



AAA NEWS BRIEF – DECEMBER 2009

HIV/AIDS PREVENTION: LESSONS FROM AFRICAN CSOs

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Learn About African Action on AIDS (AAA)

AAA is a tax exempt non-profit organization registered in the USA and operating under section 501(c) 3 of the IRS code. It is also registered in Cameroon (auth. No 00174/A/MINAT/DAP/SDLP/SAC). It has special consultative status with the United Nations ECOSOC and the UN Department of Information.

AAA Mission Statement

We believe that no one is alone. We succeed when the youth we serve become agents of their own change and use their knowledge to change their communities.

We reach the youth of sub-saharan Africa whose lives are affected by AIDS.

We affirm that tomorrow's responsible parents are the knowledgeable youth of today.

We educate youth with the knowledge they need to stay alive, and teach them to share that knowledge with their peers

We build extended family support networks in local villages and communities to deliver security, food, education and healthcare to children orphaned by AIDS

We create healthcare awareness by funding women and children's health.

HIV/AIDS PREVENTION: WHAT WE LEARN FROM ORGANIZATIONS OF THE AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

ARTICLE Four: The AIDS Support Organization (TASO)

More than twenty five years after the world first became aware of AIDS, it is clear that AIDS is still a threat in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its debilitating cycle definitely impedes on many aspects of the continent's development. Unfortunately, the death toll has been so heavy and overwhelming that official policies and strategies have tended to place more emphasis on treatment rather than prevention.

On the other hand, community responses throughout Africa have mirrored their social base and have generally adapted their initiatives to local needs and available resources. In so doing they have focused mostly on prevention and mitigation. **Prevention**, at community level has focused on reducing new infections and containing the epidemic through information, education and campaigns like the AAA JUST KNOW CAMPAIGN - for behavior change; condoms use training and distribution, targeting vulnerable groups. **Mitigation** has mainly focused on poverty reduction, and initiatives reinforcing community capacity to better resist and respond to the epidemic.

The purpose of the series of short articles that AAA has been publishing in its e-News Brief is to highlight local responses of organizations of the African civil society. Many organizations that initiated these responses were not able to pursue their activities for lack of resources. We would like this collective wisdom to inspire other communities even beyond the continent, while honoring the initiators, many of whom are /were partners of AAA. We end 2009 with TASO.

The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) was co-founded by Ms Noerine Kaleeba in 1987. The founding of TASO was based on people that were unified by common experiences faced when encountering HIV/AIDS at a time of high stigma, ignorance and discrimination. It rapidly grew, culminating in 1992 when one of the founders was appointed to the National AIDS Control Committee. It was also in 1992 that AAA adopted its first 5 orphans, who went from primary, secondary and higher education in the following disciplines: Accounting, Agriculture, Education, Economics, and Law. By year 2000, one of AAA first orphans was deputy director of an orphanage in rural Uganda! Today, TASO is one of the largest AIDS organizations in Africa.

Some TASO's achievements are: Over 200,000 and their family members have gone through TASO's care; over 23,000 have received antiretroviral therapy from its 11 service centres; 65,162 household members have been reached through Home-based Counseling and Testing; Over 1500 Community AIDS Support Agents have been trained; Has contributed significantly to the reduction of stigma in Uganda; Has promoted a vision of "A world without AIDS" that is the main focus of AAA.

Main lessons learned from TASO are: 1) Active Government support in various ways is critical. For example, government hospitals have historically hosted TASO offices and seconded medical personnel to the work in TASO clinics, in addition to making direct financial contributions to TASO's activities. 2) The quality of PLWHA can be greatly improved even without the ARVs: Integrated and timely management of opportunistic infections coupled with good counseling, nutritional support and a supportive environment care can do wonders.

Finally, one of the key pillars of TASO's success is its collaboration and networking with other service providers in the HIV/AIDS area. For example, 90% of TASO's clients come after they have undergone HIV testing from sister organizations. If TASO were to do the whole spectrum of HIV/AIDS care and prevention services, it would probably break under the strain. So complimenting each other and networking is great factor of success.

Compiled by AAA secretariat, based on long relation with TASO –since 1992, and info from www.tasouganda.org



**Pictures of
TASO & Ms
Noerine
Kaleeba, co-
founder**

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