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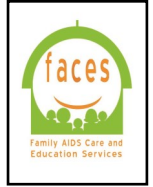
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Family AIDS Care and Education Services

Issue 20

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FACES TALK

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Buddies & Patients Inspire



"I was tested in 2006; my result was positive. It was very difficult for me to be open. I used to lock myself in the house. My mother and I are very close. One day as I locked myself in the house, my mother came and just opened the door. She found me sick and in tears. I disclosed my status to her, I can remember that she told me that life must continue for those who want it. Where there is light, there is no darkness. The following morning my family took me to the hospital with the help of my brother. On reaching the hospital we found a health talk going on about HIV progression and stigma. I was treated and given drugs. During this period my mother supported me in many ways; she helped me adhere to my treatment drugs in good time every day. She gave me financial support. She counseled me and counseled other people living with HIV. She supported me when I got married and still supports my care. I am living positively and have children that are all HIV negative."

Male, age 36, Suba District Hospital

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Welcome

Welcome to FACES TALK. Our aim is to bring you updates on program progress, activities, and feature articles. This edition is focused on treatment buddy support. While preparing this edition we received many inspiring buddy stories and quotes; many are shared here and others will be in the next edition.

FACES Snapshot

FACES is a family-focused HIV prevention, care, and treatment program in Kenya. FACES initially launched services in September 2004 with a single site in Nairobi, and a second site in Kisumu, Nyanza Province in March 2005. FACES now supports over 130 health facilities. FACES partners with District Health Management Teams (DHMTs), City Councils, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, and private health facilities to provide comprehensive care and treatment, family planning, PMTCT, TB screening, counseling, and social support. FACES continuously strives to increase local capacity through targeted trainings and continuing medical education (CME) activities.

Buddying up for Patient Support

Treatment buddies are the norm for patients on antiretroviral therapy (ART); in fact Kenyan ART guidelines encourage all patients to identify a treatment buddy to maximize adherence. Adherence to treatment is paramount; patients who miss clinic visits risk drug interruptions, poorer health outcomes, and drug resistance. FACES conducted a study to examine if having a treatment buddy reduced the risk of missing clinic appointments within three months of starting ART.

Among a cohort of 2,074 patients at four Kisumu clinics, 67% were female and 33% were male. Of the females, 87% had treatment buddies and 94% of the males had treatment buddies. Patients with treatment buddies were more likely to be married, (58% compared to 38%). Among women, the proportion with any missed clinic appointments was lower for those with a treatment buddy compared to those without (51% to 64%) while it did not differ among men. Findings indicate that treatment buddies may be more strongly associated with clinic visit adherence in females than in males. Further research is needed to determine the relationship between treatment buddies, clinic appointment adherence, and gender.



Photo by Beth Novey



Many health care facilities that serve patients who are HIV positive face challenges such as insufficient staffing levels and staff with limited training and no access to consultation resources. In response to this need, **Uliza!** (Swahili for "ask") was launched in April 2006. It is a Clinicians' HIV Hotline providing free HIV telephone consultation service for healthcare providers in Kenya. Hotline users call an **Uliza!** consultant who discusses the patients' problems and helps the caller work through a solution, reinforcing national guidelines.



Buddies & Patients Inspire



Rose enrolled in care on 19 February 2009. Before then she was at home on and off with diarrhea, headache and boils around the neck. Here is what she had to say about her treatment buddy. "My son took the responsibility of becoming a buddy. He took me to the hospital every time until I got out of bed. He used to carry me on a bicycle to the hospital every fortnight. He ensures I bathe, get food, and also that I take medication as prescribed, ensuring I adhered to drugs 100%. Due to the counseling I received from him and hospital staff, I was not stigmatized and I encourage those who are newly diagnosed with HIV to take care immediately and not wait to be bedridden; also be humble, cooperative during the time your buddy is offering support to you.

I can now do shamba (farm) work and all domestic activities. All this is as result of the good and committed buddy I have."

Female, age 55, Nyatoto HC

"I was born in the year 2002. My mother and I were both in HIV care and enrolled at Suba District Hospital. In 2008 my mother passed away due to short illness so my grandmother decided to take care of me; she would bring me to the hospital. Later my father decided to take me back home. I found it difficult since I was not able to adhere as I was with my grandmother. Two years later my father also passed away and now my grandmother takes care of me. I am very grateful to my buddy because she has made me be the owner of my clinic appointment dates, makes sure I go to school very well without missing days, gives me good food on time and also makes sure that I take my treatment drugs on time without failure. She lets me play like other children and also allows me to attend children's club like other children and there is no discrimination in the family."

Female, age 12, Suba District Hospital

"She reminds me of my appointment dates in clinic. She supports me by counseling spiritually and encourages me to join support groups and is always concerned with my welfare."

Male, age 60, Msare HC

"I am very grateful to my wife who has been my buddy since I started in HIV care. She has been my nurse at home during the time my legs were swollen and ensures full nursing is done every day. She has been taking care of the family, looking for money to support us and she even takes me to the hospital for all clinic appointments. She gives me all the support I need to live positively. We are a discordant marriage and happily supporting each other. "

Male, age 65, Nyatoto HC



Staff Snapshots

Enrollment

Program-wide Cumulative Enrollment from 2004 to the end of June 2013:

Enrolled in HIV Care

Adults: 114,435

Children: 18,920

Total: 133,355

Cumulative on ART

Adults: 54,369

Children: 5,845

Total: 60,214



Sara Obala Ogola

I'm a registered clinical officer and a district program officer in Nyatike District where I oversee HIV related activities at multiple health facilities. My core duties include facilitating Ministry of Health (MOH) and FACES collaboration and supporting good quality of care through mentorship, support supervision, and routine review of progress. I also organize and coordinate trainings.

Treatment buddies are very important part of patient care because they improve uptake of HIV care, retention of patients by reminding them of clinic appointments and time to take their drugs, they accompany them to the clinic, help monitor patient progress, and improve quality of life. A buddy knows the clients' psychological, social, physical and economical needs; they offer moral support to patients by encouraging them to move on with life and live positively regardless of the HIV status.

PMTCT Update

Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission, 2007 to end of June 2013:

Number of women counseled, tested and received HIV results within maternal and child health services at 132 sites in Nyanza:

197,359

Proportion of HIV+ women in ANC that received ARV prophylaxis:

94%

Infants HIV tested via DBS for PCR:

15,433



Everlyn Omune

The most rewarding part of my work is seeing persons living positively and able to go about their daily activities and put food on the table as a result of quality care offered to them and from the support of their buddies.

I am Everlyn Omune Clinical Officer In-charge at the Patient Support Centre (PSC) in Muhuru Health Centre. I oversee HIV care and treatment, HIV testing and counseling, Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission and Tuberculosis/HIV with Prevention (PwP) services. I counsel patients according to their assessed needs, offer health talks on prevention messages, provision of ongoing care in accordance with the National Guidelines.

Treatment buddies play a key role in client retention and stigma reduction. Buddies help to address key issues: adherence in the family by reminding them to take medication on time, disclosure to family members, risk reduction. They also provide psychosocial support which is key for acceptance and positive living, as well as nutritional support. In the Luo culture in Nyanza, men sometimes have difficulty accompanying their wives to clinic due to superstitions, yet I still manage to convince them and they are coming to the clinic in large numbers.

I feel enthusiastic when I see clients progressing well and appreciative by just saying 'thank you'. This also means that I'm also a treatment buddy to the patients available at the facility level.

VMMC

Cumulative number of **Voluntary Medical Male Circumcisions (VMMCs)** performed from 2008 to the end of June 2013:

35,969

CCSP

Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention

Cumulative number of screenings from 2007 to the end of June 2013:

13,045

Celebrating Prevention Success

"The doctors at Lumumba really supported me. They told me to adhere to my medications and clinic dates. I followed everything they told me and today I am here with my baby graduating and my baby is HIV negative. I don't know what to tell all the doctors here - the only thing I can say is that God bless you."



HIV Exposed Infant Graduation at Lumumba Health Centre

**Www.faces
-kenya.org**

FACES is funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

FACES is a collaboration between the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Within KEMRI, FACES works with two Centers: the Center for Microbiology Research (CMR), Research Care and Training Program (RCTP) and the Center for Respiratory Disease Research (CRDR). Within UCSF, FACES is a core program of the AIDS Research Institute (ARI), which coordinates all of the HIV/AIDS research, treatment, and prevention activities at UCSF.



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Special Thanks

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of our collaborators, funders, and donors. Your support changes lives daily and greatly helps us improve services, training, and capacity.

FACES welcomes your newsletter comments, please contact:

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Celebrating Prevention Success (Cont. from page 3)

Kisumu East, Rongo, Nyatike, Mbita and Suba districts organized successful HIV exposed infant (HEI) graduation ceremonies. Each district brought the exposed infants, their families and clinical teams together from the participating health facilities; over 300 collectively attended. The HEI currently undergoing follow-up also attended the graduation ceremonies where they were encouraged to continue HEI follow up until they graduate. They celebrated the infants being HIV negative after the completion of 18 months of follow-up. Mothers received gift certificates and gift packs containing Vaseline, soap, and t-shirts. Entertainment, health talks, speeches from officials, interactive forum to share experiences and lunch topped up the lively celebration. This success reminds us that we are turning the tide on HIV and achieving the goal for an HIV-free generation.

Unwavering Support & Friendship



My name is Mary and I got tested in the year 2010 when I was in form one at Mariwa Secondary School. I used to feel sick at school and one day I came back home and after a few days my buddy Jane advised me to go to the health centre for a check-up. At first I didn't go but after volunteering to take me there, I accepted. We came to Rongo and that is when I got tested. At one point I didn't accept the result because I was just in form one, however her continued support has really helped me go through secondary school. Jane is very supportive and close to me. She always reminds me of my clinic

appointment dates. She gives me drugs especially the past few months when I had TB infection and was bedridden most of the time; she is the one who was keeping my appointment card for me because I couldn't remember the dates very well. At times I could send her to the clinic to come and pick up the drugs for me because I couldn't walk.

I remember when I was to start my antiretroviral treatment during adherence counselling, the counsellor wanted me to decide on who was to be my buddy. I chose Jane because she seemed more concerned than even my own mother. She made HIV look like just any disease that I could overcome easily. At such desperate moments with a lot of fear, one only needs love and it is what I found in Jane. I wish all clients could have buddies like Jane, because to me she is not just a buddy but a mother too.



I am called Jane and I stay in Kangeso village some few kilometres from Rongo district hospital. I have known Mary for the last 18 years. I learned about her illness for the first time in the year 2010 when she complained of constant headache, coughs and diarrhoea; I advised her to come to the facility. In August 2010 I accompanied her to the facility and after all the tests she was enrolled into care. This gave me an uphill task of counselling her to accept care and treatment. However, after accepting I have been her buddy for close to three years.

The responsibility of being a buddy to Mary has been very easy, in most cases as a committed buddy and parent I am usually obliged to depart from my schedules to attend to her. At times it's more challenging when it comes to provision of some essentials. I must admit that my responsibility as a buddy has made me understand the virtue and value of accepting our fellows who are infected.

I appeal to everyone living with or around those infected to know that they have a responsibility to make them feel part and parcel of them.

For more information on FACES, please visit our website: www.faces-kenya.org

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