



# RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



## EMPOWERING PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV TO ACCESS COMPREHENSIVE HIV/AIDS CARE AND GAIN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGE



“When we started our baking project, some people were hesitant to buy our products for the mere fact that they had been produced by people living with HIV. However, this did not discourage us. We focused our attention on influencing the market with high quality products while exploring opportunities for expansion. With that resolve, we have been able to penetrate the market, raise our turn-over, and earn so much respect and admiration in the whole village,” says Ms. Catherine Shayo, the Chairperson of Kiwavukame Support Group, based in Mengeni Ward, Rombo District. Kiwavukame is among the several groups of people living with HIV (PLWHA) supported by Maisha Kikamilifu (life in its fullness)—a project implemented by Mildmay Tanzania in Rombo and Same Districts of Kilimanjaro Region. The project aims to empower PLWHA by increasing their access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS care and treatment services, promoting their full involvement in advocacy against stigma and discrimination, and facilitating their engagement in income generating activities.

*Maisha Kikamilifu is empowering people living with HIV by enhancing their access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS care, promoting their full involvement in advocacy against stigma and discrimination, and facilitating their engagement in income generating activities.*

With a grant of Tsh.240,000,000 from the Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE), Maisha Kikamilifu has established two patient support centres to foster delivery of comprehensive HIV/AIDS care to PLWHA. The RFE support has also made it possible to conduct various community sensitisation and advocacy activities and support PLWHA to establish income generating activities. Ms. Mukami Rimberia, the Mildmay Country Director notes that the patient support centres have been very instrumental in tracking treatment defaulters through networking with home-based care providers. The centres also provide other services such as treatment of opportunistic infections, pain relief and symptoms control.

As part of the empowerment strategy, Maisha Kikamilifu focuses on harnessing the potential of PLWHA as ambassadors of hope for positive living, through training in appropriate skills including public speaking and disclosure of status. It also supports participation of PLWHA in events such as the World AIDS Day, community sensitisation activities and other AIDS related events. However, full empowerment and positive living cannot be attained without reliable sources of income. Thus, the project facilitates formation of support groups of PLWHA and establishment of income generating activities as a way



Some of the members of the Kiwavukame Support Group.

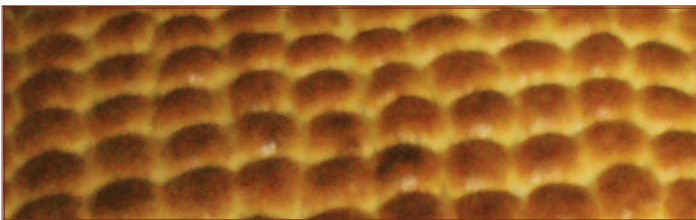
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of assisting the members to raise their income levels. With improved income, the PLWHA will be able to support their families economically, access care and treatment services regularly, and improve their nutritional intake. Subsequently, Maisha Kikamilifu offers basic training to PLWHA in entrepreneurship, animal husbandry including poultry and fish farming, and crop production. It also provides the PLWHA support groups with small seed grants as start-up capital for their income generating activities.

Kiwavukame is among the several groups that have already benefited from this comprehensive package of interventions, and is steadily beating the odds of stigma and discrimination to gain economic and social advantage. The group was officially inaugurated in March 2009 following a series sensitisation and advocacy activities conducted by the project in Rombo District. It currently has 17 members including men and women. In April 2009, it received a seed grant of Tsh.1,273,100 (US\$900) from the project to start its baking venture. Before embarking on the project, Ms. Shayo led the team in conducting a market survey to see if it would be feasible. In the process, they realised that nearly all the bread and related products consumed in Mogeni come from Moshi town, some 57km away. "We thought we could take advantage of this by making our products locally and pricing them more competitively," she explains. The group currently produces about 600 scones, four times a week. Most of the scones are sold to food kiosks and retail stores at a wholesale price of Tsh.40 per piece. However, when selling to individuals who buy in small quantities, they charge Tsh.50 per piece.

The group has also been keen to ensure the quality of their products to inspire and maintain their market. "Even those who said they would not eat bread baked by people living with HIV these days come to buy directly from us. On market days, our sales are even higher," says Ms. Shayo. The group's treasurer, Ms. Protasia Faustin, adds that some of the customers have been asking them to start preparing soup, tea, and other dishes to go along with their bread. The group is now considering opening a restaurant where they can serve different dishes and also sell their bread. They currently have Tsh.70,000 (US\$50) saved away, and hope to use it as security to access a small loan to boost their business.



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—Ms. Catherine Shayo – Chairperson, Kiwavukame Support Group



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Mr. Mededi Francis, a member of the Kiwavukame Support Group with a bicycle used by the group to distribute their bread.

### PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- 2 patient support centres established in Rombo and Same Districts;
- 3,500 PLWHA (adults and children) receiving care both at the facility and in the community
- 76 support groups consisting of 875 PLWHA formed;
- 875 PLWHA trained on stigma and discrimination, public speaking, adherence as well as group dynamics and management;
- 49 support groups received seed grants as capital for income generating activities;
- 2,849 chicken, 119 dairy goats and 108 pigs distributed to different support groups and 3 fish farms established.

Story and Photographs by Ogango K'omolo, MediaNet Ltd, [komolo@medianettz.com](mailto:komolo@medianettz.com), June 2010.



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