

Write up request to Peggy

Kibera nutrition project is a project of the Kibera Community Youth Programme (KCYP) being funded by Positively Africa an NGO from Canada. KCYP volunteers (Kepha, Robert, Quinter and others) met Mrs. Peggy Frank a Canadian working for Positively Africa mid last year in Nairobi. KCYP through Robert Kheyi got in touch with Mrs. Peggy Frank with the help of Ms Maia Green, who had visited KCYP during the 2006 international conference on climate change here in Nairobi. We met with Mrs. Peggy while she was attending an international workshop on HIV in Nairobi in 2007. KCYP shared her experiences of working in Kibera especially on creating awareness on HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, violence on women and other social vices. Mrs. Peggy shared with us on what Positively Africa does especially with HIV positive women in Rwanda.

Following our discussions and time together we learnt a lot from each other. For example how people living with HIV/AIDS in Kibera cope up with life. Mrs. Peggy was touched so much with how PLWHA survive in Kibera in light of high poverty coupled with stigma and discrimination directed to them. It was surprising to her when she learnt of the high rate of infection especially among young people and the increased cases of cross generational relationships. It would have been hard for her to imagine the realities in Kibera had she never been to Africa and supported such people in Rwanda. Her experience of down to earth with such scenarios made it easier for her to come in terms with the hard realities experienced here.

Moreover, she was happy to hear that to a good extent, many PLWHA here get antiretroviral drugs and medicines either from government hospitals which are located a few kilometers from the outskirts of the Kibera slum, or from the NGOs that operate in Kibera. Such NGOs that do offer these drugs are MSF Belgium, Amref and Ushirika Clinic. She also appreciated our efforts in creating awareness against stigma and discrimination towards PLWHA, importance of Voluntary Counseling and Testing among the Kibera residents, campaigns against cross generational relationships and sex, and the way we involve the youth of Kibera without any kind of discrimination (gender, tribe, educational level, HIV status). She lauded our five year work and our openness to partnerships and collaborations with other institutions working in Kibera.

With all these discussions going on, one question kept running through our faces. Are these drugs effective in retarding the effects of HIV/AIDS to people using them? For sure this was a tough one! Yes these drugs should be effective because we don't doubt the standards. However, the drugs are and should be more effective to people who consistently take them. During our campaigns on Tuberculosis with the International Medical Corps, IMC, where we carried door by door campaigns, we came face to face with the realities among people using any kind of drugs. Be it for treatment of Tuberculosis or for reducing the effects of HIV/AIDS. BY the way, 46% of people suffering from tuberculosis in Kibera are diagnosed to have HIV. We found out that, 70% of people using either drug don't take them regularly. Two reasons were outstanding: the drugs were too powerful to be taken on empty stomach. A visitor in any of the houses

might have gotten confused if the owner ran a chemist with the sight of many bottles of medicines in the traditional single room that make our houses, and two; the drugs were being sold for cash. All these make it impossible for the patients using the drugs and any other efforts to make visible change in the lives of PLWHA.

Another question resurfaced. How do we then compliment the existing efforts? How to we ensure the hungry and the impoverished yet HIV/AIDS positive people take their drugs regularly and don't sell the drugs? These questions were very good because they brought out the humane character of a people serving the less fortunate. In trying to help solve this puzzle, we as KCYP requested Positively Africa to start providing nutritional food to the most impoverished PLWHA and already using the ARVs. This project was later to be appreciated by Positively Africa as epitomized by their continued monetary and moral support. To date a total of \$5,000 has been put into the project by Positively Africa.

This Kibera nutrition project is very unique in its running. It is the first project to stop providing "free food" to the needy people of Kibera. The project addresses the issue of lack of essential and nutritious food to PLWHA. At the same time, the project has to address the issue of incessant stigma and discrimination being perpetrated by both individuals and institutions living or working in Kibera. The project works to enhance the self esteem of its beneficiaries with along term objective of making the beneficiaries more self reliant. As such, the food is being sold at 60% of normal price to the project beneficiaries. In case of inability to raise the money to purchase the food, we write a credit note to the beneficiaries so that they can remember to repay once they get some money. With this were sure that, slowly by slowly we shall conquer the dependency attitude of not only the project beneficiaries but also the entire residents of Kibera. This is also in line with what we are doing as organization advocating for stigma reduction.

The Kibera nutrition project is keen on ensuring that, the money from its donor benefits only the target group. The project intended to serve the entire Kibera slum. After simple research and inquiries from other NGOs we realized that there was thousands of PLWHA in Kibera. This number is too big and hence we narrowed to one particular village of Makina for our initial year of operation. In this village, over 100 PLWHA (those who have come out publicly) are on drugs. Out of these, 25 were recruited because of their unique needs that included being widows, single mothers, abandoned wives, or those abandoned or coming from huge families up to ten people. After one to two months of operations, we received requests from an extra 7 need cases cut across different other villages for considerations. We reviewed their situations and started serving them bringing the total to 32 women. From the 32 beneficiaries of the project, 5 are suppliers of the food we purchase for project. After mobilizing the beneficiaries we openly discussed the project with major emphasis on activities and objectives that would see them through as strong and independent women of Africa. The cardinal goal we agreed was that, in the long run each beneficiary shall have activities that regularly bring her income. To achieve this, business was taken as the best option to get income. The five women then came out strongly as the suppliers as they had done business before or were running small businesses.

For KCYP, this project has endeared us so much to the community. We are enjoying immense goodwill from the community. We have expanded our partnerships with NGOs working in Kibera. We have developed cordial relationships with the families of the beneficiaries of the project. Our interventions especially in helping the beneficiaries in cases like carrying them to the hospitals, contributing towards their hospital bills, assisting in paying their house rents, counseling their children and even encouraging them in joining youth efforts in changing the face of Kibera has enhanced our reputation. Our accountability in using the money of project and clear and free flow of information among the beneficiaries, the project volunteers and other like minded partners has real enhanced our integrity as youth organization.

Our close work with other NGOs has also opened our eyes wide enough to see some bad things happening in Kibera. In some cases we were able to discover mistreatment of PLWHA, poor advice especially on food and nutrition and negligence brought about by unprofessional staff. Several NGOs have been overwhelmed with number of PLWHA and give very minimal attention to individual patients. This has led to simple problems developing into complex problems. For instance, a recommendation from a professional doctor stating that, one beneficiary to stop using a particular drug and changed to another took a period of two months to be effected. With the project intervention, a record of five weeks was taken for the institution to write a mere transfer letter for the beneficiary from this institution to another. By the time we received the latter, it was too late and the beneficiary passed a way six hours after being admitted to Kenyatta National Hospital.

On the other hand we have also seen other good NGOs and clinics doing tremendous job in treating PLWHA. In this effect, the Kibera nutritional project is finalizing a partnership with Comprehensive Care Clinic based at Kenyatta National Hospital. This partnership will see our beneficiaries benefiting from the professional treatment of severe opportunistic diseases, Regular CD4 cell count counseling and food nutritional advice at a fee of Kshs.400. Already we have registered one beneficiary with them and she is enjoying their services.

All in all, the project is doing what others never thought to do. It is with profound relief that we got caring partners in Positively Africa, Mrs. Peggy Frank and the untiring volunteers of Kibera Community Youth Programme. We believe that, no man will ever reward your efforts, only the Might God will.

Robert Kepha