



Kenya Disability Newsletter

November 2009

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About the Kenya Disability Newsletter

"The publication of this newsletter is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Handicap International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government."

The Kenya Disability Newsletter is a bi-annual publication by Handicap International, Kenya. The newsletter, also available in Braille, seeks to capture local voices from grassroots based disability organizations implementing HIV and AIDS activities for the purpose of illuminating disability issues in the rural and remote areas.

The newsletter's editorial board welcomes articles, success stories and photographs for publication in the next edition. For more information, please contact our secretariat at the following address;

Handicap International
Africa Re Centre, Hospital Road, opp KASNEB Towers
P.O. Box 76375 - 00508, Nairobi
Tel: 271 6500, 2716445
Cell Phone : 0714 606997
email: hikeny@handicap-international.or.ke
website: www.handicap-international.org



Let's make Disability visible in the fight against HIV

EDITORIAL

A national campaign which seeks to reduce the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to the impact of HIV/AIDS in Kenya calls for serious attention. The Kenya Campaign on Disability, HIV&AIDS now in its third year seems to be receiving lukewarm attention from the government and service providers. The Campaign is premised on the fact that nearly 3.5m people in Kenya are living with a disability. They constitute a significant percentage of the poorest communities, which are also severely affected by HIV&AIDS. In addition to poverty, other factors contribute to increased vulnerability of persons with disabilities to the consequences of HIV&AIDS, such include exclusion of persons with disabilities from HIV&AIDS policies and programming; greater risk of HIV infection, compared to their non-disabled peers and poor access to HIV&AIDS information and services.

In order to have an all inclusive approach to HIV prevention and information dissemination the Campaign with support from Handicap International - Kenya continues to partner with various organizations locally and internationally. The Campaign is a unifying umbrella under which disabled people's organizations, organizations of people living with HIV & AIDS, NGOs, AIDS services organizations, researchers, activists and other citizens work collectively to achieve a coordinated response

involving persons with disabilities in Kenya to achieve inclusive national HIV & AIDS policies and programmes. At the heart of the Campaign is also the issue of attaining equal access for persons with disabilities in Kenya to information and services on HIV & AIDS. Proponents of the Campaign argue that it is upon the government to ensure that 14 years after HIV&AIDS was declared a national disaster in Kenya, issues of Disability, HIV&AIDS become visible. It is also the work of the government to fight the attitudes of many Kenyans who still believe that persons with disability do not have sexual desires.

There is also need for relevant and effective policy framework that should consider obtaining data on persons with disabilities and HIV/AIDS, (both adults and children). Besides, there is need to develop policies on access to disability friendly information, education and communication materials. Other apt policies should address the issue of communication channels and infrastructure to facilitate access to services by various disability groups.

Above all, the government and service providers should respect health rights of persons with disability enshrined in Article 10 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a starting point to unlocking the stalemate on interventions on Disability, HIV & AIDS.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Academy for Educational Development



Government ministries to mainstream disability issues

Years of advocating for disability issues to be mainstreamed into the national development agenda have finally paid off with the inclusion of disability mainstreaming indicator in the government's 6th Cycle (2009/2010) Performance Contracts.

"Mainstreaming disability issues in every ministry's plans and programmes is a key strategy for enabling the participation of persons with disabilities in different levels of society and achieving equal opportunities for them," said National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) Director Phoebe Nyagudi.

ICASA conference illuminates disability



Last year's International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA Conference) in Dakar Senegal was one with a difference. In a ground breaking move, an entire session dubbed Disabled People and HIV was dedicated to Disability, HIV&AIDS. Kenya's Campaign on the same subject received applause from the participants. In her testimony called Being a woman, disabled and HIV positive Mary Muthoni of Thika Support Group presented on the challenges faced by Persons with disabilities in accessing HIV and AIDS services and how they have overcome.

Other presentations made were on the African Campaign on HIV & Disability, Access to HIV information and services by persons with disabilities in Kenya, and Systematic Literature Review linking HIV/AIDS and Disability. The Conference held from December 1 to December 8, 2008, came just two days after the Africa campaign meeting on disability, HIV&AIDS. The disability meeting on the second day dwelt on making ICASA's agenda disability oriented and accessible with a focus on communication and venue. This was the first time in ICASA that disability issues were well captured and participation and involvement by PWDS was felt in most sessions.

Ms Carolyn Bii – Disability Institutional Strengthening Officer

She added that the Council is hopeful that this development would pave the way for the other sections of the Persons with Disabilities Act to be finally gazetted and speed up the domestication of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

A Performance Contract is an agreement between a government and a public agency which establishes general goals for the agency, sets targets for measuring performance, and provides incentives for achieving these targets. They are considered an essential tool for improving public sector performance and enhancing good governance and accountability for results in the public sector.

Under the Kenyan government's present contract, all public organizations are expected to set up a disability mainstreaming committee, formulate a disability mainstreaming strategy, train all staff in disability awareness and in the provision of services to persons with disabilities, and submit biannual reports to NCPWD.

The Council has come up with guidelines on disability mainstreaming and is currently circulating it among the different ministries, state corporations, and other government institutions. It will soon come up with schedules for holding workshops on disability mainstreaming.

HI Overview Film Available

Handicap International Kenya has produced a 15 minute documentary entitled Seeds of Hope. The documentary takes a look at the successful work HI Kenya engaged in last year. The documentary is a must watch for all those who care about interventions by NGOs at times when darkness hangs over a nation's head.



The documentary serializes Handicap International's emergency intervention as thousands of Kenyans were displaced by the violence and destruction of property that followed Kenya's disputed presidential elections in December 2007. What HI Kenya did in terms of economic and livelihood recovery as well as psychosocial support are well chronicled in the documentary. The movie sheds light on how HI stepped in to assist persons affected by post-election violence through a tailor-made psychosocial intervention adapted and adopted to the needs of individual groups and communities.

The counselors offer support for emotions that allow people to speak out and recall what happened, putting words to it. The role of the counselor is to re-establish or resume and improve the coping mechanism of the individual and community resilience. This did not compromise HI Kenya's other projects particularly Disability and HIV&AIDS where HI continued to be a leading star in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.



New partners sought

The New Year opened with a very crowded diary for the disability team (pictured). As a priority, the team went out to recruit new sub grantees from Nyanza, Coast, Western and Central. After sending out a call for proposals, the team began by carrying out a pre-award site assessment. A total of 12 Disabled Persons Organizations were visited with an aim of introducing to the groups the Disability, HIV&AIDS project. It was an opportunity for the team to learn more about the target organizations and their programs. A spot check was also done on the information the organizations had earlier relayed to Handicap International in their quest to partner with HI in implementing chosen activities.

Ms Doris Jerop – Finance and Administration Officer

New project on inclusion of PWD in development programs unveiled

Inclusion of persons with disability in development programs in Kenya is the aim of a new project unveiled by HI and its partners. The project, Expanding Participation of People with Disability in Development is an undertaking launched at the end of last year under supervision of the Disability, HIV and AIDS Technical Adviser, Kevin Henderson.

The 18 month long project supported by funds from USAID/AED seeks to boost the capacity of mainstream organizations to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in HIV&AIDS awareness raising and education programs.

The project’s fulcrum is hinged on the spirit of nothing about us, without us. It also seeks to strengthen disabled persons organizations to manage and implement disability programs and advocate for disability rights.



The project is premised on the reality that disability is not a priority in development cycles. The project therefore seeks to reverse this sad reality and mainstream disability in development.

Kevin Henderson, Technical Advisor Disability, HIV&AIDS.

Limuru Cheshire Peer Educators Training

Disabled teenagers, particularly girls, are often isolated from peer groups. They receive little or no education leaving them with few real prospects to improve their lives. The result is a lack of self-esteem, practical skills, or economic independence. Disabled adolescents have also been described as ‘invisible’ because programmes that are designed for young adults rarely include those with disabilities.

Consequently, adolescents with disabilities can be alienated from the few disability support groups that do exist. This is of particular importance considering that their social, educational and economic needs during this period of rapid physical and psychological development, is so great hence they need life skills and information on their rights, Reproductive Health issues, sanitation, gender, communication and presentation skills, HIV/AIDs and VCT.

It is in this respect that Leonard Cheshire Disability East and North African Region (LCD-ENAR) with Cheshire Services Kenya conducted a Peer Educators training on sexual and reproductive health issues over the course of 4 weeks at Limuru Cheshire Services, a vocational training centre for girls with Disabilities. The training was to equip the 35 girls and young women (resident in the home) with essential life skills to enable them gain control of their lives and raise their self-esteem. The training encouraged participatory interaction, including, games and drama, group work and role plays to facilitate the sessions for a better understanding of the issues.



Among the topics discussed were adolescent sexuality, basic reproductive anatomy and physiology, HIV/AIDs in relation to disability, Disability rights and life skills to develop positive behaviour, among others. Once armed with this training, it is expected that the participants will form a Peer Educators Club at Limuru Cheshire service and in their communities.

The training was supported by Population Council through the Adolescents Learning Network which is an initiative of the Population Council in collaboration with Binti Pamoja Girls’ Project.

Regional Conference on Disability in Commonwealth Africa

The Commonwealth Foundation and Leonard Cheshire Disability organised a regional conference on disability in commonwealth Africa in March 2009. The conference aimed to highlight the needs of persons with disabilities in Commonwealth Africa and to encourage all stakeholders to take action to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and to protect their rights. The conference also focused on the need for all Commonwealth countries to promote the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Dignity for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006. Participants included Persons with disabilities, youth with disabilities, and representatives from Governments, Disabled Persons Organisations, NGOs and Civil Society Organisations who came together to share innovative approaches to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and plan concrete follow up actions.



Over 60 delegates from 16 African countries attended the conference, which saw speakers from international, regional and national UN bodies, donor and development agencies, DPOs and governments spend time highlighting issues that surround Disability and why persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination and inequality. Acknowledging that millions of persons with disabilities are still the poorest and most marginalised citizens, they discussed and explored opportunities and strategies on how to address disability at various levels. It was emphasised that without including disability in any social and economic planning and processes, development goals and human rights for all world citizens would not be achieved.

Delegates emphasized that it is time for disabled people to join the mainstream of development actors and to protect them from the effects of the ever rising costs and related vulnerabilities that continue to marginalise and confine persons with disabilities to obscurity and crushing poverty.

They also called on Commonwealth African countries to introduce a motion lobbying for the establishment of a UN Special Agency on Disability; to provide support, dedicated resources, leadership, coordination and enhanced monitoring and reporting on the implementation and progress of the effects of the Convention on the lives of persons with disabilities.

Complete speeches can be accessed on the LCD ENAR website www.lcd-enar.org

Media tipped on Disability, HIV&AIDS



A partnership between Handicap International, gtz and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities yielded into a two day training on Effective Reporting of Disability, HIV&AIDS. The two day training held in March 2009 attracted 35 media practitioners from all over the country. Presentations ranged from various legal instruments which serve to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to how to cover disability issues from a human rights based approach.

Among other scintillating presentations was one on *Seducing Gatekeepers* by the Standard Newspaper Kisumu bureau chief, Mr John Oywa which saw heated debate on the floor pitting journalists on one hand and members of the Disabled Persons Organizations on the other hand. The journalists held their ground stating that most stories perish in the newsrooms because sources from the disability movement are hardly transparent with use of funds, and are largely invisible in matters affecting the society. They therefore asked Disabled Persons Organizations to be more proactive and visible so as to help illuminate disability issues. At the end of the training, participants agreed to enhance reporting on disability by using correct terminology by embracing the human rights based approach in reporting disability.

Eric Karani, Finance Officer, Nairobi

Empowering PWIDs through HIV Peer Education

By *Richelle Matthews*

Do you think people with intellectual disabilities (PWIDs) are sexually active? The popular perception among the general Kenyan population is “no.” However, this is a myth that is perpetuating the spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections among this group as they are not being educated on reproductive health issues.

Kenyan Association of the Intellectually Handicapped (KAIH) in partnership with Handicap International is addressing this problem through the development of a HIV/AIDS and reproductive health education program that is targeting people with intellectual disabilities, their parents and the general community in order to educate them on HIV.

Although there is a wide range of information available for the general population on HIV/AIDS there are minimal resources to people with intellectual disabilities as they require educational materials that cater for their cognitive level. Jackie Karemi, a Field Officer for the program says, “The problem is that people with intellectual disabilities are left out of HIV/AIDS education programs because we often think they are sexually inactive.

The key goal of the program is to develop relevant materials and simplified sustainable strategies to educate people with intellectual disabilities about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. One of the strategies that KAIH is using to achieve their program goals is through a peer to peer education approach. A group of people with intellectual disabilities are trained on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. This trained group then teaches the other people with intellectual disabilities about what they have learned. This peer based education approach is believed to be a sustainable tactic to ensure there is continual learning both within and outside of the classroom.



KAIH recognizes that people with intellectual disabilities have struggles that cannot be understood by people without an intellectual disability so peer based education ensures we are teaching and training at their level. “We feel that they will be able to talk each others language” states Cecilia Kahihia the Project Coordinator and mother of a student with an intellectual disability. “People with intellectual disabilities have very specific life struggles that only other people with a disability would be able to fully understand. Therefore, we use a peer to peer strategy to empower them with information so that they can share it with others.”

Emphasizing the importance of the peer based education strategy, Ms Karemi adds, “Due to similar life experiences, people with intellectual disabilities can more effectively talk to each other about the real and important issues.”

At a recent workshop conducted by KAIH with the peer educators the topics discussed ranged from proper personal hygiene to rape prevention and inappropriate touching of personal body parts by another party. The facilitators of the course taught people with intellectual disabilities solutions to help them address their problems. Rosaline Wanjiku, a young woman with dyslexia states, “I like to learn about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health so that I can share the information with my friends.” She continues, “Through KAIH I have learnt that HIV/AIDS has no cure and I should take care not to be cheated by people, especially because I have a disability and people will try to take advantage of me.” KAIH believes that education for PWIDs on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health is a key component to ensuring their full inclusion within society.

The writer is a VSO volunteer currently attached with KAIH, Nairobi.



Handicap International Director, Mr. Gaetan de Beauvais addresses stakeholders during the launch of As It Is: a research publication by HI on knowledge, attitude and practises among persons with disabilities



Joseph Kang'ethe Primary School hearing impaired children presenting a dance



Members of Emuhaya Disabled Group go through a self-guided needs assessment exercise during its search for new sub-grantees in March 2009



Puppetry by Deaf Empowerment Kenya for community education of HIV/AIDS information



Participants from Migori Christian Group draw up a work plan under the newpartners programs supported by AED/USAID



Members of the Kiandutu Support Group perform in Thika to commemorate the National Week of Action



HI partners pose for a photograph during a training on report writing and documentation held at Inter Leisure Hotel in Athi River



Members of the Kenya Campaign for Disability and HIV & AIDS during a public reading of the Mombasa Declaration to urge the Government to make disability visible



A young man shows off a poster announcing events of the National Week of Action (July 20th - July 25th 2009)



Youths in Kitale pose for a group photo after a performance during the National Week of Action



Crew members of Vioja Mahakamani a local TV drama group go through the paces of a program sponsored by AED/USAID in the Week of Action



Members of the Nanyuki Disabled Network discuss their advocacy plan during a training on lobbying and advocacy held in August 2009

The Chill Campaign Stifles Gains Made among the Deaf Community in HIV Fight

By Joseph Shiroko

One of the most compelling and visual mass media campaigns ever in the history of the HIV&AIDS in Kenya is undoubtedly the Chill Campaign. Its recent return to our screens has left a lot of heads turning, particularly those of persons who are deaf. Supported by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Kenya, the "Nimechill," (Swahili-English slang meaning "I have chilled" or "I am abstaining") campaign aimed to delay teen sexual debut by changing social norms and reducing peer pressure, creating stigma regarding irresponsible, early sex among youth and making abstinence a "cool", smart and responsible choice, according to information obtained from the website of Population Services International (PSI)/Kenya dated March 2006.

Nimechill's aim was to change three perceptions correlated with abstinence: social norms, self-efficacy and behavioural intentions to remain abstinent. Nimechill's persuasion strategy was based on positive affect (messages were optimistic and encouraging, rather than risk based) and positive deviance (messages featured older youth, aged 14-16, defying early teenage sex norms). The campaign was delivered through television, radio, print, billboards, poster, T-shirts, and event sponsorships. The campaign's evaluation results revealed that 42% of youth aged 10-14 had seen the campaign on at least one media channel (TV, radio, print, billboard, or poster) and an additional 44% had seen the campaign on three or more channels. A multiple regression analysis examining two rounds of surveys performed before and after the campaign revealed that youth exposed to three or more channels were twelve times more likely than youth who had not seen any Chill advertisements to strongly agree with the statement "I will abstain from sex until marriage."

Anecdotally, the phrase "Chill" became so catchy that a variety of politicians and influential public leaders have been photographed with groups of youth raising the "V" or "Chill" sign that was established within the campaign. Mini-buses, often colourfully decorated with pictures of international music and sports stars, have taken the initiative to commission their own Chill logos for placement on their vehicles. In addition, entrepreneurs have manufactured their own Chill bumper stickers and regularly sell them for their own profit in bars and petrol stations around Nairobi. During the campaign, articles on youth and "chilling" regularly appeared in the national newspapers and weekly discussions about "chilling" took place both formally and informally on the radio.

Expressly the Chill Campaign has targeted many including the deaf who rely on their eyes for both seeing and hearing. Their language is known as Kenyan Sign Language.



Miriam Opondo, a counsellor who is deaf explains a point at a past training organised by Handicap International

It has compounded matters here that "sheng" slang language has been used. The message delivered to the person who is deaf on this issue of abstinence and not being easy going (loose morals) in terms of opening your legs for sex is in fact the opposite. I reckon that that the designers of this message did not think about the impact the Campaign would have on persons who are deaf. The 'successful' V sign means the opposite of what other hearing members of the society take it for. Quoting from some of the deaf "It really has been a point of concern to the deaf community. The campaign has the wrong message for the deaf and the hearing community as well. Whereas the real intention of the campaign is to preach the gospel of abstinence which in simple terms is to close and remain closed, therefore to the deaf it should have closed fingers as you close legs one in front of the other when one is standing. This is represented by the sign 'R' in the Deaf hand alphabet.

"Instead of opening the two fingers you just close them, the middle finger above the first finger and there you have the right sign for Chill", says Paul Njatha, a specialist in deaf issues.

The "V" finger shape in the deaf sign language sheng communication means "open your legs" for me or some one who removes her pant at the slightest moment. Persons who are deaf interpret this finger shape as one that connotes that it is right to engage in sex any time anywhere, no matter how safe or unsafe it might be. The above scenario calls for sensitization of message designers so as to appreciate the existence of all segments of the population. A thorough audience study should be carried to ensure that messages resonate well with everyone in the society. Thinking about persons who are deaf is therefore a key factor in message design for all advertisers.

The author is the Programme Coordinator, Brian Resource Centre.

Access to information technology by persons with disability key to their social integration

By Phitalis Were Masakhwe

People with disabilities are often disadvantaged due to lack of access to useful information they need for survival and empowerment.

For instance, a lot of health information presented in regular print is inaccessible to persons who are blind. Also people with hearing impairment miss out crucial information presented on television due to lack of sign language interpretation.

What baffles many observers is that scanty efforts are being made to bridge the information gap between the abled and persons with disability. The speed and quality of empowerment and integration is the extent to which persons with sensory and intellectual impairment access vital information necessary for taming the environment.

Access to technology and assistive devices are hence needed where information is presented in formats that can only be accessed through specific devices or technology.

As a prerequisite to equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, society must ensure that persons with disability become an integral part of revolution in the information sector. Luckily there now exists enabling legal framework both locally and internationally to support this move. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2003 as a case in point says, "All television stations shall provide a sign language inset or sub-titles in all newscasts and educational programmes, and in all programmes covering events of national significance."

Regarding telephone services, the disability law says, "All persons providing public telephone services shall as far as possible install and maintain telephone devices or units for persons with hearing disabilities and tactile marks on telephone sets to enable persons with visual disabilities to communicate through the telephone system. This is further strengthened by the UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which Kenya has since ratified.

The Convention makes it obligatory for States Parties to ensure that all information, communication and related products are inclusive and accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.

Non Government agencies like African Braille Centre (ABC) and the World Bank Initiative on Access to Information by Persons with Disabilities are changing the lives of millions of school children through brailing of educational materials to suit the needs of visually impaired children.



Add to this list the Kenya National Library Service and the University of Nairobi's linguistic department which made deliberate efforts of training of more sign language interpreters as well as carrying out research on sign language. Courtesy of their support, various assistive technologies are now available to enhance information access to persons with disability and allow visually impaired persons to operate the computer independently. Among others such technologies include specially designed screen reader software which converts a personal computer into a "talking computer". Others include screen magnifier for persons with low vision and braille translation software for converting normal text into Braille.

Available services are however centralized and unevenly spread across the country. One wishes the agencies had more support to roll out their services countrywide, particularly in the rural areas. Information resource centres that are inclusive and accessible to all are also needed.

This scenario calls for total commitment to an all inclusive and accessible information and communication policy, legal framework and regime. The government must lead on this not only through sanctioning violation of this principle but also ensuring that essential public information and communication is accessible to all in both the private and public sectors.

Goodwill, creativity and research, training, resources including expert human resource expertise are required in this field as is the need to marshal support from all stakeholders. Effective access to information and communication will not only enhance contribution of persons with disabilities, but significantly fast-track their integration in socio-economic and political development.
The writer is a sociologist with a physical disability

The rise and growth of APDK as told a half a century later

Since its inception in 1958, the “Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya” has undergone a tremendous transformation in its approach towards the empowerment of people with different abilities. The initial focus of the interventions was based on the charity model of rehabilitation where disabled people were considered objects of pity who depended on the goodwill of well-wishers.

Through the establishment of special institutions the focus during the 1960s and 1970s was on medical rehabilitation, provision of appliances, special education, vocational training and employment through sheltered workshops. In the 1980s and 1990s the focus shifted to empowerment of persons with disabilities through a community based approach with the objective of integrating them into their respective communities.

In the new millennium, APDK has been fully embracing the social model of rehabilitation with emphasis on equalization of opportunities and mainstreaming of services for integration. In line with the recent ratification of the “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” all programs are now geared towards ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms and removal of barriers which hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis.

Disability, HIV/AIDS program in the community

The Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya has been empowering persons with disabilities through its various programmes countrywide. The organization is working towards mainstreaming disability into the development agenda in all aspects of development. Currently, APDK is implementing the program in 4 Branches, namely; Nairobi, Kisii, Kisumu and recently Embu.

APDK works with the community through its Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation (CCBR) and Outreach programs. Through these programmes, it was discovered that persons with disabilities had been sidelined in HIV/AIDS related issues. APDK’s Kisii, Kisumu and Embu branches are implementing Disability, HIV/AIDS program in the community.

The Kisii Branch works closely with AMREF through the HIV/AIDS Maanisha programme where they managed to incorporate disability in the program. The program is supported at the constituency level and therefore has a close working relationship with the Constituency AIDS Committee Coordinators and other stakeholders.

In 2006, the support focused on the community group at Ibeno location, Keumbu Division, Nyaribari Chache constituency. The main focus was to support orphans and vulnerable children, kitchen gardens for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHVAs) and food supplement to boost their immunity system.

By the end 2006, they had trained 20 persons with disability PMCTC and a further 20 trained on home based care, TB and ARVs.



A group of children orphaned by HIV from Ibeno, Kisii who received school uniforms and shoes.

Achievements

- From the trainings the persons with disabilities were empowered with information which most of them did not have.
- One person with disability was chosen by the Community Development Fund (CDF) committee to represent the vulnerable in the community
- More PWDs started attending forums on HIV/AIDS.
- Vulnerable children benefited from school fees, shoes, uniforms and other small basic necessities

In 2008, the Branch expanded the program to cover Kiogoro Division, Keumbu location Nyaribari Chache constituency. The program is on Behaviour Change Communication which is targeting the youth both in and out of school. Within this catchment area, APDK has one group for persons with disabilities; Kiogoro Disabled Group with whom they are implementing the program with. The program runs for one year and it is expected to end in Dec 2009. The major activities included:

- Training 30 youths on Behaviour Change Communication.
- 50 OVC support which include provision of uniforms and payment of school fees
- Support to widows and widowers in starting kitchen gardens
- Sensitization campaign

By the end of 2008 a stakeholders forum was carried out. The District Officer and Chiefs of the area concerned also attended. The Kiogoro and Obwoyo youth group were taken through the objectives of the whole program. Upon completion, the programme is expected to have a great positive impact on the targeted beneficiaries and the community in general on matters of HIV/AIDS.

Kisumu and Embu Branch incorporated Disability, HIV/AIDS in their services and are being supported by Amref/Maanisha and the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) under the Total War Against AIDS (TOWA) project respectively.

Removing The Barriers

Angela Nzilani, a married lady with a disability and a mother of one is a member of Kenya Disabled Action Network Post Test Club. She is HIV positive and has come out to declare her status after overcoming double stigmatization. She narrates her life experience living with the HIV virus.

“I come from culture that really discriminates against persons living with HIV. They are considered a bad omen and once found out expulsion from the rest of society is inevitable. Yes, a person is cut off from associating with family, friends and neighbours. In essence one is treated as if he or she has the plague. “It has not been easy for me to manage HIV and Disability. Sometimes I feel like giving up in life.”

“I acquired my disability through a sickness called meningitis. Meningitis is a serious inflammation of the meninges, the thin, membranous covering of the brain and the spinal cord. It is treatable, but it can be serious so as to cause blindness and deafness. I had a severe headache that prolonged for three days after which I lost my sight. Attempts at the hospital to save my eyesight could not salvage the situation.”

“I faced stigma from the last person I expected to stigmatize me – my husband. Once he found out that I was HIV positive he became abusive and violent.”

“He accused me of introducing the virus in our marital bed. This was very painful to me when I remembered the first time I tested positive for the HIV virus and discussed my status with him. He told me HIV could not infect a young lady like me. I believed it and assumed I was HIV negative only find out the hard way when my CD4 blood count was below 200. Right away I was put on Anti-Retroviral medication.”

I had to look for a Post Test Club which could accommodate me as a person with disability and assist me to regain my self esteem. That’s when I bumped into Kenya Disabled Action Network, who has treated me as one of their own. I accessed a lot of information about my health and how I could continue living positively. All this was possible through the numerous trainings and focused group discussions at the center. Now I have many friends.

The support that I get from the PostFest club is overwhelming. This has enabled me to become a qualified peer educator and assist in giving health talks and sensitize the community on issues of stigma reduction thereby helping to remove these barriers. We are not yet out of the woods as far as stigma is concerned but successive gains have been made.



RESEARCH

Cultural practise on the spotlight in Kuria District

For a long time, *Nyumba Mboke* practice has been an evil residents of Kuria District have learned to live with, albeit grudgingly.

The practice involves elderly childless women ‘marrying’ women in anticipation of family continuity. This practice mostly affects women with disabilities since they are regarded as persons who can be used as child bearing machines. This has hugely contributed to the susceptibility of women with disability in contracting HIV/AIDS due to multiple sex partners. This practice exposes women with disabilities to several male partners because they don’t have legal husbands and due to high poverty levels that surround them they use sex as an income generating activity.

The practice has hindered women with disabilities to access HIV/AIDS prevention services such as prevention of mother to child transmission, counseling and testing, antenatal and postnatal care, care, support and treatment.

Civil Society in Kuria District launch research on the impact of ‘*Nyumba Mboke*’

Women with disabilities who participated in our cultural analysis forums revealed that, most women with disabilities were getting married to “*Nyumba Mboke*” due to their low educational and awareness levels and the practice is putting them at risk of contracting the virus.

Kuria District AIDS and STI Coordinator Mrs. Lydia Odek Ogutu says 15% of women who access comprehensive care and support are women with disabilities who are not married to *nyumba mboke*. According to the records in her office women with disabilities married to *nyumba mboke* are at 0.5%.

In order to fight *Nyumba Mboke*, the Kuria District Disability Network, Association of People Living with HIV & AIDS and Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers KENFAP will undertake a two month survey to study the impact of this ill conceived customary practice. Watch this space for further information.

Braille Centre engages Groups Aiding Kenyans Who Are Blind Get Help

Born deaf and nearly blind, Joyce 19, lost all of her remaining vision and was taken out of school. She walked bent over, unable to straighten her body. Her family believed Joyce could not learn. The people at Kilimani School, a Perkins International partner, believed in Joyce. Today she walks upright with a white cane. Though she is both deaf and blind, Joyce is learning to read and write in braille, the tactile system of dots that is “pencil and paper” for people who are blind. She uses a Perkins Brailier®, the most commonly used braille typewriter in the world. Without braille, people who are blind would be illiterate. Not Joyce! She has learned braille very quickly despite the fact that – with neither sight nor hearing – she translates words through tactile (or hand-on-hand) sign language.

Paul Polman, the Chief Executive Officer of Unilever, believes strongly in the power of braille literacy to change lives. He scaled Mt. Kilimanjaro in 2005 with a party including eight blind mountain climbers.

That climb was coupled with visits to schools for the blind in East Africa. He learned that most children in those schools had no access to braille typewriters and that a great many of the machines they did have were broken. He was inspired to establish the Kilimanjaro Blind Trust specifically to ramp up the availability of Perkins Brailiers, institute brailier repair training workshops, and help build literacy programs in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

The results were almost immediate. By 2007, Julius, a participant at the African Braille Centre (ABC) in Nairobi reported that “In my school there were broken machines which needed dismantling and assembling, the knowledge which I have not had before [being trained]. Now all are working!” After attending an ABC brailier repair training workshop, Beatrice, a woman from a school in Tanzania writes, “...The skill I have been given is very important and it is one of the needs in our school.”

On Saturday, August 22, ABC celebrated another milestone with the opening of the African Braille Centre Perkins Brailier Workshop & Parts Depot, funded in large part by the Kilimanjaro Blind Trust. Messrs. Polman, Rothstein and many other representatives of Perkins and ABC were on hand for the event, which marked a greater capacity for repairing brailiers.

This project is the culmination of a long-term partnership between ABC, Perkins School for the Blind and Kilimanjaro Blind Trust. The project, in support of the education of the blind children in Kenya and in the region will ensure that ABC enhances its support to the education of learners with visual impairment in this country, a role it has played for the last 22 years.

Through this project, ABC will be in a position to make Perkins Brailiers readily accessible to people and institutions who need them. Besides, ABC will ensure that the brailiers remain in good working condition and that children do not have to stay without because of



breakdowns. Through this project, ABC will be able to provide timely and efficient repair and maintenance services, as well as spare parts, and also make the procurement process for new brailiers more efficient.

Access to braille instruction and properly working brailiers is critical because skill in reading and writing braille greatly improves chances for employment among people who are blind. ABC Manager of Development Kiprotich Juma points out, “Education is the key to a better future life and this will not be possible without braille literacy for a blind person.”

The mission of Polman’s Kilimanjaro Blind Trust is to advance opportunities for people who are blind to become productive citizens, fully integrated into society. Perkins partners with organizations in 63 countries. In Kenya, Perkins International collaborates not only with schools, and with ABC, but with the Brian Resource Centre, CBM, Sense International, Sight Savers, Kenya Union of the Blind (KUB), and many others.