



THE RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA

For Disabled Tanzanians, Informational Materials About HIV/AIDS

When Gidion Kaino Mandesi was a young law student at the University of Dar Es Salaam, he wrote a paper on the legal status of visually impaired people in Tanzania. In carrying out his research, he discovered that Tanzanian family law and government policy did not adequately protect disabled people. They had problems accessing health services and education. They needed specialized legal aid. They were left behind, both socially and economically. In short, they needed the same opportunities and rights as other Tanzanians. To raise public awareness and to advocate for the human rights of people with disabilities, Mr. Mandesi established a civil society organization, the **Disabled Organization for Legal Affairs and Social Economic Development (DOLASED)**.



Mr. Mandesi, who is blind himself, recognized that Tanzanians who are blind, deaf, albinos, deaf-blind, physically or mentally disabled are especially vulnerable in the HIV/AIDS crisis because the standard communications channels that inform and educate other citizens simply do not reach them. In 2002, DOLASED wrote a proposal to develop and introduce HIV/AIDS education materials and peer support for deaf, blind, and handicapped persons in selected rural and urban areas of Tanzania. “The latest census shows that there are some 3.5 million handicapped people in Tanzania who could benefit from specialized materials and support,”

said Mandesi, now DOLASED’s executive director. DOLASED is able to carry out its project because it was awarded \$122,000 via Tanzania’s innovative funding mechanism, the Rapid Funding Envelope for HIV/AIDS. DOLASED was the first organization to receive an award through this program.

RFE funding enables DOLASED to develop materials in Braille that will provide information on HIV testing, preventing transmission of the virus, and practical advice on caring for people with AIDS. The materials—most in Kiswahili with some in English—are being produced on Tanzania’s single Braille printing press. “We think we are the first organization to create these kinds of materials in Braille,” said Mandesi. DOLASED is now in the process of producing videotapes that offer similar information, with sign language interpretation for the deaf and hearing-impaired.

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DOLASED operates in partnership with some half-dozen organizations for blind, deaf, physically handicapped, albinos, and mentally retarded persons in Tanzania, including the National Federation of Disabled, Tanzania Albinos Society, Tanzania League of the Blind, Tanzania Association of Physically Disabled, Tanzania Association of Mentally Handicapped, and Tanzania Association of the Deaf. "These groups have told us that their members need the information and that they have a high incentive to use it. We have joined hands with them to fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS as a national disaster," said Mandesi. This constituency receives technical support on HIV/AIDS from the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF).

Through workshops scheduled over 12 months, DOLASED's RFE-funded project will directly touch about 210 participants in three urban centers in Dar Es Salaam, Bukoba (in Kagera region) and Tabora (in Tabora region) and in three rural areas Sengerema (in Mwanza) Mpwapwa (in Dodoma) and Korogwe (in Tanga). Peer educators (who are disabled themselves) and who live in the community will be trained to convey correct messages about HIV control measures. The project's benefits are expected to ripple outward—to the large community represented by the associations for the disabled and to the many families taking care of disabled people. DOLASED is using mass media to publicize its efforts. Radio, TV, and newspaper coverage the organization received in Dar Es Salaam shows that the public is interested. DOLASED has raised awareness already.

The Braille information materials developed in the initial workshops in May 2003 have had a positive impact, according to Mandesi. Questionnaires administered before and after the workshops showed that participants had gained knowledge about the proper use of condoms, understood how to prevent HIV transmission, and had a better understanding of how to take care of people with HIV/AIDS. "Before the workshop people said they had heard about HIV. After the workshop people told us they were now using condoms and were more willing to go for voluntary counseling and testing. They say they know how to slow down the spread of HIV."

THE RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has directly affected 12 percent of the population in Tanzania and left some 600,000 orphans. While the Tanzania Commission for HIV/AIDS (TACAIDS) is working with international donors to design the country's long-term strategy against HIV/AIDS, a short-term financing mechanism, the Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE) for HIV/AIDS, was created to speed resources to the small civil society organizations and faith-based groups ready to take action quickly to fight the epidemic.

Three rounds of grant making have put \$3.5 million into the hands of 25 civil society institutions and partnerships. Eleven of these projects are already underway. The project proposed by the Disabled Organization for Legal Affairs and Social Economic Development (DOLASED)—to provide HIV/AIDS education and information concerning HIV control measures to persons with disabilities—was the first project funded.

The Rapid Funding Envelope for HIV/AIDS was designed for Tanzania by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in partnership with the Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS) and eight bilateral donor agencies—the Canadian International Development Agency, Irish AID, the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, the Embassy of Finland, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, the Royal Danish Embassy, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, and the United States Agency for International Development. MSH administers the RFE in partnership with Deloitte & Touche Tanzania.

The RFE Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the Tanzania Commission for AIDS and of the eight bilateral donors began to award grants in December 2002 in the areas of prevention, advocacy, information-education-communication, care and support, impact mitigation, baseline and operations research, and monitoring and evaluation capacity.

The RFE provides a model for rapid funding that could be replicated in other countries as part of a strong, integrated response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic