



AAA NEWS BRIEF – SEPTEMBER 2009

HIV/AIDS – THE FIGHTING SPIRIT AND RESILIENCY

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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 – THE FIGHTING SPIRIT AND RESILIENCY OF GRANDMA O

The theme of this news brief that celebrates the African Woman's Day is Fighting Spirit & Resiliency – The capacity to bounce back no matter how life treats you. A fighting spirit is needed in the struggle against AIDS. It is essential to a healthy/happy life.

On 31st July 2009, the African Woman's Day was celebrated in Cameroon where AIDS definitely has a woman's face – 61% of the 500,209 people living with AIDS here are women! At the same time, women are the main caregivers for people infected and affected by AIDS. This is the reason why we decided to celebrate a great example of fighting spirit & resiliency in Grandma O who not only lives with AIDS in the village of Abem, the Central Region of Cameroon, but who also takes care of her grand son. The resiliency of Granma O has surely contributed to her survival.

Grandma O was discovered half dead in October 2008 by members of AAA team working in her village. She was immediately taken to the intensive unit of the district hospital of Akonolinga where she was treated. The stigma around people living with AIDS, mostly in villages was the main reason why she was deprived of proper family care – No proper food, no water, no basic hygiene, no visible manifestations of love. Instead everyone was waiting for her final days. After 4 months of treatment and better care at the hospital, Grandma O gained back her strength and headed back home, this time determined to take her health in her own hands!

We met Grandma O on her way back from the farm, carrying a heavy basket full of provisions and holding her grandson. During the brief exchange we had with her, she remained positive; all smiles even when she told us that she may miss one of her treatment the following week because she had not yet gather enough money to pay for it. She insisted on the fact that she was expecting no one to pay for her, but counting on her small income generating activity to meet the cost. Based on this information, we invited her to address our training session where there were new HIV positives, to earn the amount of money needed. She readily accepted and swiftly moved in our training hall in her farm clothes with basket on her back. To the question: **What lessons to learn from her life she answered:** One should fight death with a smile not fear; You should decide in your mind that you will win the fight; Stay away from your bed; Earn your living; Be generous and keep trying to connect with others even when you are rejected; Those who reject you will appreciate you more later. **On the earning side,** it is important to note that Grandma O has a farm, she also sells cooked food and on this occasion we bought all her food for our coffee break! It was good too!!!! Impressed by this incredible fighter, the whole AAA team returned to Abem with practical gifts including an insecticide treated mosquito's bed net, one potable water station and one hand-washing station.

May we all learn from this Great Spirit!

Information compiled by Ruth Bamela Engo – President of AAA

**Pictures of
Grandma O at
AAA training,
AAA visit &
with grand son**



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