

# ADMACHA



Photos: Monique Bovin

*Chairperson Ecegeri Bates Charles addressing an ADMACHA meeting.*

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Under the wide branches of a mango tree, men are gathering. Among them is an old man in a white shirt who peers through his glasses thoughtfully. A young man is smiling shyly. All are HIV-positive. The energy of the group seems to build as they share ideas, and emotions run strong. There is sorrow and humor, frustration and expectation, despair and hope. There is also a sense of purpose.

They are members of ADMACHA, the Arua District Males Community Against HIV/AIDS. It is a community-based organization founded by five men in Arua who are living with HIV/AIDS. "Many men who had HIV/AIDS were hiding and allowing themselves to suffer" because of the social stigma that attaches to the illness, says Charles Bates Ecegeri, one of the founders.

To dispel the stigma and band together for mutual support, the men meet regularly and

openly. The very fact of their meetings, where they sing and joke with one another, signals to the Arua community that HIV/AIDS is no cause for shame.

A grant from AIM to Arua People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum (an umbrella organization of all PHA groups in Arua district) has helped finance many of ADMACHA's activities which include mobilization of HIV positive males, treatment literacy campaigns, counseling training, and provision of home-based care kits for bedridden members. Its members gather at an antenatal clinic every Friday, for example, and perform skits that decry the spousal abuse that often surrounds HIV/AIDS. ADMACHA volunteers speak to the women's husbands about why they should not blame or abuse their wives who have the HIV test and how both spouses can deal positively with the illness if they have contracted it.

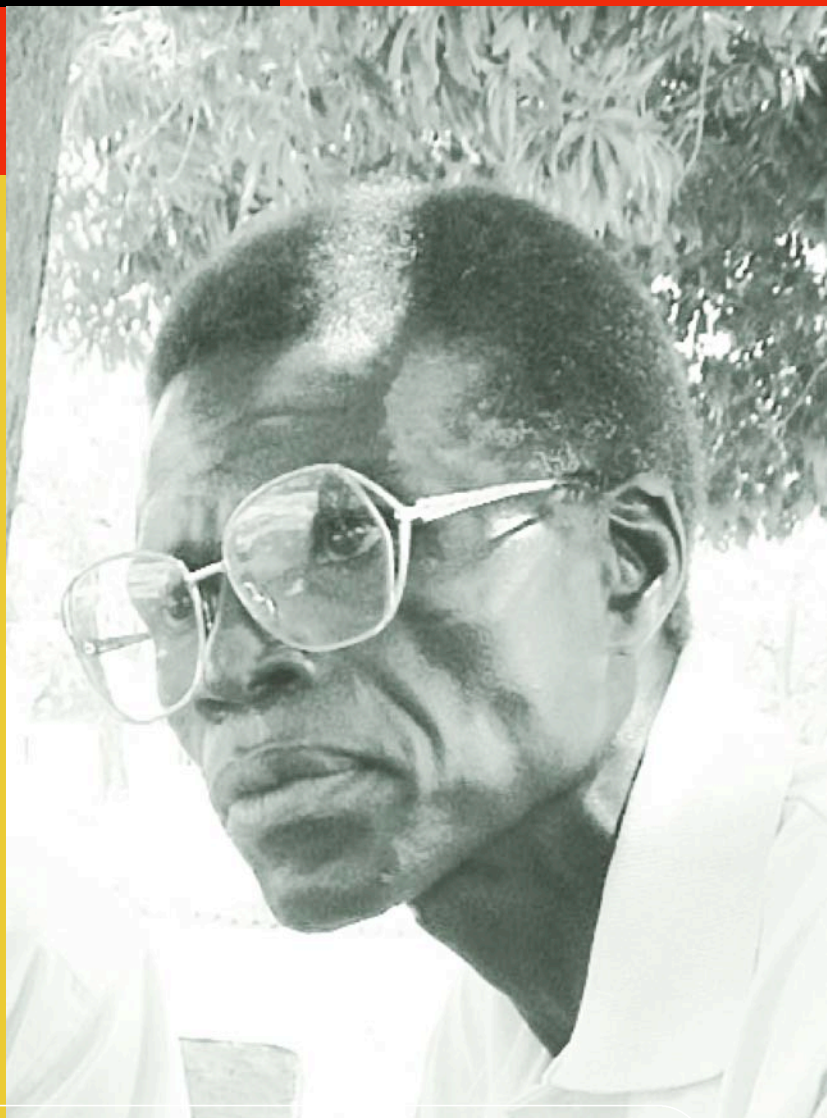
*Vice Chairperson John Onyutuwumi focuses during an ADMACHA meeting.*

One day recently, when the ADMACHA group was meeting under the mango tree, a woman came to tell them that one of their members was sick and bedridden. The ADMACHA members decided to visit the man, whose name is Edward, at his home. A few days later, volunteers arrived at Edward's house. He had lost his voice and was suffering from persistent diarrhea but was too ashamed to ask for help.

The ADMACHA home visiting teams help organize transportation such as a bicycle ride or bus fare to the health facility. They helped get Edward to a hospital, raised money for him to pay his bills while there, and encouraged his wife not to despair and to continue looking after her husband. Once he was under the hospital's care, Edward's condition improved.

Enabling ADMACHA to make home visits to people who are sick with AIDS is a central purpose of AIM's grant to the network. These visits are crucial in promoting access to care and services through the networks AIM supports. Aside from funding a variety of other self-help groups of men or women living with HIV/AIDS at the district and sub-district levels, AIM has supported ADMACHA's nationwide women's counterpart in the district, NACWOLA (National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS).

AIM's support is enabling these groups to provide a continuum of care services that focus on identifying people who are HIV positive and supporting them to access prevention, care, and treatment services. ■



<b>AIM'S ROLE</b>	<b>Supported the Arua Network Forum for PHAs</b>
<b>TOTAL GRANT</b>	<b>Ush 18 million</b>
<b>CONTRACT PERIOD</b>	<b>June 2005 and December 2005</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY AIM</b>	<b>Mentoring Involved in the refurbishment of labs in Arua hospital Mobilizing clients for VCT and PMTCT Home-based care kits</b>
<b>OTHER DONOR</b>	<b>NAFOPHANO</b>