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SUCCESS STORY

Innovative, Low-Literacy Guide Supports HIV Workers in Africa

USAID makes HIV/AIDS information accessible to illiterate patients



FHI IMPACT/Government of Kenya/Pfizer Foundation

This colorful illustration reminds patients, "Remember. More than a million people around the world take ART everyday. You, too, can take them successfully."

A small pocket-sized card reminds ART patients when and how to take their medications.

April 2005

U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov

A UNIQUE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP has produced an innovative low-literacy tool that is currently used by health care providers in Kenya and Ghana. Community organizations are also adapting it for use in Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa, and Malawi.

Healthy Living: A Counseling Guide for Health Workers on Opportunistic Infections, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), and the Management of ART Side Effects is the result of a collaborative effort among home-based care volunteers, support groups of people living with HIV/AIDS, nurses, doctors, lab technicians, and pharmacists. The guide provides information about ART, opportunistic infections, and side effects in three forms, designed for a variety of users in different settings. Flip-charts allow professionals to provide information to small groups at a hospital, clinic, or doctor's office; 30-page booklets and two-page pamphlets can be given to home-based care workers or patients to take home. A small pocket-sized card reminds ART patients when and how to take their medications.

The materials use simple terms and illustrations that are accessible to audiences of low literacy levels, but are informative to individuals at all literacy levels. These publications are particularly useful to older people, who are likely to have lower literacy levels, and are often the ones left to care for ill relatives.

With support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and through a partnership among the Pfizer Foundation, USAID's Implementing HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project (IMPACT), which is administered by Family Health International (FHI), and the Government of Kenya, the project started as part of an ART program's inauguration at Coast Provincial General Hospital in Mombasa. But the varying needs of the groups involved prompted the development of a much broader tool that addresses basic public health issues, in addition to specific ART information. The guide explains the differences between HIV and AIDS, describes simple hygiene techniques that help avoid opportunistic infections, offers advice on when patients need to go to a clinic, and provides suggestions about diet and exercise.

Kenya's Ministry of Health helped develop the guide, and the Kenyan government paid for its final production. Originally intended for use only at the hospital and medical center, the *Healthy Living* guide was quickly distributed nationwide. Thus far, FHI partners and the Ministry of Health have distributed about 1,300 flip-charts, 7,500 booklets, and more than 33,000 brochures; 12 provincial ART officers have each given out 1,000 booklets and 500 pamphlets.