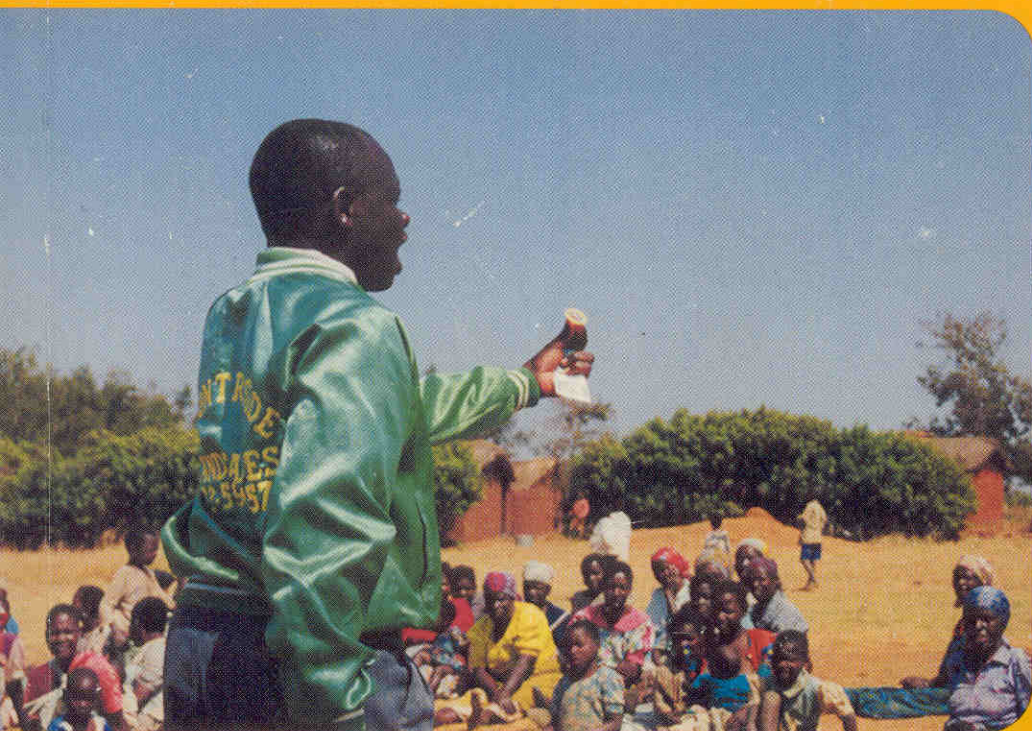


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# HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Agricultural Sector in Malawi

## A Study on Awareness Activities and Theatre



SLE CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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## **HIV/AIDS Prevention in the Agricultural Sector in Malawi.**

### **A Study on Awareness Activities and Theatre.**

Dr. Harald Braun (Team Leader)  
Natascha Vogt  
Till Baumann  
Doris Weidemann  
Peter Dupree

SLE:  
Podbielskialle 66  
14195 Berlin, Germany  
Phone: +49 – 30 – 31471334  
Fax: +49 – 30 – 31471409  
<http://www.agrar.hu-berlin.de/sle>  
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**SLE** CENTRE FOR ADVANCED TRAINING IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## **Executive Summary**

Malawi is among the least developed countries in the world and is also one of the worst hit by the pandemic. About 16% of the population aged 15-49 years live with HIV/AIDS. The impact of the disease can be felt on every facet of the society, but since 85% of the population earn their living from agriculture, this sector is especially hard hit by the epidemic.

The Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI) recognised the challenge to fight the further spread of the disease. It also recognised the impact HIV/AIDS has on its extension staff and the target group, the rural farmers. The organisation of a Training of Trainers Workshop for extension workers, other field level staff, and community representatives as well as the exploration of alternative ways of communicating HIV/AIDS matters in the communities and the workplace were the first steps in response to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In May 2001 the DAES conducted the first Training of Trainers Workshop to enable the participants to organise and conduct village events on HIV/AIDS issues as multi-sectoral facilitator teams. This programme has been implemented in three Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) in the pilot area Lilongwe West Rural Development Project (RDP).

A research team from the Centre for Advanced Training in Rural Development (SLE) undertook a three month study project supported by the Agriculture Extension Support project of GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit). The two main objectives of the study project were to explore possibilities of integrating theatre into the DAES activities related to HIV/AIDS and to evaluate the training of community representatives and extension staff and to give recommendations based on the findings. The overall purpose of the project is for the DAES to use the results and recommendations of the study to further improve its services in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation in the rural agriculture sector.

The research team observed village events, compared the knowledge on HIV/AIDS matters between field staff who have and have not been part of the training of trainers workshop, and assessed the knowledge on HIV/AIDS at village level.

The team found numerous reasons for encouragement in the work of the trained field staff. At the same time the team noted areas for improvement and clarifica-

tion to be addressed and implemented in the next Training of Trainers Workshops. Proposed interventions could include:

- Updating and revising the Training of Trainers Workshop curriculum.
- Undertaking a follow-up training for Training of Trainers Workshop participants incorporating new subject matter along with expanded training of key topics previously covered.
- Highlighting gender-based issues.
- Development of a manual to help facilitators to improve organisation and conduction of HIV/AIDS awareness meetings.
- Emphasising and encouraging cross-sectoral facilitation teams.
- Increased cooperation with NGOs working in HIV/AIDS related issues.
- More defined cooperation between ministries.

Regarding the subject of theatre and HIV/AIDS, the research team observed theatre performances, conducted group interviews with drama groups as well as post-performance interviews with spectators and with various theatre specialists and practitioners.

The high motivation of the drama groups and the impressing theatre performances observed, suggest that there is great potential in the exploration of theatre as an alternative form of communicating HIV/AIDS issues. Thus, possible ways of integrating theatre into the activities of the DAES are outlined in the study. Several key interventions involving theatre include:

- Redesigning the Training of Trainers Workshop curriculum to contain at least three days of training on theatre skills.
- Integrating modules on theatre skills into the follow-up training for participants of the Training of Trainers Workshop of May 2001.
- Organising an integrated HIV/AIDS and theatre training for representatives of community drama groups.
- Integrating the expertise of experienced theatre practitioners into theatre skills trainings.

- Supporting drama groups willing to perform at places outside their immediate environments.
- Supporting the formation of workplace drama groups in the MoAI.
- Establishing regular dialogues between different drama groups.

The study concludes that the Training of Trainers approach of the Ministry of Agriculture should be scaled up to a country-wide programme and that theatre should be integrated into the activities.