



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



TANZANIA'S ELDERLY COMING OUT FROM THE DARKNESS

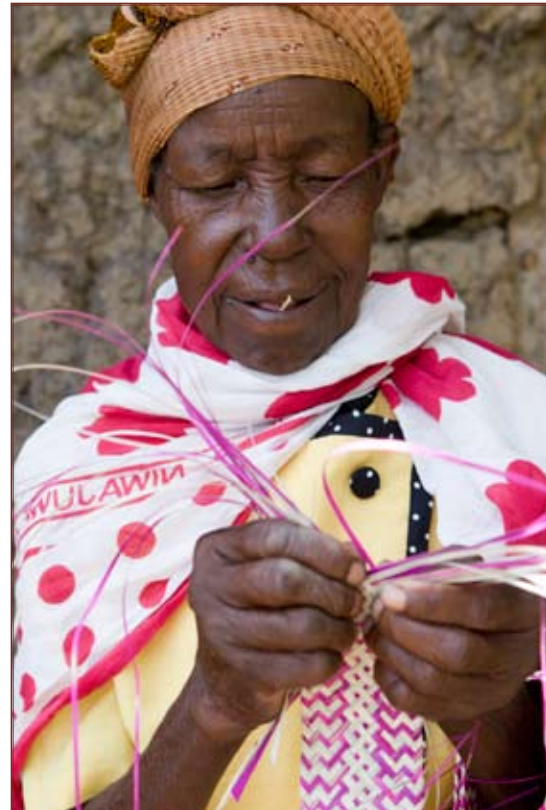


Their stories are darkly similar. Sofia's only son died from AIDS just a year after his wife, and now Sofia raises their only child. Her neighbors refused to speak with her because she had "AIDS in her house." Adija, 60 years old and a widow, is raising her three grandchildren, their parents having succumbed to AIDS years ago. Monaisha's daughter died shortly after giving birth, leaving a nine-month old grandchild. Hadija's daughter died during childbirth, leaving the newborn and three other grandchildren in Hadija's care. Selina is raising her five grandchildren, two HIV positive, struggling to come up with school fees for them each year. Glumsen, nearly blind and propped up with crutches on his one leg, has five grandchildren he cares for, all of their parents—his children—having passed away. Seeing these situations firsthand, several organisations working in the area asked: "What can we do?"

Tanzania's population over the age of 60 is estimated at more than 1 million. Of these, roughly half have been affected by HIV in some way—a relative who is positive, raising a grandchild orphaned by AIDS, or infected themselves. Just at a time in their lives when they should be able to relax, be surrounded by family, and enjoy their lives, they instead are burying their children, finding themselves with grandchildren to raise, and often stigmatised by neighbors. Many of them are caring for HIV positive relatives without any medical training or knowledge of how to protect themselves from HIV infection.

The Kilimanjaro NGO Cluster on HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Interventions (KINSHAI) is an "umbrella" organisation that unites 60 small local organisations that all work in the area of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. In 2006, KINSHAI led a partnership to implement an RFE-funded project aimed at elderly persons affected by HIV in the Same and Hai districts of Kilimanjaro Region. Eight support groups were established, each limited to an initial membership of 25. All the initial members were at least 60 years of age and caring for at least one child orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

From each of the groups, four individuals were trained by KINSHAI to provide peer support. This support included HIV/



Michael Paydos, MSH, 2007

Adija, 60-years old, is currently raising her three grandchildren. In order to pay for her grandchildren's school fees and other needs, Adija weaves mats for sale and raises chickens, activities she invested in with the help of her grant from KINSHAI.

KINSHAI provided assistance to more than 200 elderly Tanzanians who are raising grandchildren orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The stigma of AIDS had been a source of depression and isolation previously for these grandparents; now, these same people have a source of support that has brightened their lives.

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AIDS information such as preventing infection when providing home-based care to someone living with AIDS. Each member received a small stipend to be used in an income generating activity, such as purchasing chickens for eggs, or to be pooled within the group to buy larger livestock or plant crops.

The transformation in the targeted districts was dramatic. Each initial group of 25 members has more than doubled in number, even though new members received no extra assistance beyond the community support. People too young to qualify and others with no link to HIV/AIDS also joined to show support and for the social aspects. “Before, it was like living in isolation,” Sofia explains. “But now I feel like a member of the community.”

“This project has given these people a sense of hope,” explains Francis Selasin, the project officer. “But, in addition it has raised the profile of the partner organisations that were involved.” For many of the members of these groups, the partnership led by KINSHAI “has been a gift from God.”

“I used to spend all my time in my dark home. Then KINSHAI came, opened the door, and asked me to come out into the light.”
 —Adija, member of the Msingi group



Michael Paydos, MSH, 2007

Each of the monthly group meetings is kicked off with a celebration of the group’s unity and spirit.



Michael Paydos, MSH, 2007

The initial members of the elderly peer support groups were acting as primary providers for more than 400 children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- Established eight elderly social support groups with an initial total membership of 200;
- More than 400 elderly persons in all have joined the groups;
- 32 peer educators trained among the support groups to provide assistance to members and prospective new members and to provide further HIV/AIDS education to the communities;
- Members of the groups have reported reduced stigma from their communities and a greater sense of hope and well being;
- 200 small grants (20,000 Tsh) distributed, increasing nutritional and financial support among members.

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