

INTEGRATE & REPLICATE

It was crucial for Il Ngwesi to develop relationships with local and government organizations before the project began. This meant involving organizations in the strategic planning sessions, and encouraging them to take part in the development and follow through of training, testing and care. An even more critical component involved close communication with the Ministry of Health in Kenya at all levels - health officials at the national level were notified, trained and encouraged to give input, and at the district level health officials played roles in training, offering materials for testing and awareness.

Project work in Il Ngwesi was implemented by young people who had the time and interest to take part in training, engage in massive community awareness campaigns and create educational dramas. The process encouraged people at the local level to be instruments of change - their attempts have become a living experiment which has changed the lives of everyone in the community and has pushed towards creating a more integrated community health care system. Il Ngwesi and its partners are now actively sharing what they have learned with other communities that are interested in getting HIV/AIDS under control.

The Anti-Stigma Declaration of the Community of Il Ngwesi

We, the community of Il Ngwesi, pledge to continue to promote the resolution of the HIV/AIDS challenge in our community.

We will promote the development of total community awareness of the disease, so that its spread can be stopped.

We will find ways to support those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

We will not allow any form of discrimination towards those living with HIV/AIDS.

We will do all that we can to support those living with HIV/AIDS to live healthy and productive lives.

We will observe Dec. 1st, World AIDS Day, as an important day in the community's annual calendar, a day on which we recommit ourselves to the control of the disease in Il Ngwesi.



Il Ngwesi's 12 Success Indicators

- Leadership Takes Responsibility
- Defined Geography
- Volunteers
- HIV/AIDS Awareness Mobilization
- Mobile Voluntary Testing and Counseling
- Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission
- Availability of Anti-Retroviral Treatment
- Community Anti-Stigma Declaration
- Community Symbol
- Documentation and Feedback
- Connected to Organizations (Partnerships)
- Spread of the Approach with Other Communities

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Getting HIV/AIDS Under Control in Il Ngwesi, Laikipia, Kenya



An Evolving Framework for African Communities Living with HIV/AIDS



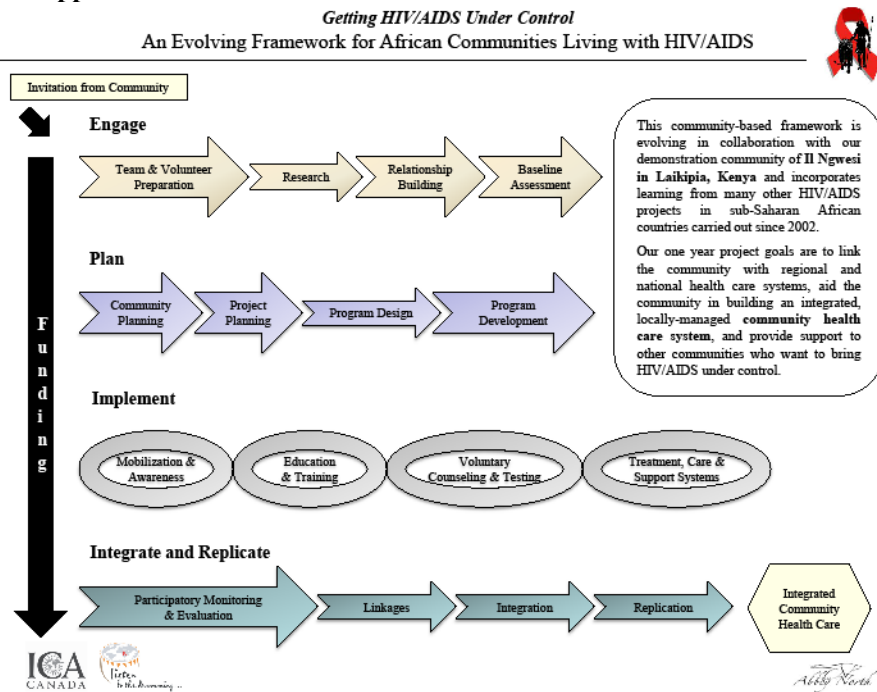
The Community

Il Ngwesi is a Maasai community of 730 families living on the edge of the Great Rift Valley in north central Kenya on a community-owned group ranch. On this rural and picturesque land, far from the services and infrastructure of modern cities, residents of Il Ngwesi tend to livestock and practice the age-old social customs of the Maasai people. But, unlike other Maasai communities in East Africa, Il Ngwesi has organized an initiative to act strategically to prevent the spread of HIV and to assist residents living with the virus.

In response to a growing awareness of the threat of HIV/AIDS to the community, the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch included HIV/AIDS in their 5-year community development strategic plan. Together with ICA Canada and Abbey North as strategic partners, the Il Ngwesi HIV/AIDS Intervention project began in late 2006 with the goal of getting HIV/AIDS under control in Il Ngwesi.

Through the determined efforts of more than 200 local volunteers and with the assistance of community leaders, local government and international agencies, Il Ngwesi has made major progress towards this goal and are reaching out to offer assistance to other communities who want to get HIV/AIDS under control. Initial funding for this work came from ICA Canada. Family Health International in Kenya is now a major funder of this initiative.

The Approach



ENGAGE

In May 2006, 19 community leaders met with ICA Canada Representatives to express their commitment to getting HIV/AIDS under control. They followed through on this commitment by conducting a baseline survey, being some of the first individuals to be tested and by creating an “anti-stigma declaration”. They remain engaged in all stages of the project by meeting regularly to make decisions, taking part in planning sessions and using community funds when necessary.

Internally, Il Ngwesi built strong ties among its community members. Links with existing organizations outside of Il Ngwesi were created and strengthened when a team of community members and ICA Canada representatives made regular visits to share progress. Government officials from the Laikipia district have been regularly notified of the project’s successes and included in a few of the community’s training sessions.

PLAN

Community members from Il Ngwesi including Traditional Birth Attendants, Morans and key business people met with outside organizations (World Vision, MOH, VUMA, ICA Canada) to define where they would like to be after one year. They then created a project map that outlined their intention to focus on awareness, testing and care. Smaller teams focused on the design, development and planning of these three focus areas.

IMPLEMENT

Community members felt that if a thorough job was done with HIV/AIDS awareness, many more people would seek out testing, and there would be a reduction in unsafe practices and stigma. A series of trainings were designed and implemented in Il Ngwesi including; Peer education with youth, training for Traditional Birth Attendants and a Community Care Coalition, and basic education with the leaders. Peer Educators then conducted formal and informal meetings, conversations and trainings in the field. Sometimes groups traveled from home to home over difficult terrain, sharing knowledge about HIV with households.

Initially, Il Ngwesi partnered with an outside organization to bring mobile testing to the community. Subsequently, key people in Il Ngwesi were trained to become counselors. Now Il Ngwesi’s own counselors are linked to government services that provide materials necessary to conduct these tests.

VCT counselors are responsible for equipping those who test positive with the names of individuals and organizations that help connect them to services and information. Names of those who test positive are kept confidential but people are encouraged to travel to Nanyuki on select days where a partner organization links them to services including CD 4 count tests and access to ARVs. Il Ngwesi and its partners are working to create even stronger support systems which include focusing on nutrition, food security and livelihood.