



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



TAKING COMPREHENSIVE HIV PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS TO RURAL FARMERS IN ZANZIBAR



“For a long time, HIV prevention messages in Zanzibar have been quite general and largely urban-based, leaving the rural populations more vulnerable to the risk of infection due to inadequate knowledge about the scourge,” says Ms. Florence Muheirwe, a project manager with the Anglican Church of Tanzania (ACT) – Diocese of Zanzibar. Florence further observes that a number of HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives in the Zanzibar Islands have not adequately addressed sensitive issues such as gender imbalance and other potential drivers of HIV infection including poverty. It was against this backdrop that the ACT Diocese of Zanzibar, with support from the Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE), introduced an HIV prevention project targeting rural farmers in Unguja Island. The primary objective of the project was to bridge the gap in the knowledge and perception of the farmers regarding HIV transmission and address the problem of poverty as a potential driver of the pandemic.

The comprehensive HIV prevention project to rural farmers in Unguja Island raised awareness about HIV prevention, stimulated demand for VCT services, and empowered the farmers economically, especially women, through distribution of dairy goats and cows, thereby reducing their vulnerability to poverty which is a potential driver of HIV transmission.

Implementation of the project began in earnest in February 2009. The project adopted a three-prong approach in delivering comprehensive HIV prevention knowledge to the farmers and by extension to members of their households. The approach involved targeted training of key stakeholders, peer education outreach services coupled with supportive supervision by the diocesan project team, and dissemination of educational materials on HIV/AIDS sourced from different stakeholders.

As a result of the interventions, increased awareness about HIV prevention including demand for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services, has been reported in the project area. Ms. Jabu Ali Ali, a peer educator in Kinyasini Ward (Unguja North “A” District) says a lot of people they talked to during outreach activities showed willingness to test for HIV to know their status. However, access to VCT services was a major challenge since the services are not that close to the people. She thinks that mobile VCT services would bridge that gap and make community HIV/AIDS awareness initiatives more helpful to the people. Juma Hamis, another peer educator in Kinyasini observes that demand for condoms has also quietly grown over the project period. “Even though a lot of people



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Peer Educators in Kinyasini Ward with the information materials used in educating the community about HIV prevention.

Support provided by: Bernard van Leer Foundation, Canadian International Development Agency, Embassy of Finland, Irish Aid, Royal Danish Embassy, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, United Kingdom's Department for International Development, U.S. Agency for International Development.

have been feeling shy to come out openly to ask for these commodities due to religious reasons, several individuals with whom we have built trust have been coming to us quietly for them. This is the very reason why peer educators need to be well equipped with such tools at all times,” he explains.

Another major priority for the project was improvement of economic and social status of the farmers, especially women, by providing them with dairy cows and goats. Priority was given to widows, the disabled and child-headed households. Ms. Asha Suileman of Mahonda Village is one such beneficiary. She is a widowed mother with three children. She received a dairy cow from the RFE-funded project in September 2009. The project also gave her basic training on dairy keeping. She cannot hide her joy as she narrates how she felt the day she received the cow. “When I came back from the training, I made a shelter for the cow in advance and began to wait. It was not until the Holy Month of Ramadan that I got my wonderful surprise. I saw it as a blessing from God, a special fruit of patience, so I named the cow Zaituni (a Kiswahili word for Olive – a fruit revered across ancient civilizations).”

For the purpose of sustainability, the project adopted a concept called “Pass On” from another animal husbandry project implemented by the ACT Diocese of Zanzibar with support from Heifer International. The first offspring of an animal donated to a particular farmer is passed back to the project, which in turn passes it on to another deserving case. The next offspring is retained by the farmer and the cycle continues with a cascading effect. Bi Juma, a dairy goat farmer in Mpapa Village (Unguja West District) seems to have internalised the concept and speaks metaphorically about it. “I have given back two passes and I believe both have been put forward towards the goal. This is how we are playing our game to score against poverty,” she explains with a broad smile. Ms. Muheirwe, the project manager concludes that the RFE support has catalysed the process in the most positive way by making it possible to increase the number of farmers with animals. This, she believes, will go a long way to reduce vulnerability of the farmers to poverty and HIV transmission, and mitigate the impact of the scourge in already affected households.



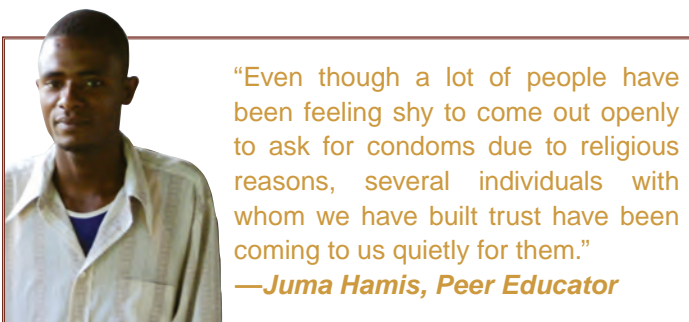
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Bi Juma next to her dairy goats' shed, as she explains the “pass on” concept.

KEY PROJECT OUTPUTS

- 7 HIV prevention training sessions conducted to 353 farmers
- 7 village AIDS committees established and 5 members from each committee trained on HIV prevention and gender issues
- 37 peer educators recruited and trained
- 879 peer education outreach sessions conducted reaching 8039 people
- 134 peer education supervision visits conducted to strengthen the outreach services
- 76 farmers trained and provided with animals (46 dairy cows, 30 dairy goats)
- 7 bulls and 4 bucks provided to village farmer committee in order to make the males available for the cows and nannies for the purpose of reproduction
- 1 motorcycle purchased for the project veterinary officer to enable him monitor the condition of animals donated to the farmers and provide the necessary veterinary assistance

Story and Photographs by Ogango K'omolo, MediaNet Ltd, komolo@medianettz.com, June 2010.



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—**Juma Hamis, Peer Educator**

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

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