

## Cutting the Rate of HIV Infection in Zimbabwe

### Challenge

The rate of HIV infection in Zimbabwe is one of the highest in the world, with devastating impact on the country's social and economic sectors. Over twenty-four percent of Zimbabwe's sexually active adults are HIV-infected and an estimated 3,290 Zimbabweans are dying every week due to AIDS. Life expectancy has fallen from 61 years in 1990 to 34 years in 2002. Zimbabwe must reduce the incidence of HIV-infected people and provide education in more remote rural areas on how to prevent the spread of HIV.



Photo: Advance Africa/Nina Pruyin

26-year-old Forward Kache actively supports the fight against HIV/AIDS in his community.

***“I had my first [adopted] children at age 10 because my brother and his wife died of AIDS. We must stop this disease in our communities. I am successfully playing my part.”***

***- Forward Kache, a Depot Holder***

### Initiative

To reach rural areas of Zimbabwe, USAID is helping train community members to distribute information on HIV and AIDS to their fellow villagers. The training is provided by “Depot Holders” who are employed by the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council to provide distributors and clients with condoms and contraceptives.

In addition to providing general HIV/AIDS information, Depot Holders are trained to refer community members to related HIV/AIDS services such as voluntary counseling and testing, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

### Results

Rural Zimbabweans are now beginning to receive accurate HIV/AIDS information from within their own communities. Over 26,000 people have received information regarding reproduction and HIV/AIDS.

Forward Kache, a Depot Holder for two years, is bringing about positive change through the USAID program. Forward referred a woman for HIV voluntary counseling and testing who learned that she was HIV-positive. She has since adjusted her lifestyle by practicing safe sex and also receives food and other assistance from her neighbors who are part of a community effort to support those with HIV. Forward gives her nutritional advice and other information on keeping her immune system strong and living positively with HIV.