

## Bringing HIV/AIDS Message to Rural Zimbabwe Challenge

Zimbabwe has one of the highest HIV-infection rates in the world at 24.6%. Crucial to the success of HIV/AIDS prevention efforts is the implementation of effective communication strategies. More than two thirds of Zimbabwe's 11.6 million people live in rural areas. Only 5-10% of these people watch TV regularly and only 20-35% listen to the radio regularly. Thus, reaching rural people through mass media in a cost-effective manner with HIV/AIDS information is difficult – alternative communications channels must be identified.



Photo:PSI/Zimbabwe

An HIV/AIDS play at a food distribution point.

### Results

The program trained 196 community members across thirty FDPs in 2003. Community members, chosen by their fellow villagers and trained by Population Services International (PSI), educate their neighbors on HIV and AIDS at food distribution days as well as other occasions.

By training local people to educate their own communities, the program ensures sustainability and local ownership, and promotes acceptance and broad community participation. Thirty-eight new condom sales outlets were opened and almost 80,000 male condoms have been sold in and around the pilot sites. USAID hopes to expand the program to cover more of the 1,700 FDPs around the country.

### Initiative

USAID supports an innovative information, education, and communication program on HIV prevention in three rural Zimbabwean districts at food distribution points (FDPs) – places where large numbers of rural people congregate to receive international food aid. USAID is part of a donor network providing food assistance distributed once a month at each of the country's 1,700 FDPs.

The beneficiaries often wait for hours before food distribution begins – providing an opportunity to conduct HIV prevention education. Capitalizing on this opportunity, the program trains community members on the use of drama, singing, outdoor media, and other entertainment to convey HIV and AIDS prevention messages.

***“HIV and AIDS education at FDPs not only underscores the importance of adequate and proper nutrition in communities where there is high prevalence but also capitalizes on an opportunity to reach underserved rural populations through a unique interpersonal communications channel.”***

***–Andrew Boner, Country Representative, PSI/Zimbabwe***