

SUCCESS STORY

USG equips women to fight HIV/AIDS in Bauchi

In Bauchi, northern Nigeria, Momi and Nibi (not their real names) have made personal commitments in support of the national HIV/AIDS response by retiring from commercial sex work. This retirement was made possible through a United States Government (USG) funded project managed by USAID/Nigeria that provides women like Momi and Nibi with training in business and vocational skills. With these skills, they can receive grants to help them start their own income-generating activities which will enable them live healthier, safer lives.

HIV/AIDS is a growing challenge in Nigeria, which has the third highest number of infections in the world after India and South Africa. Nearly three million Nigerians are HIV positive. Over 60% of infected adults are women. The USG considers Nigeria a priority country in the fight against HIV/AIDS. USAID works with other government agencies including the Department of State, the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Defense in the implementation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Before her change in lifestyle, Momi operated from hotels in the Dan-lyia district of Bauchi, the capital city of Bauchi state in northern Nigeria. However, with help from the USAID local beneficiary Ummah Support Group, she was given the opportunity to learn the art of tailoring women's clothes as an alternative to commercial sex. An equipment grant provided her with a sewing machine that has empowered her to successfully make a profit. Momi's profit has led to expansion: she bought a refrigerator and in addition to sewing, now sells soft drinks.

Ummah Support Group also rescued Nibi from the streets. With training in business and vocational skills, she benefited from an income-generating award which provided her with the means to engage in petty trading. Petty trading expanded into poultry farming and she now sells her produce to hotels and restaurants in the city.

Another successful beneficiary is Hizwik (not her real name), who is a widow and mother of three children. She tested HIV-positive after her husband died two years ago, after which she enrolled at Ummah Support Group to learn how to knit. With a knitting machine, she has become an expert in producing baby clothes, the proceeds of which she uses to maintain her family. Hizwik is full of gratitude to USAID which she says "has changed my life positively. God bless you."

The U.S. Mission to Nigeria is collaborating with local communities and faith-based organizations to serve as lead and multiplier agents in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through capacity building and the award of small grants, beneficiaries affected or infected by HIV/AIDS can increase their income and improve the quality of their own and their dependents' lives. The programs also provide HIV/AIDS awareness education, prevention messages, and medically correct information on condoms and sexually transmitted infections to commercial sex workers to reduce HIV transmission and facilitate behavior change.

Between 2004 and 2008, the USG provided assistance of more than \$1 billion to support Nigeria's efforts to mitigate the impact of the disease. USG-funded programs also provided prevention, treatment, care, and support to more than a million HIV-affected individuals.