



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



DELIVERING NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION TO PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

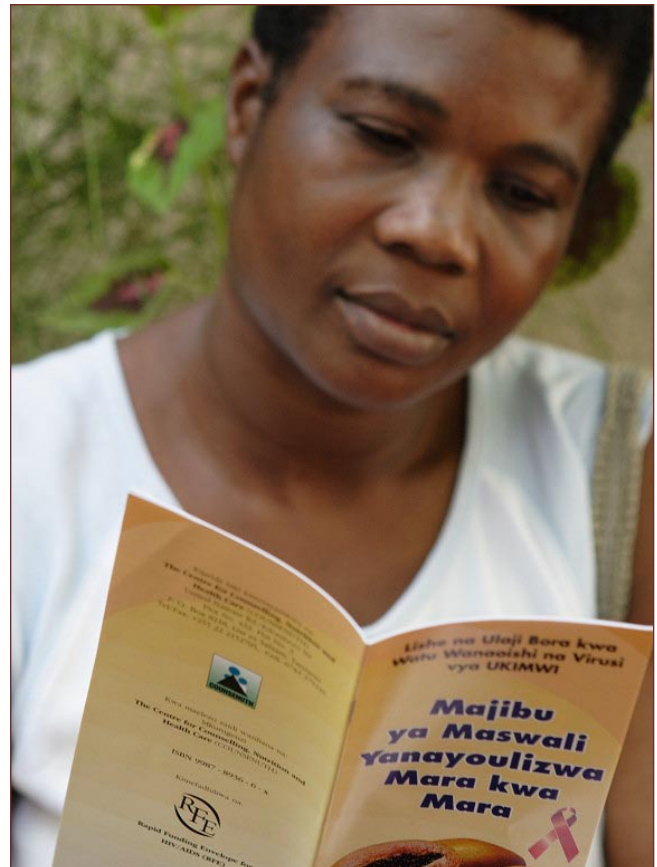


“This man came in one day for counseling. You could see he was sick—the dark circles under his eyes said he was anemic and he had the thrush common to people with AIDS. I asked about his status but he just looked down at the ground. He finally said he was positive, but that no one knew. I told him to not worry—that I’m also positive and I know what it’s like.” Eliza describes proudly how she instructed the man on how to clear up his thrush—by chewing three cloves of garlic—and other nutritional counseling to help deal with anemia and achieve and maintain better health.

Just two years ago Eliza was in a very different situation. She weighed 35 kilograms. Her husband had left her and their three children. She was losing a three-year battle with AIDS—a battle fought mostly on her own, fearing what would happen if people found out. With little recourse, she opened up about her status. Eliza was able to get food aid for herself, her three children, and four children of her sister, who had just passed away as a result of AIDS. She attended counseling sessions where she learned how to access medications and obtained information on proper nutrition.

The counselors who helped Eliza were trained by the Centre for Counseling, Nutrition and Health Care (COUNSENUH), a non-profit organisation in Tanzania working to improve the quality of care and quality of life for vulnerable target groups—women, children, youths, and persons living with HIV/AIDS—by promoting preventative care, nutrition, and counseling at the community level. The organisation was founded to serve the community as a whole; however, as the AIDS epidemic has become a major priority, now more than 80 percent of COUNSENUH’s work is related to HIV/AIDS.

For people living with AIDS, proper nutrition can help ward off disease and keep immune systems stronger. A critical gap in nutrition education COUNSENUH faced was a lack of information on nutrition and HIV, particularly in an accessible format. “You see, while there is a lot of



Through COUNSENUH’s nutritional materials, Eliza has learned how to maintain a healthy diet, which has improved her health.

information out there on nutrition and HIV, there is almost none in Swahili,” explains COUNSENUH’s executive director, Mary Materu. “But, it’s Swahili that the vast majority of people are comfortable with. We not only write the materials in Swahili, but also include information on how to use locally grown foods and traditional cooking.” Few nutritionists work in Tanzania’s health system. “You will find some working for the Ministry of Agriculture, and Education as Home Ec teachers, but none in health. So we work to fill that gap.” To do this effectively, COUNSENUH needed resources.

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The Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE) for HIV/AIDS is a unique partnership between the Tanzania Commission for AIDS, the Zanzibar AIDS Commission, and 10 international donors (see front page). The RFE enables civil society organisations in Tanzania like COUNSENUTH to participate in the national response to AIDS by providing grants for short-term projects that complement the overall national strategy in facing the disease. The Leadership, Management and Sustainability Program of Management Sciences for Health provides technical oversight and application screening for the RFE, while the international accounting firm, Deloitte & Touche, provides grant management and financial oversight.

COUNSENUTH used its RFE grant to expand several of its programs, including a radio programme to combat misinformation about nutrition, especially among those living with HIV. Also, in partnership with Sokoine University of Agriculture, a leading Tanzanian institution in nutrition research, COUNSENUTH developed three nutrition booklets and a training manual to serve as a reference for caregivers when dealing with nutrition and HIV. The grant also funded printing and distribution of 20,000 copies of the booklets. The three informational booklets, covering basic nutrition, infant feeding, and answers to the most commonly asked questions about HIV and nutrition, filled a critical gap in nutrition education in the country.



COUNSENUTH trains counselors and other health professionals in the proper use of its materials.

is a job aide for nutrition counselors who work with people on ARVs—a group with special nutritional needs,” Ms. Materu explains. “The other we feel is even more important and interesting. You will find lots of information for children under five, and then for adults. PMTCT programs also cover children up until they are two, but then what? Those years from two to eight are critical for a child’s growth and there is almost no information out there on nutritional needs for HIV positive children of this age. It’s been very challenging, but being a part of the RFE has connected us with a lot of organisations and we’re working with many groups to put everything together.”

The result that matters most, however, is that COUNSENUTH is able to offer better information to improve health of members of the community—people like Eliza, who remains in good health, and has become a counselor for others living with AIDS. “Today I have no shame. Yes, I am HIV positive, but I am grateful to God that he gave me the strength to survive. I see this as a chance now to use what I know to teach others so they can also survive and live a quality life.”

Story and Photographs by Michael Paydos, Management Sciences for Health, mpaydos@msh.org, February 2006.



“Your materials are filled with rich information that is clearly improving the quality of life of people living with AIDS...one of our staff who is HIV positive informed us how he’s been using information in your booklets. He said he was never aware of some of the uses for many of the spices.”

—UNAIDS Country Coordinator

The demand was so high, in fact, that in the year following the initial distribution of the materials, a week doesn’t go by without more requests for copies. The high demand and successful implementation of the original RFE grant has enabled COUNSENUTH to secure additional funding from Ministry of Health, United Nations, and other donors to print more copies. The organisation is now one of the Alliance Partners of the Tumaoni Programme, which is implementing a home-based care programme in five regions of Tanzania. COUNSENUTH has become the leading source in Tanzania for nutrition information for people living with HIV/AIDS.

In late 2005, COUNSENUTH received a second RFE grant to produce two additional booklets related to HIV/AIDS and nutrition, again targeting key gaps they’ve identified. “One

For more information on the Rapid Funding Envelope, please contact:

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