



FACES Newsletter April 2019

NIH directors see UCSF research come to life in Kenya

On a hazy day in Kisumu, Kenya, a group of visitors watched as water sprayed the African kale crops on a small farm. National Institute for Mental Health Director Joshua Gordon was trying out an irrigation pump from Kickstart International that serves as a gateway to better health and food security for people living with HIV in Kenya. The small patch of land belongs to Maureen, a friendly woman with a ready smile who credits the Shamba Maisha farming study with giving her a steady income, better health and a more positive outlook. Shamba Maisha, which means "farming for life", is one of the innovative UCSF HIV prevention and treatment studies that 3 directors from the National Institutes of Health traveled across the world to visit.

UCSF receives more National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding than any other public institution in the US. It wasn't an easy road for the NIH directors to go see the fruits of that collaboration in action.

Dedicated Staff Making a Difference in Adolescent Lives

Nicollate Okoko
Pediatric and Adolescent Technical Lead

"I believe that an investment in children and adolescent health today will bear dividends tomorrow"

The first born in a family of 6 growing up in Kenya's sugar belt, Nicollate Okoko saw her mother lose 3 children under the age of 2. "It's still vivid in my head. The baby turned blue, and the baby died." Looking back, she strongly believes someone could have done something to save their lives if they had better training. She became determined to make a difference, overcoming challenges along the way that made that goal feel impossible. Even when she had to stay out of school for a year because her family couldn't afford the school fees, she held onto hope that she could pursue her medical training.

Thanks to her vision and persistence, Nicollate is now able to touch the lives of children and adolescents every day in her role running the pediatric adolescent care and treatment program for Family AIDS Care and Education Services (FACES). She strives to constantly improve their unique model of providing HIV care and treatment in Kisumu County, an area with an HIV prevalence more than 3 times the national average. [Read more](#)

Building dignity and trust through peer support

William Odhiambo
Peer Leader

"Trust in yourself, and you can have success."

When William Odhiambo was 10 years old, he started asking his mother questions about their visits to the clinic and why he was taking drugs. She sat him down and told him that he was HIV positive. "I was about to give up on life," he says. More than a decade later, he's healthy and happy, and he credits FACES with saving his life. "The FACES team made me to be who I am today." He's paying that forward by using his personal experience to help others as an adolescent peer leader at FACES' adolescent center at Kisumu County Hospital.

He first started out volunteering at FACES' Lumumba adolescent center in August 2017. The team would take him to events where he shared his life story. He feels that the fact that adolescents hear from and spend time with other people their age is critical to their success. "When you spend time together, it builds your dignity, being that you see that you are not alone. It gives you hope." It's also much easier for adolescents to share problems and talk

about their status with someone their own age who has faced the same challenges. [Read more](#)

Evaluation

Featuring insights from caregivers of children on ART

Pediatric HIV Viral Load Suppression: Qualitative Insights of Barriers and Facilitators among Caregivers of Children on ART in High Volume Sites in Kisumu County (Nicollate Okoko et al)

Presented at: Inter-CFAR Research Symposium, Jan 31-Feb 2, 2019, Machakos, Kenya

Patient Story

Finding a home for compassionate HIV care

"You can see people who are older than you coming here that are very happy. It makes you happier."

Every 3 months, Mary boards a bus to her home town of Kisumu. There are many places she could go for HIV treatment in Nairobi, a city of 3 million people. But the 8-hour bus ride is worth it to return to the compassionate care she knows at FACES at

Kisumu County Hospital's adolescent center. Mary is a university student with an infectious laugh who loves to write and bashfully says she "tries" to sing. It's a far cry from the scared 14-year-old who showed up at the hospital to get treated for tuberculosis and pneumonia, only to receive a life-changing HIV diagnosis. It was an overwhelming experience dealing with an array of doctors, even though they worked to make her comfortable and cracked jokes. But she found a home at the FACES adolescent center that gave her hope. "I just like this place," she says, explaining why she makes the long trek from Nairobi. "It's a very nice environment." She can't imagine herself going to a place where she doesn't share that level of comfort and history.

Mary was very underweight when she arrived at FACES 7 years ago. Antiretroviral treatment has

helped her gain weight and improve her physical and mental health.

Pseudo name used.

Featured Impact Stats for Oct 2016 - Dec 2018

1,293,653 people tested for HIV, including 328,888 children under 15

47,055 individuals currently on life-saving antiretroviral therapy (ART) at 61 care and treatment facilities, including 3,670 children under 15 years of age.

92% of individuals on ART are virally suppressed, 93% among adults and 81% among children under 15 years of age.

Visit the [FACES website](#) to learn more about our impact and see how you can play a role in supporting our work.

Thank you to our partners

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