

RAKAI COMMUNITY BASED AIDS ORGANIZATION

**PROJECT REPORT ON THE LYANTONDE ART ADHERENCE PROJECT
FUNDED BY FuG SWEDEN OCTOBER 2010**

a) Introduction

RACOBAO received a grant of 48,752 US Dollars from Pharmacists without borders (FUG) Sweden to implement the Lyantonde ART adherence project. The main aim of the project is to contribute to increased adherence among PLHIV on ART through increased PLHIV receiving proper treatment support.

b) Objectives of the Project

The project will also lead to increased accessibility to ART treatment support and other health services consequently resulting into increased ART adherence. The trained treatment helpers will offer treatment support to their clients aimed at proper utilization and effectiveness of ARV medication.

In addition, the trained treatment helpers will also compliment the efforts of the ART clinic through routine follow up of clients already on ART to ensure that the patients' adherence to the drugs. The trained drug dispensers would enable the district department of health to bring the drugs to the lower health units.

c) Main activities

• Identification and selection of treatment helpers

RACOBAO successfully selected the 60 care givers to be trained as treatment helpers. As a lesson learned from the previous project funded by FuG, selection must be participatory and must involve all stakeholders such as the area local leaders.

The selection was done in conjunction with the local leaders in all the 5 sub counties of Lyantonde district. The local leaders vetted the selected caregivers on the basis of level of volunteerism exhibited in the past as well as social and moral behavior in the community. The list of selected members was then shared with the District Health Officer (DHO) who had earlier recommended that some of the selected members are living with HIV/AIDS.

• Training for 60 care givers as treatment helpers about ART and counseling.

Although the government of Uganda in conjunction with her development partners continues to provide free ART, accessibility and adherence to the drugs still remain low due to several constraints such as lack of education on effective ART uptake and administration and long distances to health units. At the moment, 760 people are receiving treatment from within the district and the surrounding areas while adherence rate to the drugs in Lyantonde is at 87% way below the 95% national average.

Currently, RACOBABO is in the middle of training the 60 (24 females) identified care givers. The 5 modular training spread over 25 days of classroom work and 140 days of field work in between, has so far covered 3 modules. Topics covered include Epidemiology of HIV infection, clinical presentation of HIV, ART goals, side effects and management, common opportunistic infections, as well as counseling in ART. The trainees have also had two months of field work and are currently in their third month of field work. The Distich health department has provided the trainers in addition to the RACOBABO staff members that were trained in ART management by FuG in 2007.

The remaining modules will include topics such as PMTCT, HIV management in children and adolescents, nutrition and HIV, as well as Home based care and rehabilitation.

- **Provide bicycles to the trained treatment supporters to ease transport**

Even when the care givers operate in their areas of residence, some of their clients reside in very distant and remote areas. This transport constraint may hinder frequent client visits, follow up and referrals to health centers especially for those on ART that need attention of a doctor.

RACOBABO has purchased 60 bicycles that will be given out to the treatment helpers on completion of their course. The bicycles will enable the treatment helpers to be able to support those clients with chronic transport problems owing to long distances to the health centers. The bicycles will also make it easier for treatment helpers to network with other service providers for instance district, local authorities, and health centers.

- **Conduct training for drug dispensers in ART administration**

In Lyantonde district, like in many places in Uganda, there is chronic lack of adequate staffing to handle ART on a larger scale. The district health department proposed that ARVs be extended closer to those who need them at lower health centers in the community. However this has not been possible due to unavailability of trained drug dispensers or pharmacy assistants. The majority of drug dispensers currently available at the lower level health centers are not trained in the administration of ART programs.

RACOBABO has already made plans to train 15 drug dispensers and pharmacy assistants in collaboration with the district department of health. The district health office has already selected the participants and the course module has been designed and approved by the National ministry of health quality assurance office. The 5 days residential training in The District department of health has promised that once those personnel have been trained, the drugs will be taken to the lower health centers nearer to those who need them.

d) Immediate out comes

Increased knowledge among the targeted PLHIV and their care givers about HIV/AIDS and its treatment.

Increased no. of people seeking and receiving treatment through ART services.

Decreased no. of patients on ART discontinuing treatment.

A lower percentage of people on ART discontinuing treatment in the target group than in the district as a whole

Sufficient knowledge among the drug dispensers about ARVs and patient counselling.

The trainee counselors have identified and registered 141 persons living with HIV and AIDS in need of ART but are not accessing the services due to long distances to health centers, lack of information on ART, stigma. The counselors have provided information on the availability of free ART services and referred the clients to where they can be accessed.

Counselors have also identified 33 clients who have defaulted on their ARV medication. Reasons given include alcoholism, forgetfulness and the long distances to health centers. This highlights the important role the counselors have started to play to ensure that clients in need of ART access the services, but also those clients already on the medication adhere to the treatment.

Increased no. of PLHIV receiving ART services at lower level health centers.

e) Conclusion

The project is proceeding according to plan. So far 3 modules of the treatment helpers training have been completed on schedule and it is hoped that the remaining 2 modules will also be conducted as scheduled. Preparations for the training of drug dispensers are also almost complete. There are high indications that a strong foundation has been laid and project will lead to great impact on ART accessibility and adherence among PLHIV on ART in Lyantonde district.

RACOBAAO would like to thank the people of Sweden and particularly FuG for the strengthened partnership and collaboration. The lives of those suffering from AIDS would not be the same without this collaboration.

Annex 1 Progress monitoring

Project objective	Project indicators	Progress	Remarks
Increased accessibility to ART treatment support and other health services leading to increased ART adherence	Increased knowledge among the targeted PLHIV and their care givers about HIV/AIDS and its treatment.	Scores for; Block 1 Pretest- 40% Block 1 Posttest- 63%	
		Block 2 Pretest- 46 Block 2 Posttest- 54%	
		Block 3 Pretest- 64% Block 3 Post test- 78%	
		Block 4 Pretest- 79% Block 4 Post test- 88%	
	Increased no. of people seeking and receiving treatment through ART services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors have referred for VCT 289 PLHIV seeking ART services, representing a 32% increase accessing ART services 	A mini survey will be conducted towards the end of the project to measure increase
	Decreased no. of patients on ART discontinuing treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors have registered 33 PLHIV who have discontinued ART treatment 	A mini survey will be conducted towards the end of the project to measure decrease
Increased no. of PLWHAs and HIV affected people receiving counseling services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors have provided counseling services to over 400 Clients representing a 40% increase in people seeking counseling 	A mini survey will be conducted towards the end of the project to measure increase	
Increased no. of PLWHAs referred by Community volunteers for treatment and VCT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors have referred and followed up 96 PLHIV to access ART as compared to 23 PLHIV in the same period in 2007 	A mini survey will be conducted towards the end of the project to measure increase	
	Increased no. of PLHIV receiving ART services at lower level health centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	

Annex 2: Human Interest Story

RACOB AO counselor's training begins to bear fruits.

30 year old Juliet Natukunda is one of the counselors under going training in HIV/AIDS counseling funded by Pharmacists with out borders. She resides in Mpumudde sub county, Lyakajjura Parish. She has received training for the last 6 months from RACOB AO.

When the identification for counselors to train started, it was easy for Juliet to be selected because she had the strong backing from the local government leaders of her area owing to her dynamism and her involvement in sensitizing communities about HIV/AIDS even without training. Juliet is excited about the training ***"I was humbled that I could be chosen among the many, these training modules have been an eye opener, I have learnt so much!"***

Juliet teamed up with 2 other trainee counselors from the same parish and after introduction to the community by the local authorities has successfully conducted HIV/AIDS sensitization and awareness meetings in each of their villages. An average of 30 people attended the 3 sessions.



One of the training sessions in progress

After the sensitizations, several people were prompted to follow up Juliet to find out more about Anti retroviral treatment. Semanda, one of them, had been started on ARVs and had adhered for 2 years until transport constraints became a major hindrance. Since then, Semanda has continuously defaulted and his health deteriorated tremendously. Juliet counseled him and referred to him to an NGO that

operates clinics at Mpumudde health center which Semanda was not aware that provided ARVs. After restarting the treatment, his health has started to improve and he can go about his work.

Another client, Arinitwe, was pregnant and Juliet advised her to go for an HIV test which unfortunately turned out positive. Juliet counseled her to go for PMTCT instead of going to her usual traditional birth attendant. Juliet assured her that with the PMTCT program, there were high chances that her unborn child would be born free of the HIV virus. Arinitwe was immediately referred to Mpumudde health center where she attended frequent ante natal check ups and consequently delivered a health baby.

Juliet delights so much in her new counseling duties, consultations and referrals, ***“it gives me pride and satisfaction that I am part of the solution to the HIV/AIDS epidemic” she concludes.***