



“WORLD AIDS DAY”

DECEMBER, 1



*World AID Day Theme for this year's **World AIDS Day** focuses on preventing HIV transmission: "Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV Infections. Zero Discrimination. Zero AIDS-Related Deaths. Zero AIDS related deaths." The first global health day has been observed on Dec. 1 since 1988 to highlight the fight against HIV and AIDS.*

How We Celebrated AIDS Day

Vickie, Alice and Katherine visited the Kibera WEEP project with the Israeli Ambassador's wife, Dalit Haskel and Andy Bryant from Segal Foundation!

They gifted the WEEP 2011 graduates with their sewing machines that were purchased for them while in the program! We received 20 new machines from UK Philanthropists Mr. and Mrs. Vraj Panharia!



Jane Akinyi with Lynn Adrian, Mary Lou Naylor and WEEP alumni during the 2011 WEEP graduation..

Katherine Rubin, HEART mission Staff, was a guest speaker via Skype for World AIDS Day event in Chico, California. She talked about how the HIV prevention message in Kenya is now focused on the youth and HEART be going to Migori this month where we expect 600 kids to participate in a soccer tournament. HIV prevention messages and HIV testing will be integrated into the tournament in a very action-oriented format. She also shared about her experience while working with the WEEP ladies.

Nairobi, November 16, 2011. Today we visited Jane, a woman we'd met three years ago. A single mother of two, Jane is HIV positive and lives in Kibera, the largest slum in Africa located in Nairobi, Kenya. In 2006 she fell seriously ill and was so close to death that her parents sold her slum dwelling to pay for a coffin. Somehow, she survived. But she had nothing.

A USAID project (called HEART) which helps women like Jane, found her, got her on anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), and started teaching her and 10 other women business enterprise skills. In 2010 Jane graduated from the program and set out to start her business. "At first I learned from market women who were farther ahead of me," Jane reminds us. Slowly, she was mentored and eventually started selling dried fish in quantities measured by an old coffee can, 20 cents worth.



Jane Akinyi shows her product. Photo credit: Michael Gebremedhin, USAID.

Today, she is healthy and sells omena – small fish from Lake Victoria – wholesale to Kenya's largest grocery store chain, Nakumatt. Managing impressive transactions, she's now considering taking on a partner. Her two children are in good schools, the eldest in her first year of university studying, what else, commerce. Last month Jane bought a piece of land where she'll eventually build a



Jane Akinyi serves a customer. Photo credit: Michael Gebremedhin, USAID.

home for her family. As the chairperson of a women's cooperative, Jane's group is saving to buy a truck to better transport their fish to market 500 miles away in Nairobi.

The Jane we meet today is a successful working woman and an inspiration to other women who find themselves in the dark days

of HIV. Speaking as a HEART alumni, Jane inspired this year's class of 34 small business graduates – women who are facing poverty, discrimination, and poor health, as Jane once did.

Jane is not defined by her HIV status. As we chat, her cell phone rings. "You don't mind if I take this?" she asks politely. Of course not, we reply. After all, she has a business to run.



Jane Akinyi speaks to a customer on her mobile phone. Photo credit: Michael Gebremedhin, USAID.

Story by **Lynn Adrian**,
Director of the Office of Population and Health, [USAID/Kenya](#).