

EAST AFRICA (ZANZIBAR)



Promoting Better Health: The Raha Leo Community Health Programme

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) plays a key role in developing ways to enable poor communities to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to protect and promote good health. In the urban areas near Stone Town, Zanzibar – where 13,000 people reside in the four communities of Raha Leo, Mwembeshauri, Mwembeladu and Miembeni – 40 percent of the total population lives below the poverty line of 1 USD per day.

In February 2004, through a partnership between AKF, the Government of Zanzibar and the Raha Leo Maternal and Child Health Clinic, the Raha Leo Community Health Programme (RLCHP) was initiated to better serve the health needs of these communities and at the same time pilot cost-sharing approaches in line with the Government of Zanzibar's Health Sector Reform Strategy.

The Programme – defined as a “second line dispensary” by the Ministry of Health – has kept a focus on women and girls and set out to enhance services at the clinic; develop community and school health programmes (the area is home to four public schools with 6,000 students

enrolled); and document and replicate the experience in other areas of Zanzibar.

Objectives

To help improve the health status of these targeted communities, the Raha Leo Community Health Programme seeks to:

- Improve the quality and routine availability of appropriate health services according to the needs of the population in the catchment area;
- Implement and test a viable, transparent and comprehensive cost-sharing model which takes into account the needs of the most vulnerable;
- Enhance community ownership and involvement in health facility management in view of quality management and management of collected user fees;
- Contribute to improved knowledge, health practices and health seeking behaviour of the communities;
- Improve knowledge and practices of key health behaviours of teachers and students in four schools;

- Document RLCHP experiences and disseminate good practices particularly in user fee systems, community involvement and quality care delivery;
- Promote and support replication of good practices in other government facilities to improve quality and routine availability of appropriate health services elsewhere.

Strategy

The RLCHP works to achieve these objectives through the following:

Public-Private Partnerships:

By piloting cost-sharing approaches in line with the Government's health sector reform, the Raha Leo Health facility has taken steps to improve the quality of its existing health services. This has included renovating the facility and purchasing new equipment to increase the number of laboratory and diagnostic services offered for a greater number of patients.

HIV/AIDS Counselling and Testing:

The clinic introduced HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) as part of an

The clinic offers 11 types of diagnostic testing for various diseases. This is made possible through partnerships with public and private organisations such as the Ministry of Health, the African Medical and Research Foundation and Aga Khan University.



Development Partners

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
Johnson & Johnson
Ministry of Health & Social Welfare,
Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar

"I see myself as more knowledgeable and confident in serving my fellow youth after receiving different training on health issues like substance abuse and HIV/AIDS organised by this programme."

– Peer Educator

For further information

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Cover photo: Raha Leo Clinic provides quality health services in such specialty areas as maternal and child care, to an average of 105 patients each day, most of whom are women and children.

integrated service in 2004. By housing a VCT centre within a second-line primary health-care unit, rather than as a stand-alone facility, those seeking counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS are able to access services without stigmatisation.

Cost-Sharing:

In catchment areas where 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line of 1 USD a day and health services are traditionally provided free of cost, the Programme has successfully introduced a fee for some services. Fees charged are nominal, ensuring the availability of services to the largest number of patients, while still generating some revenue to contribute to operating costs. Results indicate that people are both willing and able to pay for services that are available and of good quality.

School and Community Youth Outreach:

The RLCHP is implementing different health interventions for youth in both schools and communities in the catchment areas. In schools, the programme has helped establish school health committees and coordinate capacity building workshops for teachers so that they can educate their students about health issues such as malaria, diarrhoea, substance abuse, reproductive health, environmental hygiene and HIV/AIDS. The programme also organises seminars, debates, sports activities, painting competitions and awareness campaigns to educate youth attitudes and practices towards personal health care.

In addition, a peer education network also reaches youth in and outside of schools. Peer educators are trained by the Programme to talk to their peers about healthy lifestyle choices and the dangers of risky behaviour through sports and informal and formal group discussions.

Outcomes and Achievements

The RLCHP has built a reputation for providing quality diagnostic, maternal and child health, and other clinical services. Patient volumes have increased from 10 to an average of 105 patients per day in 2006, and the number of diagnostic tests available has increased from three to 11.

Partnerships have been formed with the Aga Khan University through placement of post-graduate nursing students at the clinic to assist in best practices. Counsellors have been trained by the African Medical and Research Foundation on HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing. Over 3,000 clients have used the VCT services and a referral system to Mnazi Mmoja hospital is in place, where HIV-positive patients can access life saving anti-retroviral medicines free of charge.

Based on RLCHP's success, the Government of Zanzibar is planning to replicate this model of quality health-care delivery in other areas of Zanzibar.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

