



# Stopping the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe

## Challenge

Out of a population of 11.6 million, an estimated 1.8 million Zimbabweans -- adults and children -- are living with HIV/AIDS. HIV voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) programs are the cornerstone of efforts to prevent the spread of the disease by helping increase the number of people who know their HIV status. However, the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS discourages ordinary citizens from getting tested to learn their HIV status.



Photo: PSI/Zimbabwe

A depiction of activities carried out under the New Start VCT Rural Outreach Program.

## Results

New Start's mobile outreach program expanded from twenty community sites visited in 2002 to eighty-five in 2003. There is a corresponding increase in the number of clients served from 2,500 to 11,500.

Through the mobile outreach program, USAID has broadened access to VCT services for underserved populations, met demand created by smaller community organizations, and investigated the demand for and feasibility of permanent VCT sites in remote areas. VCT services have proved to be an effective and cost-effective measure for promoting behavior change including increased condom use and partner reduction.

USAID is planning to expand the mobile outreach program to cover selected food distribution points where large numbers of rural people gather to receive international food assistance.

## Initiative

The hallmark of USAID's strategy to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe is the promotion of behavior modification among key high-risk target groups. Programs focus on social marketing of voluntary HIV counseling and testing. USAID is working with Population Services International, a provider of VCT services, through a national network of eighteen testing centers called "New Start."

New Start provides skilled counselors, support staff, test kits, and promotional materials while collaborating with local partner organizations to provide community mobilization, space, and information on post-test services. In 2002, New Start launched its new mobile outreach program designed to benefit Zimbabweans residing in remote and rural areas.

***"We decided to make mobile outreach the cornerstone of New Start's initiative to expand access to VCT around Zimbabwe, especially to underserved populations in the rural areas. New Start took VCT to the people in large numbers last year."***

***- Charles Szymanski,  
Deputy Director, PSI/Zimbabwe***

