

Thirty Youth Graduate as PEER Councilors

February 2006

Thirty excited young people graduated from the AEP-Kenya and HOPE Worldwide co-sponsored PEER Counseling Program on Saturday, February 4, 2006.

The youth completed the training last November. (The training was featured in a November 2005 AEP News Room story "Education Tops AEP's World AIDS Day Agenda.") A wide range of topics were covered during the five-day training including life skills, HIV/AIDS, drugs and substance abuse and reproductive health. The graduates are all members of the Health Club at Ofafa Jericho Secondary School and are orphans whose parents have died from HIV/AIDS.

To kick off the graduation ceremony, two of the workshop participants presented a song to the group. This was followed by a rap presentation from one of the PEER counselors. The group was very upbeat as they shared their talents with each other. The students then had an opportunity to share how the workshop has impacted them.

Many students talked about how they intended to use the skills they had learned from the training. One student shared how he went to his friend who was having problems with drug abuse. The student

encouraged his friend to quit taking drugs. Even though he met resistance initially the friend started yielding to his constant admonition and has decided to stop using drugs.

William Siwa, AEP-Kenya Program Coordinator, encouraged the students to start dreaming, looking for ways in which they can impact society for positive change. The students expressed their gratitude by having the trainers and AEP-Kenya staff stand as they gave them a huge round of applause.

Each student was presented with a certificate. The students jubilantly waved their certificates in the air. But the best was yet to come. Each student was also presented with 100 Kenyan shillings (equivalent to \$1.50) for completing the workshop. Once again the students danced about the room waving their new treasure.

Of the thirty participants in the PEER training, only one student was an AEP scholar. The training program is part of a larger effort by AEP-Kenya to impact the lives of young people through youth development programs. The next PEER workshop will be launched at the Friends Secondary School on Saturday, February 18, 2006.

