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SUCCESS STORY: THAILAND

Positive Partnerships Destigmatize HIV

Creating strong networks to reduce prejudice and poverty associated with HIV/AIDS



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

“My mental health is much better now because I am not worried about how to pay for my medical treatment,” said one Positive Partner.

Early on, HIV/AIDS in Thailand spread predominantly among household breadwinners in their most productive years. Although national resources were rallied toward prevention, families continued to lose income due to poverty and people with HIV were discriminated against in the workplace. Without any income, HIV-positive people could not afford life-prolonging medications and often became financially dependent on family and friends. This in turn increased social tension as non-infected people found they could not bear the burden of supporting expanding numbers of friends and relatives.

Through the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, USAID supports the Positive Partnerships program, which works to reduce prejudice and poverty associated with HIV/AIDS. Positive Partnerships links people who have HIV with non-infected people, provides them with vocational training, and helps them start small businesses together with an initial loan of \$300 for each partner. People with HIV also receive counseling and referrals that enable them to access antiretroviral therapies. As their medical and economic situation improves, people with HIV demonstrate to their partners that they can pursue productive lives and can contribute financially and socially to their community.

One widow who participated in Positive Partnerships said that she is grateful not only for her personal gains, but also for being allied to a cause that can benefit her whole community. She said that her personal experience shows that people with HIV who get medical and social support can continue to meet family obligations and keep on contributing to society.

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