The Power of One: Zambia

Public-private partners

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An estimated 28 percent of adults in urban areas of Zambia and 15 percent in rural areas are infected with HIV. But unlike some of its equally burdened neighbors, the Zambian government has mounted a strong response. In 1986, Kenneth Kaunda, then Zambia's president, publicly acknowledged that one of his sons had died of AIDS; that year, the health ministry secured the safety of the blood supply and began spreading information about STDs, condoms and health care.

A second initiative, introduced in 1994, was designed to encompass both the public and private sectors, including input from people with HIV. As a result, a variety of nonprofit organizations have been formed -- with both domestic and foreign-aid funds -- to help implement the government's prevention and health care efforts. Groups such as Kara Counseling, the Positive and Living Squad and the Copperbelt Health Project target specific groups, educating commercial sex workers and truck drivers -- ground zero of the infection -- as well as youth and providing care to PWAs, which rarely includes antiretroviral therapy.

This integrated approach has paid off, according to Moses Sichone, MD, manager of the National AIDS Program. While the percentage of adults with HIV remains high, it has recently stabilized.

Zambia will have the opportunity to showcase its achievements at the International Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa this September in Lusaka, the Zambian capital.

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