



SUCCESS STORY: ZAMBIA

Short Documentaries Fight HIV Prejudice

**Through the films
Let's Talk About It,
USAID aims to address
HIV/AIDS stigma and
discrimination**



Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs

Harriet Mulenga demonstrates confidence and the value of positive living.

“You were once the victim of your illness. Now you are the victor of your future.”

— Harriet Mulenga’s minister

TIKAMBE (LET’S TALK ABOUT IT) is the title of two short video documentaries that address the stigma and discrimination that people living with HIV/AIDS often experience.

Banja La Yengwe portrays the lives of Paul and Alice Phiri Yengwe and their six children. “After telling them [of my HIV status],” says Alice, “I noticed my relatives stopped visiting my home. Even when my child was sick, no one came to visit me in the clinic. This really hurt.” With time, Paul and Alice’s extended family and neighbors realized that the Yengwes had a strong relationship, and that their HIV status was nothing to fear. Paul and Alice say they are living normal lives through using tips for “positive living.”

The Yengwes have become role models for others in their community through their quiet honesty and openness. Alice meets with young mothers at a nearby clinic to explain the benefits of breastfeeding while taking nevirapine, the drug that helps prevent HIV transmission through breast milk. Paul meets with fellow policemen and young men in his community to talk about the importance of understanding HIV, respecting those with HIV/AIDS, and seeking counseling and testing. Says Paul, “HIV is more dangerous than AIDS, because those who are ignorant—those who don’t know their HIV status—will go on infecting others.”

Harriet portrays the life of Harriet Mulenga, whose life is joyful despite HIV. Harriet’s mother and her sister reveal their former prejudices on camera and explain how scared and embarrassed they were when they learned of Harriet’s illness. “At first, I thought she brought shame to the family,” her mother says.

By mid-2002, Harriet was near death. “If she had died,” her sister Elizabeth says, “I would [have felt] guilty that I didn’t take care of her the way I was supposed to. So I had to change.” Realizing that Harriet would die without antiretroviral drugs, Elizabeth agreed to pay for the medicines. In a few months, Harriet was once again living a productive life. She now brings the message of positive living to others in her community, explaining the importance of practicing abstinence, being faithful to one partner, and using condoms consistently and correctly.

Both films run 20 minutes, and were produced by the Zambia Integrated Health Programme, the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV, and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs through funding from the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through USAID.

April 2005