

# ROLE MODEL

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*Above: Role Model Treasurer Aliker Harriet and Secretary Omaki Martin display some of the organization's working files.*

*Above right: Role Model member and Nen-Gire PHA Network member Onega Christopher is one example of the many people who are standing up for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.*

In April 2004, when a group of HIV/AIDS activists in the Nebbi district of northwestern Uganda sought a grant from AIM, they failed to get it. AIM rejected the group's proposal for various reasons, including the fact that the target area was too wide for an organization with limited capacity, proposed activities were overly ambitious, and most activities were over budgeted. Furthermore, the proposal showed that the organization needed more clarity on what it wanted to do and accomplish.

But the People Living with HIV/AIDS Role Model Action Group or Role Model, as the



Photos: Monique Bovin

group is known, did not quit. It rallied district officials to support its proposal and accepted AIM's invitation to change and strengthen it. When the proposal was resubmitted, it was approved.

From humble origins in 1993, Role Model has persevered. In its earliest days, it consisted of six people who would gather secretly to talk about their HIV-positive status. Today, Role Model coordinates the activities of 45 self-help networks comprising more than 1,633 people living with HIV and AIDS in the Nebbi district.

AIM has supported the organization's aspirations to grow and diversify its activities. Besides assisting with proposal writing, AIM has equipped Role Model with office equipment, consulted with it on strategic planning, trained its members as home-based care volunteers, and supplied them with bicycles for traveling to rural areas.

Omaki Martin, Role Model's secretary, says members of the networks constitute a forum for sharing advice and information among



Photo: Caroline Turyatamba

*Above: Canwego Scovia, Role Model Chairperson.*

*Left: Role Model members and staff with a bicycle donated by the AIM program. From left to right: Role Model Coordinator Omodo Wilfred, Onega Christopher, Aliker Harriet, and Omaki Martin.*

the members and serve as a wellspring of mutual emotional support. Ugandans living with HIV/AIDS typically face formidable problems, such as social stigma, poverty, and depression. "It is not good to stay alone and be isolated," Martin says.

As its name implies, Role Model has served as an example and mentor to the 45 networks that have formed in its district. Role Model sponsors workshops for the groups' members, training them in organizational and fund-raising methods. It brings their leaders together for monthly meetings to discuss common concerns and coordinate their activities.

Role Model has devised a low-interest loan program that it also views as a model for self-help groups. Under the program, Role Model has set aside a portion of its membership fees in a loan pool. The

members can obtain low-interest loans to fund a business startup, such as a road-side fruit stand or egg-producing chicken coop. The low-interest loan fund has helped Role Model acquire a motorcycle. As of late 2005, 10 Role Model members had tapped the startup fund for loans, and the loan pool stood at Ush 1 million. ■

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| <b>AIM'S ROLE</b>                  | <b>Provided capacity building, technical assistance, equipment, and strategic planning</b> |
| <b>TOTAL GRANT</b>                 | <b>Ush 42,495,600</b>  |
| <b>CONTRACT PERIOD</b>             | <b>November 2004 to October 2005</b>   |
| <b>ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY AIM</b> | <b>Home-based care</b>   |