



Leadership seminars forge new ties and stronger commitment to action against HIV/AIDS.

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Ukraine breaks down barriers and builds leadership against HIV/AIDS

Wednesday, 15 May 2002. At a recent seminar in Ukraine on HIV/AIDS, the editor of a government newspaper found himself discussing the country's surging epidemic with a participant from the nightclub scene, a milieu he knew nothing about. This is exactly what the organizers wanted.

The seminars -- organized by the UNDP Leadership for Results programme -- are empowering participants to take action against HIV/AIDS in their workplaces and communities. The aim is to generate higher levels of commitment and effectiveness within organizations around the country to help reverse the epidemic.

"I feel that I have a better understanding of the psychology of those living with HIV/AIDS, and therefore we can better work together in a cooperative fight against the disease in Ukraine," said Julia Senyshin, a journalist with Lux, a television station in western Ukraine. "We are all responsible as members of society, not only those living with the disease," she said, adding that she hoped to continue working with other journalists from the seminar to bring national attention to the

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HIV/AIDS threat.

When people settle into careers, many develop "tunnel vision" in the drive to get ahead in professional life. Drawing on extensive research and work with thousands of people, the seminars are breaking down barriers and stereotypes and encouraging links between participants from different social worlds while building leadership skills.

More than 300 Ukrainians from various backgrounds are participating in the Leadership for Results seminars.

The number of reported cases of HIV infections in Ukraine has increased 20-fold in the last five years, and experts estimate that up to 400,000 Ukrainians -- 1.5 per cent of adults -- are infected. The rapid spread of the deadly virus, linked to increased injecting drug use and an upsurge in the sex trade related to lack of economic opportunities for young women, has spurred senior officials to step up efforts to stem it, and President Leonid Kuchma has declared 2002 the "Year of the Fight Against AIDS."

Douglas Gardner, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, underlined the importance of developing leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS. "We are encouraging not only government and NGOs, but people from all sectors of society, from top to bottom, to join hands in spearheading the movement to reverse the spread of the epidemic," he said.

Leadership for Results grows out of

the UNDP corporate strategy on HIV/AIDS, which works to reverse the epidemic by helping countries prevent new infections, ensure adequate care and support for people affected by HIV and AIDS, and lessen the social and economic impact of the epidemic on societies. UNDP is also implementing the programme in Cambodia, Ethiopia, South Africa and Swaziland.

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