



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



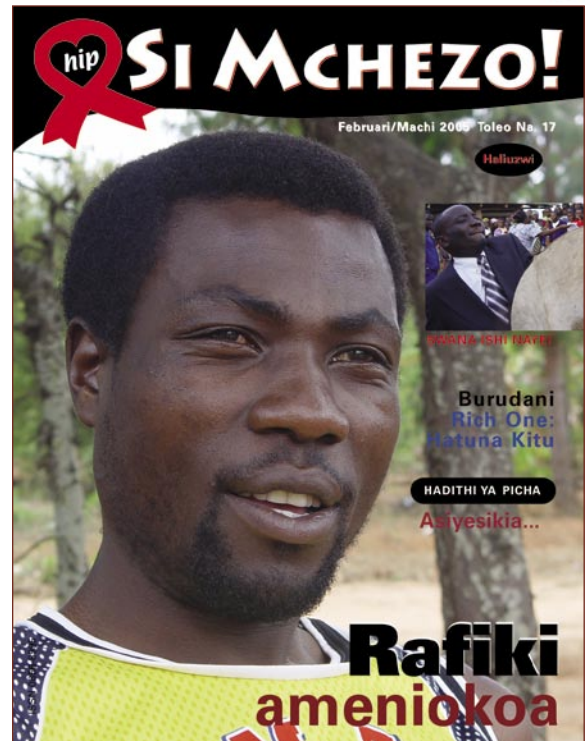
DELIVERING INFORMATION ON HIV IS NO JOKE



“We would like to congratulate the *Si Mchezo!* team for their hard work to educate the community on different issues relating to HIV/AIDS. The language in the magazine is simple, and the stories and pictures reflect real life and real situations from different community settings. We are also so happy that the magazines are distributed at the village level.” This letter, from four health workers of the Lusisi District, southern Tanzania, is one of a stream of testimonials the East African Development Communication Foundation (EADCF) has received in response to its publication.

EADCF is a non-governmental organisation that uses “edutainment” to shed light on and dispel the myths about HIV/AIDS, entertaining and educating audiences throughout Tanzania through various media formats that mirror youth culture and language. EADCF uses mass media including internet, radio, and picture-story magazines to facilitate open dialogue that will enable individuals and their communities to change their behavior. One of the latest products EADCF uses to deliver this message is the magazine, *Si Mchezo!*

Si Mchezo! (“No Joke” in Swahili) was launched in 2004 on a small scale, with a distribution of 10,000 copies of each issue to three districts in southern Tanzania. *Si Mchezo!* stories use photographs and dialogue in simple Swahili, covering key issues about AIDS. Its format, language, and messages are tailored for its audience—rural, out-of-school Tanzanian youth. Editors visit target villages and meet with community youth groups to produce the issues. Together they come up with the storyline, develop the story, determine which characters are needed, and how to direct the photography, giving the communities a sense of ownership. While past projects of EADCF utilized national celebrities to generate interest in its messages, *Si Mchezo!* focuses on creating and using characters readers can relate to more easily. An editor at *Si Mchezo!* describes a typical character in an issue: “This is Issa from Lindi, he has HIV. He lives with his mom, he’s very open about his status. At first there was conflict with his community, but now everyone’s at peace with it. This is Issa at his house, which anyone anywhere in rural Tanzania can recognize as being just like theirs.”



Si Mchezo! features people Tanzanian readers can relate to.

Si Mchezo! is distributed free of charge every other month. Since it targets out-of-school youth—a group typically difficult to track—distribution can be challenging. So in areas with large employers, EADCF has partnered with companies to distribute issues to workers. In other areas with no large base of employment, EADCF works to create partnerships with local governments and organisations working within the communities to assist with dissemination.

Though the first issues of *Si Mchezo!* were well received, staff at EADCF were concerned about the magazine’s small scale and its lack of funding to scale up the product. “It might have just fizzled out if a funder hadn’t come along who was interested in helping make it survive,” says Rebecca Arnold, a production manager at EADCF. Then EADCF found out about the Rapid Funding Envelope for HIV/AIDS.

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The Rapid Funding Envelope for HIV/AIDS (RFE) is a 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 to participate in the national response to AIDS by providing grants to local organisations for short-term projects that contribute to the overall national strategy in facing the disease. Management Sciences for Health provides technical oversight for the RFE, while Deloitte & Touche provides grant management and financial oversight. In July 2003, EADCF applied successfully to the RFE.

A priority area of the RFE is to fill the void for Information/Education/Communication (IEC) materials in Swahili, Tanzania's national language. EADCF's RFE Project involved scaling up *Si Mchezo!* from 10,000 copies distributed in three districts to 50,000 copies in six districts. Three underserved rural regions of Tanzania were chosen for the expansion.

In addition to scale-up of *Si Mchezo!*, EADCF used its RFE grant to develop two booklets—AIDS in our Community and Living Positively with AIDS. Adapted from booklets published by Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication of South Africa, scenarios were adjusted to reflect Tanzanian settings and translated into simple Swahili. The RFE grant enabled an initial print run of 25,000 copies of each booklet. EADCF received permission from Soul City to adapt the materials on their own without any direct technical assistance or funding. When completed, Soul City was impressed with the results. "They said that ours are the best of the nine countries they work with," Rebecca reports, "in terms of the quality of adaptation and printing quality."

"It is true that as a parent I was very ashamed to talk about HIV/AIDS with my kids. With Si Mchezo! magazine I think I can try to talk to them. Nowadays I feel somehow comfortable to discuss issues related to sex." —reader response

The districts chosen to receive *Si Mchezo!* are among the most neglected in the country, with a very limited infrastructure. In Ludewe, by the edge of Lake Tanganyika, the only printed materials available are *Si Mchezo!* and weeks-old newspapers. With the RFE grant, EADCF successfully produced and distributed 10 issues of *Si Mchezo!* Family Health International's YouthNet Program then agreed to fund two more years of the magazine to be distributed in select districts. Since the completion of its RFE grant, the magazine's reach has grown further—now operating with print runs of more than 100,000, while EADCF still works for further expansion to achieve full coverage for the country.



EADCF staff develop content for *Si Mchezo!* in partnership with the communities the magazine targets.

EADCF is now working to adapt additional Soul City materials. Using a new RFE grant awarded in 2005, EADCF is adapting three more booklets for use in Tanzania: "HIV and Treatment," with information on ARVs and living positively with AIDS; "HIV Affects All Children," which is an adult-targeted piece to increase awareness of the toll the disease causes on society's most vulnerable group; and a third piece that targets children 8–12 years old.

EADCF's success in repackaging Soul City's materials has fostered what could become a larger-scale partnership. "We've had discussions with Soul City about a bigger collaboration, not just adapting a few booklets," explains Rebecca. "They want us to be their hub for East Africa, so if a Kenyan organisation contacts Soul City, they'll say 'actually you need to call EADCF and they'll sort you out.' So they've written us into their proposal for the next round of funding from the European Union for their regional expansion, which means we'll get funding from them and get a closer technical support. Also, this will allow for networking with the other organisations they support in the southern African region, so we have big plans."

As a result of its RFE grants, EADCF has expanded its partnerships and its coverage with one aim in mind: ensure correct, accessible HIV/AIDS information reaches every Tanzanian. By building on these successes, EADCF's experience can be used as a guide for other organisations to ensure a multi-sectoral response to battle HIV/AIDS in Tanzania, and indeed, around the world.

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