

Davis 100 Projects for Peace Initiative Proposal
Jessica Shih, Cornell University

Development of a Peer HIV/AIDS Education Network
and a HIV/AIDS Education Center in Beijing, China

INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS is an epidemic that has led to enormous suffering and death, especially among young adults outside of the United States. The goal of this peace initiative is to unite young adults in Beijing, China in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Young adults, including high school and university students, have not been given much opportunity in China to actively participate in this fight, but I believe that can change. By uniting students in China, we can give them the power to make a difference.

WHY BEIJING, CHINA?

There are approximately 200 million youth aged 15-24 in China, and over 2 million in Beijing alone. As a result of the more conservative nature of older generations in China, China's youth are not receiving adequate education about sexual behavior and practices. Although the Chinese middle-school curriculum currently contains a section on reproduction, many teachers are not comfortable teaching their students about sex. As a result, students are not being taught about safe sex practices that promote prevention of pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS and STI's.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

General Goal:

To increase sexual education and awareness among young adults in China in order to promote safe sex practices and knowledge on the subject, and to link young leaders from all over the country to support each other.

There are two main components of the HIV/AIDS Sex Education Development Project:

- 1) Establish a network of Peer Educators, via the Internet, where discussion, exchange of knowledge and ideas, and educational materials about sexual health education can be found.
- 2) Establish a comprehensive sex education program in Beijing high schools that is taught by trained Beijing university student volunteers.

1. Online Network

From working in a charity called LetsStopAIDS based in Toronto, Canada for two years, I recognize the need for Peer Educators worldwide to connect to each other in order to learn from one another. The online network will be available in both English and Chinese with the intention of spreading to as many HIV/AIDS Youth Outreach groups as possible. There will be a public and private site. The public site will contain information for anyone who is interested in learning more about HIV/AIDS and sex education. The private site will be a forum for the Peer Educators to obtain educational materials, engage in discussion, and exchange ideas and initiatives they are currently working on. The private site may even be a way to promote local, national or global conferences for the Peer Educators.

2. Sex Education Teaching in High Schools

We hope to gain the support of at least 25 high schools in Beijing to participate in the program. This involves speaking with school principals as they are in charge of allotting time for programs like ours. We anticipate that we'll meet some resistance, but should be able to have support from 25+ schools. We must also have enough volunteers to teach the sessions, which involves recruiting university students. Once we have identified the university student volunteers, we will train them in Beijing so they are prepared to teach a comprehensive sex education program in the high schools.

TIME LINE

This project will begin during the Spring semester of 2008, but the bulk of the project will occur during the Summer of 2008.

I will go to Beijing, China during the Summer 2008 to collaborate with university students in Beijing and be directly involved with speaking to local principals. I also will train the volunteers and organize logistics of the program. I will also develop the content and ideas for the website.

BACKGROUND

I am a senior at Cornell University majoring in Biology & Society. My specific interest is international public health. During my time at Cornell, I have volunteered with various charities and organizations on health education programs. I traveled to Beijing last summer, as a Volunteer Leader for the Beijing 2008 Olympics; while in Beijing, I became acutely aware of the lack of knowledge and education with regard to HIV/AIDS.