



Ripples International Health Services Report

Ripples International is on the move

In March of 2007, Ripples rented a new building to house its main office near Kinoru Stadium off Milimani Road. The VCT was moved to the old main office site and Ripples opened a Dispensary at the same. The former main office also houses space for Peace X Peace, an international organization that fosters peace by connecting small groups of women from around the world.



The VCT, the new RI dispensary and the offices of Peace X Peace are housed in the old main office

VCT stats indicate decline in HIV positive cases

The VCT has served as a contact point where many clients came to seek for information regarding HIV/AIDS. The VCT was able to set up one more VCT room. Which means that they are now able to see two clients at a time. This has been positively welcomed by clients since their wait time has been reduced.

For most of 2007 there were four VCT counselors thanks to Action for Transformation (ACT) and Academy for Educational Development (AED). Other VCT counselors are hired only when needed especially during the Mobile VCT where the services are free and the turn out is high .

RI gives back to the community by offering free VCT at the site on Wednesdays for those who cannot afford the fee. The subsidized standard fee for VCT services is Ksh 100 /=. A waiver is available for those who cannot pay and do not come on a Wednesday. No one is turned away from the VCT for the inability to pay.

Dorothy Mwatha, the VCT counselor, said that the number of people testing positive has declined. On average



Dorothy Mwatha explains the different result reading from the HIV test to a client

there are six clients per day. But only about one out of 10 test positive. Dorothy believes the numbers have reduced because people have become more educated on the facts of HIV.

“Most of the people who come to this center are new to the area or are coming from far, there is still a lot of stigma surrounding getting tested.” Dorothy said. “People still think if they see you getting tested that you are positive. That is why people don’t like to be seen coming to the site.”

The new VCT location and the fact that it is housed with other RI offices has made it more private and accessible to clients. The visibility from World AIDS day has also led to a rise in clients seeking testing.

World AIDS Day



World AIDS Day began with a march from River Land to Makutano. More than 1,000 people gathered to commemorate the international event.

Even the harsh rains both before the march and during the ceremony could not put a damper on Saturday’s commemoration of World AIDS Day.

Marchers gathered at River Land to begin the march up the hill, through town to Makutano. The rains came down heavy before the march got underway and delayed the procession, but it did not rain once the procession was underway.

Marchers carried signs with this year’s World AIDS Day slogan, “Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise.”

Marchers included Ripples International, S.O.S Children’s Village, SPARK, and Red Cross among other groups.

With only one Tent, Ripples mobile VCT was able to see more than 20 clients during the event and they would have seen more if only they had an extra tent. They are seeking for partners who will be willing to help them purchase another tent to be able to meet the demand for the mobile VCT services.

Improving health and confidence of children through psycho-social support

Ripples believes in treating the emotional as well as the physical ailments of the child. The three ways in which Jennifer Gitonga, a child counselor for RI, helps the children deal with their issues is one on one counseling, group counseling for children with HIV/AIDS and support groups in the communities.

From January to September of 2007 Jennifer saw 55 children on a one-on-one basis at the dispensary which also serves as her office despite her busy schedule and also being the only child counselor at RI. Some of the children are referred from the children's department for violent behavior. Gitonga also does one-on-one counseling with children she finds in villages during field visits.

There are several support groups of young people living with HIV/AIDS that meet once a month. These meetings started in October of 2006. The meetings are held by age group. There is a group of 26 teenagers who discuss issues, share experiences and help one another deal with the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. They also do an activity or watch a movie besides sharing a meal during their monthly meetings. "I've seen them grow a lot in the last year," Gitonga said. "They feel safe with the kids in this group, their health has improved and they are more confidence and resilient."

Other age groups are 0-5 year olds, 6-9 year olds and 10-11 year olds. Because children living with HIV/AIDS must get a monthly check-up at the Comprehensive Care Clinic to get a general check-up and a refill on their medications, the children are now only required to meet when school is out of session in April, August and December.

Guardians however meet monthly. RI has a support group for them where they are able to discuss issues that affect themselves and the children in their care. RI also gives them health talks. The subject have been good hygiene, nutrition,

drug adherence and infection prevention.

From January to September 2007 there were 1,028 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) enrolled in the program sponsored by AED and APHIA II through USAID. The Steven Lewis Foundation support another 200 OVC. RI ensures the children are able to receive at least three of the following components: nutrition, education, shelter, psycho-social support, protection and health. Psycho-social support of the OVC was too much for one or two people so RI trained youth from every location to do activities and home visits with the OVC in their community. The youth then brought report which included attendance at meetings and the topics discussed to RI at the end of every month.

From October to December the numbers of OVC benefiting from the AED and APHIA II programs increased to 4,600, plus the 150 children living with HIV/AIDS. SLF plans to scale-up the number of children it sponsors through RI to 500. Therefore in 2008, RI will be supporting 5,200 children. Gitonga and other field workers have also been providing life skills training to primary and secondary school children. They have visited 6 schools so far this year. The program will begin again in January.



Jennifer Gitonga counsels a child.

Your Urgent Support is needed...

Agnes Kathambi, 22, came to RI in November seeking treatment for her disabled niece, Ann Nkirote 5 years, for whom she is now the primary caregiver.

Agnes's six brothers were killed by relatives in order to possess their land. Her mother went back to her family with Agnes and her older sister. The father followed but was killed in a road accident on the way. Agnes's mother was so stricken with grief that she died soon after orphaning Agnes and her sister as teenagers.

Agnes's sister died 10 months ago leaving Agnes to care for her three children, Edward 11, Ann 5 and Porseline 1. Agnes has a daughter of her own, Dorkis, who is 3 years old.



Agnes Kathambi and her 5 year old disabled niece, Ann Nkirote

Due to Ann's severe disability, Agnes had to place baby Porseline in an orphanage as she was not able to care for them both.

"I often think about taking the children and leaving them outside the chiefs place and running away," Agnes said. "But I just can't leave them."

Agnes does casual labor when she can, but cannot leave Ann alone for long. She survives mostly through hand-outs from her neighbors.

Agnes's problems fall outside RI mission so we are seeking assistance from well-wishers as she is as deserving as anyone we have met for support.

If you would like to help Agnes please contact RI Directors on 254—722- 733- 128.



Ripples mobile VCT was set up in Makutano on World AIDS Day.

VCT Statistics for 2007

Positive testing results have declined: 1 in 10 people test positive in 2007 versus 1 in 6 people in 2006

●
% of positive cases VCT site:
8.4%

% of positive cases mobile VCT:
3.9%

●
% of clients from VCT site:
25.2%

% of clients from mobile VCT:
42.5%

% of clients for clinic services:
32.2%

●
% of VCT clients in 2007:
Male 48.9%
Female 51%

●
The number of orphans living with HIV/AIDS being helped by RI has doubled in the last year

●
The number of clients coming to be tested both at the site and in the mobile VCT has risen by 12.1% in the last year

Mobile services: enhanced, more locations

Mobile (MVCT) services

Between July and September RI carried out fifty five MVCT at seventeen different sites. Thanks for ACT for paying salaries to the VCT counselors and AGNT for Providing the Mobile Clinic/ VCT vehicle. In many sites the number of clients turning up for the service was very high and this showed that there is still demand of VCT services.

During the MVCT we realized that though people are willing to know their status, distance to sites where services are offered is a barrier. MVCT services were offered both in Meru Central and Meru North districts.

RI was selected in Meru Central District as the pilot site for government testing of mobile VCT guideline.

Mobile clinic outreach services

Many children under R.I support in the OVC program live very far from accessible health service delivery points. To be able to reach out to them, we carried out mobile clinics to some of the furthest areas in Meru North and offered the following services; health education, clinical diagnosis and curative services, diagnostic counseling and testing/provider initiated counseling and testing, VCT, and psychosocial support. Thanks to AGNT for the mobile clinic vehicle and paying salaries of the driver and clinical officer.



An auxiliary doctor gives a check-up to a sick baby at a mobile clinic.

The most encouraging thing about the mobile clinic outreaches is that we were able to identify the health needs of the community more appropriately and involve the community in identifying possible solutions to the problems facing them and we have been able to revisit some of the sites to do follow ups based on priority of the community health need.

Most of the health problems facing many community members are as a result of poverty which has lead to poor hygiene, poor nutrition and HIV/Aids. There is no lab services offered in the mobile clinic, cases are diagnosed clinically. The most common ailments are boils, malaria, typhoid, jiggers, worms, skin conditions, wounds and upper respiratory infections.

“One of the major problems with mobile clinics is that when we ask people to cost share, even though the costs are minimal, they believe since we are an NGO that the drugs should be free.” Dorothy Mwatha said. “Many people just refuse to pay.”

RI is working on establishing a Moonlight VCT in Makutano, which is known for it’s lively after dark activity. “We want to target touts, drivers and business people in the area,” Dorothy said. “It takes a lot of planning because we will need security and people who are willing to set up and take down the tents every night, and get all the workers home safely. It’s a lot of logistics. But we will make it happen.”



An auxiliary HIV counselor tests a client at a mobile VCT site.

Creation and development of RI dispensary on track; services fulfill community needs

RI opened a dispensary in March 2007, on the site of the former RI main office. At its inception the clinic was funded by the ABC bank while Stephen Lewis (SLF) availed the drugs for children living with HIV/AIDS.

Other services offered included weighing and immunizations of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and children in the SLF program. The treatment is free. The children living with HIV/AIDS are provided a small stipend for transport to allow them to come to the hospital and RI to receive medical attention when necessary.

Association for Global New Thought (AGNT) has funded the expansion of the clinic to be able to do general consultations. The dispensary has shown an increase in the number of clients seeking preventive health services. The average per week is 25 patients. Treatment for the community at large is offered at a greatly subsidized fees.

Walter Andande, the medical assistant who runs the clinic says they have equipped an on site laboratory, and plan to offer the following services as soon as possible: maternal and child health care, family planning and prenatal care.

Deworming children under R.I support shall continue at three months intervals. Other clients who also visited the dispensary or the mobile clinics were dewormed.



Representatives from ANGNT visit the new dispensary site.

Since August 2007 we have started giving relevant health education talks to guardians/caregivers of children living with HIV/AIDS. This has proved very helpful and many are eager to learn more about the children they are taking care of and more so about their personal health.



Medical Assistant, Walter Andande, takes the blood pressure of a client

Children living with HIV under R.I. support get their ART treatment from Meru District hospital while the dispensary gave treatment for Opportunistic infections. This will continue until a time that we shall be able to offer ART treatment at the site.

Supply of drugs and other medical supplies to other R.I sites i.e. New start centre and Tumaini centre were coordinated and now both centres are able to obtain there supplies through the dispensary and other services.

Thank You!

To GCI, ACT, AGNT, ABC Bank, our other donors, collaborators and supporters, friends and well wishers.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generosity and commitment of time and resources entrusted with RI Health Services to effectively implement its vision.

Your continuous support is making a difference!

Vision

To improve the health and well-being of human beings through education, counseling, health services and treatment of illness to insure those helped will be to tackle the obstacles in front of them with the assurance of good health.

Mission

To follow the example of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ in standing with the oppressed, establish united family structure, and alleviate poverty and suffering around the world.



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