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Giving back: Community support for TB/HIV treatment in Tanzania

Once he would have been considered a target beneficiary of the Detroit Recovery Project, but Mohamed Sultan, a former cocaine addict, is now a member of Tupambane na Kifua Kikuu na UKIMWI (TUKIKIZA), a community-based organization working with PATH to create community awareness around tuberculosis (TB) and TB/HIV and contribute to TB detection in communities in Zanzibar. Mohammed has worked at Detroit Sober House, a recovery center for drug addicts, for three years. He used drugs for many years before he joined Sober House, and since his recovery, supports newcomers.



Photo: PATH

Since 2009, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), PATH has been encouraging community members to take part in TB case detection in several districts in Tanzania. Specifically, PATH has identified, sensitized, and trained former TB patients, traditional healers, drug sellers, and sputum fixers on TB and TB/HIV activities.

In 2011, Mohammed and 19 others from TUKIKIZA participated in a training on TB and TB/HIV organized by PATH. At the training, he learned how to screen and refer people who may have TB for proper diagnosis and treatment, support patients on TB treatment, and provide referral for drug addiction recovery. To date,

Mohammed has referred more than 100 people for TB diagnosis, 25 of whom were diagnosed with TB. In addition, because many of the people with whom Mohammed is working are at risk for contracting other diseases, his work is critical to the larger community. For example, in just a few months in 2012, he identified six people with TB, two of whom also had HIV and one who had hepatitis C. All of the patients have been able to access treatment for their illnesses.

I feel honored to help other people and being useful to the community. I am giving back to the ones who have helped me and I think it's only by raising awareness and helping each other that we can solve our problems, and change behavior.

Mohammed Sultan

In addition to a focus on increasing TB case detection, Mohammed received training on community TB Directly Observed Therapy and can now help others get treated in line with national guidelines. As a treatment supporter, Mohammed is responsible for storing TB medications and seeing that TB patients staying at Sober House receive their daily treatment.

Mohammed does not do this work just at Sober House; he also talks with drug addicts living on the streets and helps get them admitted to the hospital. In addition, he participates in creating community awareness through different approaches, including magnet theatre.

For more information

To learn more about PATH's work in Tanzania, please contact Dr. Zahra Mkomwa at zmkomwa@path.org. To learn more about USAID's work in TB, please contact Elizabeth Pleuss at epleuss@usaid.gov.

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About PATH

For more information, please visit www.path.org.