipe out.
- **Logistics problems:** the location of CLP offices in Isolo has presented its own peculiar challenges. Poor infrastructural development in the area has meant that CLP suffers some degree of isolation. For a long time: the Project office had to depend on the terribly inefficient NITEL telephone lines for communication which meant that for days, even weeks, it could be cut off from the outside world. Lately, CLP shifted to the new generation telephone and internet service providers including Linkserve and Multilinks, thus ameliorating the problems posed by lack of telecommunication facilities. To the problem of telecommunication inadequacy should be added the challenges posed by

inadequate power supply until it purchased its high-powered generating set recently, CLP had had to cope with the consequences of frequent power outages with its office equipment including computers frequently ruined by inadequate power supplied by its small generators.

- Inadequate remuneration: As a registered not-for-profit organization, the management of CLP cannot draw salaries from the organization but are entitled to honorarium for work done. The honorarium hardly compensates for the efforts being put in and certainly is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the Project Director and other management level staff.
- Challenge of the unpredictability of the programming sequence: in several instances, CLP has had to organize programmes that were never planned nor budgeted for. Because of the referencing system in which either an individual or a group that had participated in an earlier event then refers the organization to other groups. CLP has found that planning becomes difficult. The consequence was that money that had been planned to cover five workshops may end up being used for ten or even twenty. CLP always tried to respect funders' restrictions on spending money on approved line items; thus, even when programmes are not- implemented exactly the way they were planned, the outcome always reflected and never buckled the original objectives. CLP has been lucky with its funding bodies who respected the organizations approach to the implementation of planned activities but new and coming organizations should be fully prepared that programmes never get exactly implemented as planned.
- Another element of unpredictability with programme planning is in relationship with the partners. Many times scheduled sessions could not hold for one reason or the other that had to do with challenges internal to the partner organization. A programme might have been planned but suddenly a member of the association dies and other members are busy commiserating and that definitely is not the time one would expect them to sit down and participate in an educational session of any type. At other times, the association might be resolving internal conflicts and until such conflicts are resolved. It would be difficult to secure their attention, The lesson for CLP in this is the need for flexibility in dealing with partner organizations. Given the nature of the associations and groups that are partnering in the implementation of these activities. It is difficult to expect a rigid adherence to scheduled activities. However, this has potential implications for funding because when activities are not carried out as scheduled, it takes an understanding funder to appreciate the challenges of the programming environment of this nature.
- Challenger of internal divisions and problems within the partner groups: many times work with partners is hindered by the absence of a conducive environment within the partner organization. Some get embroiled' in 'leadership tussles which disrupt the continuity 'of the relationship. The CLP response in such a case was to conduct leadership training workshops for the leadership of some of these organizations in order



to build in them the quality that would, enable them to function as viable partners and to build their capacities.

### **Lessons of the CLP Experience**

- There is great danger in assuming knowledge of people's needs: the bottom up approach that requires CLP to allow its partner organizations to determine their needs and the direction of the relationship at all times has brought out clearly the importance of giving the people the say. Each time CLP was tempted to assume knowledge of what ought to be the needs of the people, it has always emerged that while it can guide the choice. It is always better to permit the people to make their decisions. Any organization seeks to replicate the CLP model or pattern its activities after the CLP approach should be ready to adopt the bottom up approach to determining its activities and the pace with which it would work with its partners. If this is not done. It is likely the partners would turn their backs to such projects or initiatives.
- The community development approach requires the initiating organization to be ready to work with people of all shades and be ready to bring them together into a coalition of interest, when in 2000. CLP needed to reach out to church leaders in the neighborhood in order to break the silence on HIV/AIDS on the part of the clergy. It found that it had to work with all available denominations, even those who did not share similar values. It had to bring together Pentecostal, evangelical, orthodox and the so-called white garment churches into a working group. In the ordinary sense, many of these groups do not relate with each other. Aggregating the views and values of these groups was a daunting experience but CLP was able to hold four leadership meetings with all these groups and it did this successfully but it learnt the lesson that moving forward many times would require bringing together groups and individuals who do not necessarily share similar points of view.
- Flowing from the above is that the initiating organization should not assume that apparently disparate groups can never work together. What is required is the development of common interests with which the target partners can identify and develop a stake in. Thus, the initiating organization must be clear in the articulation of the common interests and develop messages around those interests.
- Projects have to work at the pace of the community and partner organizations. While some of the partner groups are dynamic and more enterprising others have to be encouraged to move forward. The groups are not all at the same level and each determines the pace at which it wants to go; they determine how fast and how frequent they want to go.

## CLP in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### **Developing a Dynamic Organization**

The shape of CLP work has continued to change reflecting developments in the programming environment. As a policy CLP has continued to reinvent itself to make it more relevant to the needs of the target population; Once CLP discovers that another organization has shown interest in a particular area of service, it seeks to step aside and engage itself more proactively. For example, once it discovers that another organization is working with the same school with which it is working on the same issue, it withdraws immediately rather than competing for attention. The implication is that CLP needs to constantly anticipate movement and progress not just to remain relevant but to continue to provide the necessary leadership in the field of community based participatory intervention in development and social service delivery. CLP's objective is to increase the people's access to information and service and once that objective is being realized in a particular community, CLP is perfectly willing to withdraw and move on to other areas.

CLP envisions the evolution of communities in Nigeria where the level of social awareness will be high and use of modern technological facilities including information and telecommunications will compete favorably with what obtains in metropolitan agglomerations. Indeed the revolution in telecommunications from year 2001 is a good pointer of what is likely to happen to our communities in the nearest future. Thus as our communities are changing and evolving, CLP is preparing itself to meet the dynamics and challenges of programming in an environment that is constantly evolving. To meet unfolding challenges, CLP has continued to equip its workforce with required tools through a process of training and retraining and capacity building activities.

### **Human Resource Development/Capacity Building**

One crucial element of CLP's Work that distinguishes it from other organizations is the approach it adopts in its programming initiatives. The principles embedded in community participation in information dissemination and service delivery are not the ones that are learnt in school or college. While a number of staff have related academic backgrounds such as degrees or diplomas in social work, health work, medical, social work, sociology, nursing/midwifery and communications, none had the much desired experience in community-based approach to social service delivery and information dissemination. It is the approach to its work that distinguishes CLP, the approach that seeks to appropriate the quantum social capital available in the country for the people's good. And it is in this regard that CLP has had to train and retrain its staff in order to assist them to acquire the principles with which the organization works. Thus whatever the educational background in terms of discipline or level, each staff recruit has to be trained or retrained in order to impart into them the values embedded in the CLP approach. One of the things that the Project looks for in a potential staff is the capacity to learn and amenability to

training; retraining and re-learning. Indeed the first thing that happens to a new member of staffs what we call "unlearning", that is-' helping the new staff members to overcome preconceived notions of dealing with communities and partners, seeing the partner as the "boss" whose views must be respected and fully considered and being responsive to the needs of partners.

Beyond retraining staff members in order to enable them to acquire CLP values. It is also important to build up the capacity of staff members to meet the dynamics of contemporary programming. NGCS operate in a constantly evolving environment and the challenges of non-profit work are always changing, hence staff members need to be able to adapt to developments in the programming environment. In this wise, CLP invest heavily in building the capacity of its staff members to meet contemporary challenges. This it has -done at various levels: in-house national, international and encouraging personal development and fulfillment by staff.

1. In-house training: CLP conducts a lot of in-house training and mentoring to give staff members on-the-job training. For most staff members just joining the organization most are joining without any relevant experience in community work, reproductive health work or even HIV/AIDS. Thus on both the subject matter, (i.e., the issues being dealt with) and the approach, CLP has had to engage in in-house training activities to equip staff. Trainings are conducted on diverse issues including such basic ones as report writing and the more serious one as the process of obtaining grants from donors. The process of in-house capacity building is also furthered by such activities as the internal review of activities where staffs give feedbacks on activities carried out. In addition older staffs conduct training on different areas of the organization's work. In house training has also involved inviting experts from allied organizations from outside CLP to come and train CLP staff. For instance, experts from Action Health incorporated (AHI) and Girls Power initiative (CPD) have conducted training for CLP staff on sexuality education and gender issues respectively at different times.

2. National level training activities: CLP sends its staff to workshops, seminars and conferences that take place locally within the country and outside. Staffs are sponsored to such meetings and upon their return are encouraged to share their experiences with their colleagues at in-house sensitization and replication meetings. In many national conferences, CLP is known to have some of the largest delegations and this is due to the premium we place to giving our staff and volunteers the appropriate exposure that will enable them perform better in their duties.

3. Participation in international seminars and Workshops: CLP invests heavily in international conferences. On occasion, the organization sponsors up to four or five staff members to international conferences in order to give them the necessary exposure and skills to discharge their duties and to understand what is happening at the international level.

4. Encouraging personal development and fulfillment: CLP realizes the importance of developing a work force that believes in the work of the organization; CLP believes that every

staff member must be a stakeholder in the organization in which he/she Works. Hence, CLP provides opportunities for personal development and self-realization on the part of staff members and this includes opportunities to undertake degree programmes in universities even while such staff members remain officially in full employment. About five staff members entered the service of the Project as secondary school leavers but among these, some have graduated while others are at various stages of their university education, The Project grants staff members on approved courses loans and grants as may be necessary to pay their tuition fees or support their study in one form or the other. Some others are engaged in acquiring professional qualifications that would enable them to perform their duties in the organization better. The Project Accountant for example, joined the organization with only an OND but has since obtained her HND and is presently registered for the professional examination of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the foremost accounting body in the country.

### **Towards replication and scaling up**

One question that CLP has had to deal with in recent months is what to do with demands for the expansion of its work. At inception, the founders were firm in the resolve that the new organization would concentrate its activities in the target primary beneficiary community, Isolo, and adjoining communities and remain focused on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health issues for a minimum of five years before contemplating expansion in any direction. Before the target date CLP set for itself it was clear that its work in Isolo, was expanding both in terms of the number of partners the organization was working with and in terms of the subjects being covered in its educational and awareness sessions. Thus, there is no doubt that CLP would have to expand; the question is, in which direction, There are demands to work in other local government areas and even other states in the country, but these demands compete with those for an expansion of the thematic or subject area of focus of the organizations information dissemination and social service delivery activities.

By 1997, the Ford Foundation took an interest in the work of CLP and agreed to fund elements of it. The arrival of Ford coincided with CLP's in-house decision to embark upon a process of expansion. The funding needs of the organization were thus in two directions: fund for the continuation of existing work and funds for replication activities. CLP entered into a dialogue with MacArthur and the Ford Foundations and the former agreed to continue funding the mainstream programmes of the organization while the latter agreed to fund the replication.

As seen earlier chapter four, CLP has expanded its work with partner groups by developing partnerships with counterpart groups in Mushin and Oshodi along the lines of the work clone with the partner groups and associations in Isolo. However, the activities carried out in these areas are not as intensive as that in Isolo. The scope of activities includes faith-based, school work and work with professional associations such as the local NATA, vulcanisers, tailors, market women, etc. in the two new areas. CLP has been able to record great success in the two

new communities first because it had mastered the community-based process and sequence of intervention activities and secondly. It did not have to replicate the mistakes of past activities.

However, towards systematic replication and up-scaling of CLP activities, a Scaling Up workshop took place at CLP premises on 22 and 23 June, 2004. This exercise, which was facilitated by Management Strategies International (MSI), was the first of two planned workshops aimed at enabling CLP to conceptualize and identify strategies for the scaling up of CLP's model for community development. The specific exercises and activities carried out were based on a scaling up framework developed by MSI under its MacArthur grant to study and field test scaling up. The workshop identified CLP's holistic model of

The five elements essential to the success of the model were identified as;

1. Community ownership and partnership in the initiation, design, planning and implementation of educational programmes;
2. Working through existing community Structures and institutions;
3. The location of the implementing organization in the community and its familiarity with local processes;
4. The gradual building relationships of mutual trust and respect starting with initial referrals, through regular programmes and informal meetings and counseling; and
5. Flexibility and adaptability of the organization and its programmes. Tailoring programmes to fit the social, cultural and religious values of partners groups;

However, the model has had meaning in the context of CLP's commitment and dedication to faithfully implementing the elements. While many other organizations profess commitment to the same values, CLP has committed itself in practice. But equally, important is the organizational structure of CLP itself which has supported the Project's commitment to these values. Five aspects of the nature of CLP considered crucial are:

1. Participatory decision-making by the whole staff
2. Staff dedication and commitment
3. Continuous capacity building of staff
4. A clear, shared vision and sense of mission, and a genuine commitment to its actualization; and
5. Ability to transcend social, cultural, ethnic and religious differences internally and externally.

The workshop defined the broad parameters of what scaling up would look like in terms of dimension, methods and who will play what roles in scaling up. It was agreed that scaling up would involve simultaneously expanding: CLP and replicating CLP geographically by

transferring the model to other organizations. Expansion for CLP could involve reaching other communities in metropolitan Lagos. and into other subject areas such as civic education, good governance, advocacy, Non-communicable diseases, pre-and post-natal care and, in the area of HIV/AIDS home-based care and persons living with HIV/AIDS. Potential partners for expansion include nearly all organizations; government agencies, private sector companies involved in community work such as oil. Companies, community development agencies at all levels of government, and community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations working in all areas, but especially reproductive health, sexuality education and family planning.

### **Visions for the Future**

In the medium term, that is, in the next five years. CLP expects to continue working with its two national scale up partners, the CDPA and the Catholic Church. CLP also hopes to continue engaging international and national non-governmental organizations (INGOS) such as Pathfinder, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN) and others; in order to create awareness of the way CLP has worked over the past several years in particular how community based development work has proved workable.

CLP intends to place the community based approach in the front burner of development discourses in the country. Towards this end, the organization has completed work on its medium term Strategic plan which the Advisory Board is currently examining with a view to devising modalities for the implementation.