



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



CREATING HOPE: PROVIDING ALTERNATIVES TO COMMERCIAL SEX WORK AND INCREASING VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING

“When I grew up, my parents were so poor,” says Nuria Azam. “I started doing commercial sex work because I didn’t have any other way to make money.” Having only completed Standard 7 in school, Nuria had no skills and no opportunities. Instead, she turned to commercial sex work. Her friend, Hawa Athuman, also a former commercial sex worker (CSW), says that although she could make money this way, it was dangerous – at times she would get beaten and often she would not get paid at all. Still, she says, she thought that was her only choice.

Both women eventually found their way to the Anglican Diocese of Dar es Salaam’s (ADSM) CSW drop-in shelter. The shelter sits just off one of Dar es Salaam’s main thoroughfares, in Buguruni, one of the poorest sections of town. It is estimated that of the 75,000 people living within the Buguruni area, 3,000 women are engaged in either formal or informal commercial sex work. The ADSM drop-in shelter was designed to provide a safe space for those women and to provide programs which can assist them in seeking alternative means of income.

Nuria says that originally she didn’t want to go to the center, but her friend Hadijah insisted. One afternoon, Hadijah kept knocking on her door and wouldn’t leave. Nuria tried to ignore her, but, she says smiling ruefully, “Hadijah just would not go away. So I let her in and she told me her story and I decided to go.” Once at the shelter, Nuria found acceptance and resources, instead of the judgment she feared. She was given free meals and free medical attention and she began attending life skills training courses, HIV education courses, and individual and group counseling.



Judy Wiegert, 2009

Ernest Bendera, the ADSM HIV/AIDS Program Manager.

The shelter also offers economic support through a pilot alternate income support program. Through business and skills training, women are taught alternative business strategies and then are given seed money to begin a new business and a new way of life. Nuria and Hawa both learned how to cook, and are now business partners, running their own roadside food stand nearby. The small grant they received went towards buying the supplies, equipment and materials they needed to start their business.

All of these services are made possible through a grant given to the ADSM from the Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE), an innovative partnership between the Tanzanian Commission

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for AIDS (TACAIDS), the Zanzibar AIDS Commission (ZAC) nine bilateral donors and one private foundation. Established in 2002, the RFE's purpose is to enable civil society institutions in Tanzania to participate fully in the national multi-sectoral response to the AIDS epidemic.

In addition to work with CSWs, the RFE supported ADSM to initiate community based universal HIV/AIDS Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT), as well as community sensitization about HIV in the neighborhoods of Buguruni.

Ernest Bendera, the ADSM HIV/AIDS Program Manager, says that at first the program faced challenges in implementation because people assumed that they had to join the Anglican Church in order to get services. But, by holding stakeholder meetings with local faith and political leaders and by taking their sensitization and VCT campaigns to the streets, the ADSM program demonstrated that they were there for the entire community. Today, they have tested nearly 8,000 individuals.

Veronica Msonde, a counselor in the outreach program, says that it was always difficult to tell someone that they were HIV positive. But, she says, she provided them with accurate information and referral for care, repeatedly emphasizing, "This is not a death sentence. This is not over! You can get treatment and you can get support."

Both Nuria and Hawa tested for HIV for the first time after they began going to the shelter. For Hawa, taking the test changed her life. "I had started attending classes at the shelter, but I was still doing some sex work. Then one day I tested and I was negative. I thought, 'I'm negative. Why do I keep putting myself at risk? Why should I be selling my body?'" Nuria, who is also HIV negative, says the staff at ADSM taught her self-awareness and pride, "I learned that I still have my dignity. And when I sell myself, I'm not only putting myself at risk for HIV, I'm destroying my dignity."

Now, both women say they have peace of mind. Their business is prospering and they hope one day to expand it. Hawa has since gotten married, and Nuria has big plans for her daughter, hoping to see her one day go to university – something that was never a possibility for herself. They say that they have learned how to be creative in their business, how to think broadly about ways to keep it going, and how to sustain themselves. And, they say proudly, they now have control over their own lives.



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Nuria and Hawa's cooking equipment, purchased with support from the ADSM and RFE.

PROJECT RESULTS:

- 250 CSWs provided counseling, life skills training and entrepreneurship courses.
- 78 CSWs received financial support through the alternate income generation program.
- 17 CSWs left the business and went back to their home villages.
- 7,890 (5,292 Females) counseled, tested and received HIV test results.
- 250 People Living with HIV/AIDS referred for treatment and follow up care.

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