



AJAN staffers meet with students concerned about AIDS at Loyola Jesuit College in Abuja, Nigeria.

In 2002, Jesuits in 25 African nations bolstered their response to the AIDS crisis on their continent by creating the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN). Its main office in Nairobi serves as the central office for all the HIV/AIDS work in which Jesuits on that continent are engaged. This summer, AJAN has something to celebrate: five years making a difference in the fight against AIDS.

AJAN staff span Africa, working with the ten Jesuit provinces there to support existing AIDS ministries. They are also incorporating AIDS education into the formation process of young African Jesuits by conducting presentations and hosting Jesuit interns at AJAN House.

AJAN's growing collection of research materials—several thousand books, periodicals, and articles, as well as CDs and videos—has become a valuable resource for others in the fight against AIDS. (*Linked for Life* is a recent AJAN publication available through the website below.) Some 800 Jesuits have already attended AJAN workshops and courses.

This past March, AJAN helped launch the Loyola Hope Center in Togo to offer care and AIDS prevention to the region's youth. The center's nutrition facility teaches proper dieting to those undergoing AIDS treatment. AJAN also works with Nyumbani House, which cares for AIDS-affected orphans and elderly in the slums of Nairobi, and Radio Kwizera, a Jesuit Refugee Service-run radio

station in Tanzania.

One of AJAN's larger goals is to remove the stigma associated with the virus and promote compassion and support for those affected. "People use the term 'mainstreaming' to talk about this goal," says AJAN staffer William Mbugua, SJ. Last year, AJAN helped coordinate an AIDS awareness day at Loyola High School in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, to encourage openness and discussion at the school and within the students' families. The organization also set up a resource center there of books, videos, and other educational material on HIV/AIDS.

Mbugua also notes that at Loyola Jesuit College in Nigeria, the students write and perform plays and poems that "speak to the larger school community on the pandemic." It is through such mainstreaming that AJAN is eradicating shame and bringing care and hope to those who need it most.

AJAN's director, Fr. Michael Czerny, SJ, knows there is always more to be done. He notes that though AJAN has helped achieve success in providing relief, but he is more interested in making structural changes. "It isn't just a matter of bolstering the health systems in Africa to deal with AIDS and other pandemics, but of creating an economic system that works for the whole world and not just a handful of nations. Aid is good, but structural change allowing Africa to develop is better." **C**



Battling **AIDS** in *Africa*

Jesuit efforts in the fight against the disease are expanding

RADIO CHIKUNI



Jesuit-run Radio Chikuni in Zambia reaches an audience of a quarter million with music and also education on a wide range of topics, including HIV and AIDS.

Sources: *AJANnews*, *The Catholic Register*, *Province Express*