

MULTIMEDIA TRAINING KIT

Case Study Name : Volunteers Contributing to MDG: #6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

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CHIC volunteers in Kenya - Kenya

WiRED (World Internet Resources for Education and Development) is a nonprofit organization founded originally to introduce internet access across Croatia, and soon expanded to bring computer hardware, software and training to many underprivileged areas around the globe - now including the Balkans, Africa and South America. ICT volunteers assist in its mission "to provide information and communication resources that benefit disadvantaged people around the world."

In 2001, WiRED started to implement CHICs (Community Health Information Centers) in Kenya, of which there are now 25. Each CHIC is equipped with PC's, computer hardware, software and multimedia about various health issues. They are also stocked with a wealth of information stored on CD ROMs covering a wide range of health care information: mainly on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, DM, malnutrition and many other diseases.

The CHICs stand out as a successful effort to educate the Kenyans in these deadly diseases and enable them to access information about their prevention and treatment. An essential component to the success of these information centers is the more than 80 volunteers who are involved with the 25 CHICs around Kenya.

After taking intensive training sessions on the use of ICTs given by WiRED experts, the volunteers are able to move on to their task, inspiring others with their enthusiasm, dedication and insistence on making a difference, as well as their desire to utilize the power of information and communication technologies to combat these diseases and improve health in Kenya.

Information-seekers from different walks of life in these communities attend the CHICs - "the computer places," as the volunteers and local visitors often refer to them. Motivated by a desire to reach out to the community and use their knowledge in ICT, the volunteers help them find the information they are looking for and aid them in the operation of the PC's, CD's and multimedia. They also patiently assist as one or another visitor learns how to use a computer for the first time.

Many stories and positive feedback from the community can attest to the prominent impact of WiRED's CHICs and the great job done by the volunteers. Many patients of chronic diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other STDs) first were able to recognize their symptoms and conditions upon seeing them on the CD ROMs, and, encouraged by the

volunteers, went to seek medical advice. One Community Health Information Center Client, Anthony Mwaro, described his experiences as follows: "Two months ago my father was suffering from severe leg pains so he consulted a doctor who diagnosed him with "intermittent claudication" and scheduled him for an operation. We had never heard of such a disease, so I paid a visit to the WiRED Centre in Mombasa, where I accessed all the information that I needed to know about this illness. I learned how one gets it, the prevention measures and the required treatment. This information came in handy because we were now able to know what steps to take, the decisions to make, and what exactly would happen during the operation that my father would soon undergo."

Not only patients are benefitting from these centers, however. Many medical professionals have also used the CHICS to update their knowledge of important diseases. Some lab technicians have found invaluable information about the latest diagnostic advances. Several commercial sex workers, after being persuaded to attend the CHICs, now know how to protect themselves from life-threatening sexually-transmitted diseases, and some have even quit their job and found alternate employment.

Primary health care providers, midwives, nurses, teachers, traditional healers and even illiterate housewives have come to the "computer places" and never left empty handed - they always came away with knowledge.

The CHICs have an important role in helping to not only treat existing diseases, but also to inform and prevent the members of the community from contracting diseases, as can be witnessed by the testimony of one young visitor to a CHIC in Mombasa: "My name is Luke Thuo, and I am a resident of Mombasa. I recently heard about the Community Health Information Center (CHIC) and decided to find out more about it. What I found was quite impressive; this CHIC is a centre where you can access a variety of detailed health information for free. I found all the health information I needed and more, from human anatomy to various Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Most importantly, I found information on transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS, its effect on a country's economy, and dealing with the pandemic and the infected population. I was also very much impressed with the amount of simplified information on diseases like cancer, arthritis and coronary diseases that anyone is able to understand. This information has enabled me to identify some of the common STIs, and therefore I am now able to advise my friends on how to spot them, too, so they may seek medical attention if infected. CHIC has also helped me understand the dangers of smoking and drinking alcohol, which in turn has helped me reduce both my smoking and alcohol use."

Thanks to the Information Centers and the essential role of the ICT volunteers who staff them, WiRED is helping people in these communities in Kenya to gain information about the serious diseases which threaten to destroy or damage many young lives. With this information, the Kenyans in these communities can be better informed about how to best live with, treat, or most importantly prevent these diseases, greatly improving their knowledge and therefore quality of life.

For more information on this case study, or to view more, visit www.unites.org