



## SUCCESS STORY

# PEPFAR, Community Grants, Peace Corps and TASO Power Real Change



*PCV Hannah Gardi with a volunteer counselor and beneficiary of the community gardens project.*

**“Our clients didn’t get any services before. Now they do...There is still more to do. HIV is an expensive virus that lasts your whole life.”**

The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history. Since 2003, the U.S. Government already provided \$18.8 billion in HIV/AIDS funding, with a reauthorization of up to \$48 billion for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria over the next five years.

Written by Lynne McDermott, PEPFAR Communications Officer and Kerry McBride, Small Grants Coordinator

When Peace Corps volunteer Hannah Gardi first arrived in her village in Iganga two years ago, she found a community struggling with an unusually high rate of HIV and an absence of patient support services. To address the problem, Hannah and her counterpart, Sula forged a partnership with determined beneficiaries to apply for funding, manage microfinance projects and support its members. Then Hannah started an income-generating project in the village to produce cloth school bags. The project raised over \$7,000 to pay for staff salaries, youth programs and HIV testing for over 2,000 people. The extra income also revived the community volunteer program that provides critical adherence support in patients’ homes. Since then, stigma is down in the community and condom use is up. “People want to get tested, now,” says Hannah.

Hannah’s project is funded in part by the U.S. Missions’ Community Grants program, which is funded through PEPFAR. Their grant paid for seeds and equipment for community gardens and six bulls to plow the fields. When not used for gardening, the bulls are rented to other farmers and the proceeds are returned to the communal gardening fund. The renewable crops are a key source of nutrition for patients; surplus is sold for a profit that is also returned to the group.

The Community Grants Program also paid for 200 mosquito nets and a motorcycle to transport home based care volunteers to the most rural and hard-to-reach of the 580 people living with HIV/AIDS and 1,906 orphans and vulnerable children they serve. At night, the bike is used as a taxi, which generates income to goes back into the project.

A PEPFAR-funded volunteer herself, Hannah then convinced the Ministry of Health to distribute Septrin, with US Mission funding. Sula says Septrin makes “the biggest difference of all.” In order to ensure continuity of care, the team in Iganga and the US Mission then worked together to build a sustainable link with TASO to open a TASO Outreach Center in Iganga District. By eliminating the transportation barrier for patients, this satellite center will provide comprehensive care and treatment for the future.

After two years together, Hannah and Sula successfully built valuable relationships inside and outside their community, and put systems in place that are sustainable and powered by the very people they serve.