



USAID
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Latin America and the Caribbean

SUCCESS STORY

Breaking the cycle of poverty and risk among youth affected by HIV

Kwame was 15 years old when his world was shattered by the news that his mother, a single parent, had AIDS. It took him several months to come to terms with what this meant for him and his younger sister. He had been struggling at school and had dropped out. He had been home for about a year when his mother asked him whether he was interested in joining a USAID-funded project she had heard of through her support group. This project was aimed at building vocational skills among persons living with HIV/AIDS or older youth affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS.

Recognizing a valuable opportunity, Kwame enrolled in a seven-month training program under a joint initiative between USAID, Habitat for Humanity, Food for the Poor, and the Guyana Ministries of Housing and Health. Through this program he has learned masonry, carpentry, painting, and steel work. Additional coursework has focused on self empowerment and relationship skills. He has learned the values of discipline, self respect, risk reduction, and how to navigate the working world. As a result, Kwame has formed lasting friendships with other youth whose lives have been also been affected by HIV/AIDS. He says he was able to get a better understanding of how to be supportive of people living with HIV. “The program helped me to learn a trade and to understand the people living with HIV who I worked with. I also learned about work and how to talk to my boss. I am the only person who gets to work early everyday and so far I have never missed a day.”



Kwame applies his skills, learned under the USAID supported vocational skills program.

After graduating from the training program, Kwame diligently sought employment to support his family.

His persistence was soon rewarded with a recommendation from Habitat for Humanity for a full time job with a private building contractor.

Since accepting his new job, Kwame has been able to support his mother who is on antiretroviral treatment, and his younger sister. He says, “The work is very hard, but I feel good about earning my own money and being able to help my mother and sister every month.”