

KISIIZI HOSPITAL

As a staff counselor at Kisiizi Hospital's Hope Ministries, Everse Kahanda is a frontline fighter against HIV/AIDS in a remote southwestern corner of Uganda. The Church of Uganda runs the 200-bed hospital, which is located in a secluded valley of the Rukungiri district. Hope Ministries is the hospital's answer to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

“I introduce myself, talk briefly about nutrition, and say what it means to be HIV positive, how you can live positively and how you can protect your baby...”

— EVERSE KAHANDA

Kahanda, a soft-spoken, dignified woman, began working for Hope Ministries as a bookkeeper seven years ago. But she was drawn to the work of HIV/AIDS counselor, sought training for the job, and switched to that role in 2002. Her work illustrates the efforts of Hope Ministries (its motto is “to bring hope to the hopeless”) to counter the misinformation and despair that surrounds HIV/AIDS.

Kahanda's assignment is two-pronged. She consults with people who come to the hospital inquiring about the HIV test. The cost, Ush 3200 (\$1.80), is prohibitively expensive for many Ugandans in rural areas like Rukungiri, where many people earn less than that per day. “Most of them say it's too much,” Kahanda says. But she advises them to weigh carefully the test's benefits against the cost, discusses the perceived risks of having it versus not having it, and corrects misconceptions.

She also counsels women who come to the hospital's antenatal ward about how to protect their babies and themselves

Photos: Joe Rosenbloom



Everse Kahanda talks to people about being tested for HIV and once tested, provides further counseling and referrals for those who test positive.

against HIV/AIDS. As she summarizes the job: “I introduce myself, talk briefly about nutrition, and say what it means to be HIV positive, how you can live positively and how you can protect your baby...”

She asks if the women are ready for the test. “You find that, out of ten, you have four who say yes,” Kahanda goes on. “Some say, ‘My husband says I should never take the test and, if I do, he'll chase me out of the house.’ These women are very poor. They don't have any income. They depend on men. So what men say, they have to do.”

Although her success may be limited, Kahanda says she values programs that make critical information about HIV/AIDS accessible to the hospital's patients. In administering and financing its HIV/AIDS programs, Kisiizi Hospital has received a range of support from AIM. For one year, starting in April 2003, AIM provided training for Kisiizi nurses and other personnel about new HIV/AIDS-related methods and



Everse Kahanda meets with Restatuta Tibekiriga as part of the Hope Ministries outreach program, which received AIM support.

assisted the hospital in strengthening its administration and program-monitoring systems.

Under a second AIM grant, the hospital was able to upgrade its administrative capacity and further improve its program to prevent the mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The Kisiizi Hospital has also benefited from various other donor support which has helped strengthen staff skills and infrastructure.

Being a part of such a program, Kahanda says, is gratifying: “When people start positive living and are healthy, you are so pleased, because you have resurrected someone who was dying.” ■

AIM'S ROLE

Provided funding, technical assistance, and capacity building

TOTAL GRANT

Ush 85,939,500

CONTRACT PERIOD

April 2003 to December 2005

ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY AIM

**Opportunistic infection and STI management
Support to PMTCT services
HIV clinic, routine counseling, and testing
Supervision of CB-DOTS implementation
Monitoring and evaluation**

OTHER DONORS

**Church of Uganda and its partners
Ministry of Health
Uganda Red Cross
Joint Clinical Research Centre**