

Christian AIDS/ HIV National Alliance (CANAs), India

A case study on influencing theological colleges in aspects of integral mission

CANA is a national alliance of churches and Christian NGOs involved in HIV and AIDS issues. Its main role is the empowerment and involvement of network members through networking, communication, advocacy, capacity development and consultancy services. It enables churches to become directly involved in addressing HIV and AIDS, and also mobilises regional Christian HIV and AIDS network members to become a local resource for changing attitudes within the church at all levels.

As part of its work, CANA is working to integrate HIV and AIDS studies into all Indian Bible colleges, and is initially working with twenty colleges. One of these Bible colleges is Union Biblical Seminary (UBS), and it is CANA's interaction with them that provides the basis for this short case study.

Steps of engagement with Union Biblical Seminary

1. UBS has been involved in a Tearfund-supported intern programme for a number of years. This programme provides theological students at UBS with the opportunity to do a seven-month placement with a Christian NGO, working with commercial sex workers, street children or slum communities. This programme has had a profound impact on the lives of the students with many returning to UBS with life-changing stories, and with challenges to the college to address such issues as HIV and AIDS. UBS were therefore already thinking about how to teach their students about HIV and AIDS before they had any discussions with CANA.
2. Banner Makan, the Executive Director of CANA, met with the Principal and Dean of UBS at a Tearfund strategy conference. This enabled him to build a relationship with them and get to know them.
3. UBS invited him to meet their staff. Their first question was 'What is your theological background?' Banner Makan is a graduate of Fuller Seminary in the US, and this immediately gained him credibility, as in India it is one of the most respected and influential US colleges.
4. Banner then worked with the UBS staff in helping them to think through how HIV and AIDS can be mainstreamed into all their courses (e.g. ethics, New Testament, mission, etc). Banner did not give them a pre-written curriculum but encouraged UBS to develop their own.
5. UBS then organised a 28-session course for all UBS professors and MA students, where each week a different faculty staff member taught about HIV and AIDS from their own discipline (e.g. from a church history perspective, an ethics perspective, an Old Testament perspective, etc). The papers from these sessions have been written-up for future reference.

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Information provided by CANA, India

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