

**The 1st Graduation of 27 SPLA HIV/AIDS Educators/Focal Persons and 30 Peer Educators**

**Who are HIV/AIDS educators and focal persons?** The HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons are soldiers of different ranks who were selected by their commanders to be trained and equipped to spearhead the fight against HIV/AIDS in SPLA. The HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons will have dual roles, in which they serve as HIV/AIDS educators in their Divisions, Brigades and Battalions and at the same time as the link to the SPLA HIV Secretariat based at the SPLA GHQs in Juba. The training of this cadre of military personnel is an initial and deliberate effort to build the capacity of the SPLA HIV/AIDS Secretariat in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support activities. Currently, the human resource capacity in HIV/AIDS within the SPLA is low, and the training of the HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons is a positive step towards filling this gap. The 27 HIV/AIDS Educators/focal persons are now available to conduct HIV/AIDS commanders' sensitization workshops for mid level commanders and HIV/AIDS education outreach for the SPLA soldiers and their families in the local



languages and well reflecting the SPLA and Southern Sudanese culture. The focal persons are also available at their locations on short notice to consult, counsel and mobilize troops for HIV/AIDS related activities.

**Training and Graduation**

The training of the HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons is based on the "training of trainers" model with an initial three weeks of training followed by a two week refresher course over a six month period. The draft training curriculum and training were developed and conducted by a team of three HIV/AIDS trainers from the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF). The training was officiated by Brig. Ibrahim Wani from the SPLA GHQs who described the training as "timely and critical in supporting the security and development of South Sudan." Brig. Wani urged the trainees to take the training seriously and graduate to be the HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons that they are expected to be. The trainees described the three weeks of training as intense but the mix of lectures, role plays, story telling and practicals *(continued on back)*

**"We are calling the commanders within the various SPLA ranks to support the work of the HIV/AIDS educators/focal persons but also to take advantage of their skills to better HIV/AIDS knowledge among the troops."** - Maj. John Woja, Acting Director SPLA HIV/AIDS Secretariat



**"Training of the focal persons is of significant importance to the Secretariat because without the focal persons it's difficult to implement and coordinate HIV/AIDS activities, considering the large geographical coverage of the SPLA in Sudan. As a link to the Secretariat the divisions, the 27 trained are a drop in the ocean but we in the Secretariat with support from our partners have a plan to train more in all the divisions of the SPLA."** - 2nd Lt. Martin Taban, BCC In-charge SPLA HIV Secretariat



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*(continued from front)* captivated their interest throughout. The opportunity to train HIV/AIDS peer educators as part of the practicals provided exposure for the focal persons in training, a skill that was highly appreciated.

The graduation ceremony was marked by pomp, song and dance and was officiated by Major General Wilson Deng from the SPLA GHQs. Major General Deng emphasized yet again the commitment by the SPLA leadership to fight HIV/AIDS in the military as he awarded certificates to the 27 focal persons and the 30 peer educators.

***“We invite our partners to support this training initiative in order to build the capacity of the SPLA Secretariat in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support.”***

-Major John Woja,

**Training of Peer Educators**

*by Simon Taban, PSI International*

The HIV/AIDS peer educators are military personnel selected from the various SPLA units and trained in HIV/AIDS education. The five day training course was facilitated by trainers from the UPDF and the trainee the focal persons. The peer educators will conduct day - to - day peer education sessions in their units to individuals and/or to small groups. The peer educators are closest to the troops and will provide HIV/AIDS education services in their military units. The peer educators are trained and are supervised by their counterparts, the HIV/AIDS educators and focal persons. The peer educators compliment the work of the HIV/AIDS focal persons and are a key in the fight against HIV/AIDS as they are closest to the troops. As more peer educators are trained, the HIV/AIDS Educators and Focal Persons will assume a leading role in the establishment of Divisional HIV/AIDS Committees as detailed in the draft SPLA HIV/AIDS policy document.

**Future Plans:** The goal of the SPLA HIV/AIDS Secretariat is to train and equip the entire SPLA force with HIV/AIDS information. In order to do this, the SPLA HIV/AIDS Secretariat has planned to train more military personnel as focal persons and peer educators. Our plan as the Secretariat is to train 120 focal persons and 1200 peer educators by the end of 2007.

**Two Things**

*Major Yohana Mabor Deng,  
SPLA Medical Corps*

If a young man meets a young girl, two things will happen. Either she will attract him or not. If she doesn't attract him, there is nothing to worry about but if she does attract him two things will happen. Either the young man will declare his love or not. If he doesn't declare his love then there is nothing to worry about but if he does and she accepts, then two things will happen. He will ask for sex or not. If he doesn't ask for sex, then there is nothing to worry about but if he does then two things will happen. Either she will say yes or no. If no, there is nothing to worry about but if yes, two things will happen. Either the young man will use a condom or not. If he does use a condom then there is little to worry about but if he doesn't two things will happen. Either the man or the woman will contract HIV or not. If neither does then there is little to worry about but if either does two things will happen. Either the young man or woman will .....CAN YOU GUESS THE CONCLUSION?

***“I learnt a lot about HIV/AIDS which is very important to my life. I now know about where and how I can contract HIV/AIDS and how to pass the same information to my comrades. We also got certificates that support our future careers both in the military and outside.”*** -2nd Lt. Kout Kuot Kuot, Focal Person Team leader for the SPLA GHQs

***In the next issue of the HIV/AIDS Bulletin:***

- Facts on sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Collaboration with the SPLA Medical Corps