



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



SUCCESS STORY: ZAMBIA

Youth Contribute to Home-Based HIV/AIDS Care

USAID helps young men and women gain important life-skills training



Population Council/Horizons Katie Schenk

Anti-AIDS club members in Luapula Province celebrate their achievements a year after beginning their caregiving work.

The young people's enthusiasm, flexibility, and eagerness to learn new skills enable them to take on care responsibilities that significantly improve the lives of their clients.

April 2005

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

SINCE THE EARLY 1990s, anti-AIDS clubs members in Zambia's primary and secondary schools have actively educated families and communities about HIV/AIDS. These committed youngsters have recently begun to assist in home-based care. Their enthusiasm, flexibility, and eagerness to learn new skills enable them to take on care responsibilities that significantly improve the lives of their clients. And their efforts provide much-needed adjunct services at little additional cost to the health care system.

With USAID funding through the Horizons Program, in 2001 the Population Council developed a joint training program with Care International and Family Health Trust. The program trained 12 local health professionals, who then trained 300 young people from 30 anti-AIDS clubs in two districts to provide a variety of caregiving services, including domestic and personal-care tasks.

Initially there was concern that male and female youths would feel pressured by traditional sociocultural norms for women to be primary household caregivers. Instead, the program found youth to be open to exploring gender roles. A year into the program, male and female caregivers were providing similar services.

As one young caregiver said, "Some people living with AIDS worry about whether they are cared for by a boy or girl, but their main concern is whether we do the things that help them, not which sex we are." Clients reported that their caregivers were "respectful, well informed, and well trained." Many clients have requested more frequent visits and referred their services to others.

Clients found changing dressings, treating sores, counseling on positive living, and referrals to clinics most valuable. While both youth and clients were disappointed that youngsters were unable to provide food, financial support, medicine, and transport, the youth were able to alleviate some of the patients' anxiety regarding their children. Young caregivers have taken active roles in relieving the children's isolation by involving them in recreational activities, making sure their schools recognize and respond to their needs, and referring them to other appropriate sources of assistance. The youngsters' example of compassionate care also helped change the attitude of clients' families, many of whom became more accepting of the HIV status of their relatives.

Today, through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, support and involvement of local health institutions and community leaders help guarantee the program's success in legitimizing youth caregiver services. The youth enjoy the satisfaction of serving their communities, gaining the respect of community leaders, and increasing their knowledge and skills.