

**WELCOME TO MAISHA MAPYA'S SUPPORT GROUP PROFILE:
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KAKAMEGA, WESTERN KENYA.**

By Susan Nanjala, Project Administrator MAY 2013

WHO IS MAISHA SUPPORT GROUP? This is a group of people living with HIV both men and women though 95% of members are women. This is because women are three times more susceptible to HIV infection than men and also women have a better health seeking behavior than men/

WHAT DOES MAISHA MAPYA MEAN? Maisha Mapya means a beginning of NEW LIFE. A beginning of a new life in the HIV era implies a new journey of life after testing HIV positive. It is considered new life because when one tests positive, he/she tends to loose hope and sees the grave nearer than before.

WHERE THE GROUP LOCATED IS: Maisha Mapya support group is based in Western part of Kenya and affiliated to the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega. This is just one of the social groups initiated by the Diocese.

WHEN WAS THE GROUP FORMED? The group was formed in the year 2005 by the counseling department of the Diocese of Kakamega

MEMBERSHIP: The group has 40 members o which 95% are women. The group is meant to embrace both men and women infected / affected by HIV. Apparently, male membership is very low simply because men remain in denial / stigma for a long time and their health seeking behavior is very poor. This is one of the main causes of high death rate among men because they seek for treatment & support at an advanced stage.

WHY WAS THE GROUP FORMED?

The group was formed to enhance POSITIVE LIVING and learn how to cope with the virus through psychological support the key issue being fighting stigma and discrimination at individual level, family level and community level.

THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP:

- Psychological support.
- Nutrition
- Medical care
- Economic empowerment.
- Shelter
- Legal support etc.

PARTNERSHIP WITH SUITCASES FOR AFRICA.

Partnership with SFA began in the year 2009 getting to know each other's interest and the possibility of working together. This was during the visit of SFA executive in July 2009. Since then SFA has supported the group with various projects to enable them have a better livelihood so as to live positively and live long too. SFA has assisted the group through the following projects:

- Farming of maize and beans
- Provision of treated mosquito nets for Malaria prevention and control.
- And now the cow project.

THE COW PROJECT:

After the maize and beans project in 2010, a new idea came to the group to start a dairy farming project as a long term project. They thought of dairy farming because they were looking at the production of milk if the cows were productive for nutritional and economic purposes. They shared the idea with SFA executive team Darlene, Wendy, Charlotte and Mary and the project looked quite big and costly. The members had divided themselves into smaller groups of 5 totaling to 8 groups and therefore they needed 8 cross breed dairy cows. Cross breed cows are half local and half grade that can be managed easily. It was not easy for SFA to approve the project because of the cost involved. Through continues dialogue and consultation, it was agreed that the project was to be kicked off in phases, to begin with 1 cow for one group. SFA team went back after the successful visit and by August 2011, the team communicated to SFA administrator in the Diocese of Kakamega that they had received money for 2 cows from Loving donors of the project in Canada. So the first 2 cows were purchased in September 2011 and were given to 2 groups. The cows were named Darlene and Charlotte. We then had 6 groups left. We were not seeing a possibility of reaching the target number soon but God created ways and a caring / Loving friend donated money for the 3rd cow.

This was purchased in May 2012 and Wendy and Charlotte participated in the purchase since they were around for another visit. The cow was named Veronica . God being on our side, the executive team continued lobbying for funds from Canadian friends and they received overwhelming support from our beloved donors in Canada and in 2013, the team received funds for 5 remaining cows. It is really amazing that and unbelievable that all the 8 groups have finally received a cow each so far. Among the 8 cows, 3 of them are expectant if all goes on well. By the end of the year, members will be reaping the fruits of the combined efforts. We have very high expectations for a productive project.

HOW MEMBERS WILL BENEFIT FROM THE PROJECT:

- When a cow gets a calf, members of a given group will share the milk for their own consumption and extra milk will be sold and money generated will be used to sustain the project in terms of treatment / vaccination and feeds.
- Calves will be shared among the specific group members.
- Cow dung will be used as manure and can be sold too if need be.

COMMENTS / REMARKS FROM SOME OF THE MEMBERS WHO ARE ALSO CARE TAKERS:

1. **ALICE MUSOTSI:** Alice is a member of a small group called MWELEKEO. Mwelekeo is a Swahili word meaning FOCUS / FOCUSED. This simply implies that, the group should always be focused and objective in whatever they do. That is their motto. This is what Alice had to say about the project. Being a member of Maisha Mapya support group has indeed brought New life in me just as the name suggests. When 2 of our groups received the first 2 cows, I kept on praying to God to grant us an opportunity to host our own cow. When I was almost losing hope, I had report from Mama Susan that she had received funds from our beloved friends of SFA for 2 more cows. I really prayed that my group may be one of those to be given a cow. Indeed dreams came true and my members requested me to keep the cow and take care of it on their behalf. I was really happy and my children were very excited. But still I was having doubts it could be but then I saw building materials being delivered for the cow shed. I now started yarning for the day of purchasing the cow. I used to have sleepless nights and finally the day came. Our Sister / Mama Susan and the group officials Carolyn & Pacifica helped us identify and purchase a very beautiful cow. I always refer to this cow as a VERY BEAUTIFUL COW. I have no problem with the cow because it graces very well inside the shelter and in the field. All my children are so supportive in feeding, administering dip and also ensuring that it is given clean drinking water. ***THIS IS SURELY A DREAM COME TRUE TO OUR GROUP, MY FAMILY AND OUR SPONSORS FROM CANADA.***

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS OUR EFFORTS.

BY SUSAN NANJALA

PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR:

2: ANTONINA MAKUKU FROM NYOTA GROUP.

Nyota means STAR. We should always shine even in this new journey with HIV. I am very excited, pleased and very happy for what God has done for me and my entire family. When we wrote the proposal about the cow project, I did not have hope of being one of those of owning and taking care of a beautiful cow. The 1st two cows that were purchased brought a lot of hope to me and I particularly supported the two care takers in my own small way with what I could afford e.g. providing nappier grass and just paying visits. I walked long distances paying visits to those hosting cows with hope that one day I will also host one cow.

This year 2013, God answered my prayers because through the support of Suit cases for Africa and Maisa Mapya support group, I am among the beneficiaries of the last 3 cows that were purchased. I am so excited about it. I graze it, spray it with dip alongside other chores. My children and my husband also take part in caring for the cow. This cow is one of its kind, it is so calm that I suspect it must be pregnant. My husband who had been bed ridden due to HIV / AIDS is slowly improving and getting strength and he is also very positive and supportive to the project.

I am so thankful about this project and do believe that we shall live longer to enjoy all the benefits that will be there as a result of this cow project.

GOD BLESS SUIT CASES FOR AFRICA, OUR DONORS, THE DIOCESE OF KAKAMEGA AND MAMA SUSAN.

BYE BYE:



Mabel



Veronica



Marigold



Charlotte



Darlene



Josephine



Josephine Being sprayed with dip



Mabel



Salome, Antonina, Selena & Pacifica Picking the cow names randomly



Alice Musotsi



All the groups of cow caretakers. Asante Sana Canada! Thank You!