

“My Life, My Future, My Choice!!”



**Teenagers Plus
Community Based
Organization**

**Tiplus Maisha Yangu Project
Total War Against AIDS (TOWA)**

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Introduction

The core activity of Teenagers Plus Community Based Organization since its registration in 2009 has been HIV/AIDS Awareness, Care and Support to school children born and living with HIV and their families in Kasarani division of Nairobi. The idea for Maisha Yangu project was generated by the chairperson of Teenagers Plus CBO, a trained counselor in psychology and a HIV/AIDS trainer, with vast experience on pediatric HIV and discordance. One of the major field experiences is the lack of family HIV disclosure in pediatric HIV hindering ART adherence in children mainly adolescents and was an indicator as to why many CCC institutions were currently referring adolescents to her counseling sessions on issues of non-adherence to ART treatment.

Working in Behavior Change Programs in schools within Kariobangi and Korogocho, it was evident that lack of empathy and skills by teachers on how to handle HIV+ students magnified the gap in support for HIV+ children mainly due to lack of familial disclosure which leads to poor or non-adherence to ARV treatment in teenagers. She also documented two cases of death due to treatment stoppage and suicide. Both victims were school children aged 13 and 17 respectively. Urgent intervention was necessary and at this point, she mobilized the community to address the challenges facing children born with HIV and Teenagers Plus CBO was formed.

The organization has experiential knowledge and understanding of the myriad challenges that these children face both at home and in institutions of learning as a result of over 5 years addressing individual counseling needs to school children within Kariobangi, and Korogocho slums.

Rationale

Many organizations and the Government have come up with various programs to address the HIV pandemic and offered intervention ideas. However, it came to our realization that most initiatives target those aged over fifteen years leaving out those below this age bracket.

Most schools in Kenya have adopted Life Skills sessions as an integral part of Guidance and Counseling to students. Our observation is that, while these sessions are helpful, the children already living with HIV by virtue of birth feel stigmatized for a condition they acquired by default. This attitude renders Behavior change communication irrelevant to them and our take is that if this emotional issues remain unaddressed, it increases chances of “hitting back’ at society during adolescence. This is likely to be in the form of reckless sexual behavior which in turn would mean more teenagers getting affected with HIV during that experimental stage.

This might explain the shift in HIV prevalence rate 15-49 age from 6.7% to 7.1% according to KDHS (2003) & KAIS (2007) government surveys. However, we intend to carry out a statistical survey on this data with an objective of seeking to establish the sexual behavior of HIV+ teenagers (by birth), Sexual Reproductive Health and PMTCT services accessible to them as including their everyday challenges.

Our hypotheses is that, unless this children are embraced, educated and de-stigmatized about their HIV status while still growing, expecting them to embrace and sustain Behavior communication during adolescence extolled in life skills sessions in schools, may become not only ineffective but may hamper HIV prevention efforts in teenagers, in effect scaling down Governments efforts towards a HIV free generation and the MDG agenda 6.

T-plus -Maisha Yangu Project

Maisha Yangu project is a pioneer youth led initiative for Teenagers born & Living with HIV (TLWHA) aimed at creating a platform for them to come together, share experiences and challenges of living with HIV as teenagers, identify gaps within the initiative and discuss way forward in support of the projects’ effort to educate HIV+ adolescents and teenagers on reproductive health, Family planning options and PMTCT for the pregnant. The organization seeks to train the teens into peer educators to hasten growth and replication of the initiative in Kenya and beyond, revolutionizing youth participation in the global fight of HIV through this innovative project that will serve as a community led and owned project for social and behavioral impact evaluation platforms and research resource centre.

Justification

According to the Kenya Aids Indicator Survey of 2007, an estimated 7.1% of Kenyans aged between 15 to 64 years are living with HIV. Further, the survey found that of the HIV affected households, 79.9% had at least one child under the age of 18 years. The report however is silent on any data on children below the age of 15. According to the projected population estimates report (Revised Population Projections for Kenya 2000-2020) by KBS, August 2006, Kasarani division; where Teenagers plus CBO is located and serving has a population of 0.506m people with an estimated 6.18% of them living with HIV / AIDS.

According to the Constituency Aids Control Committee statistics, 30% of these are children below the age of 15. This estimates to about 9,300 school going children whose data is already captured through Comprehensive Care Centers where they access ARV / ART treatment or management by cotrimoxazole. As such policy interventions based on these estimates indicate therefore an urgent need for early intervention for rapid results.

Like their peers, children born and living with HIV face varied problems including sexuality and reproductive health challenges as they progress into teenagers and as such, this presents a double challenge for them due to lack of suitable forums, information and facilitations in which confidentiality is assured for them to express their feelings on such sensitive matters given their HIV status. This discourages disclosure to their sexual partners and if pregnant, it hinders them from the accessing available prevention options through PMTCT programs.

In line with WHO guidance on PMTCT this project seeks to create an integrated program on Counseling, Care and Support where HIV+ teenagers can access information on family planning services and options to prevent unwanted pregnancies and reproductive health, PrEP and PEP, PMTCT and also referrals to youth friendly health institutions for clinical follow-ups. Their families will be counseled to offer primary support to these teenagers to maximize adherence to treatment, which will PMTCT sustainability and scale up.

Apart from offering the above information and services, Maisha Yangu Project seeks to include nutritional support for the teenage mothers based on needs assessment,

distribution of female condoms to enhance women & Girls sexual rights, thereby offering holistic support through an integrated program which will ensure continuity in client follow-up, supervision and create a community - led client-focused project, a focal point for youth friendly best practices.

The decision to base this pilot project in Kariobangi, Korogocho and Baba Dogo area is based on the fact that the implementers are residents of the area hence possess vast knowledge of grass root needs and unique dynamics of the people living here. The high poverty levels in the area add to the challenges that HIV poses to them on a daily basis. The chairperson has for a long time worked within the area in school based Behavior Change Programs, is well respected by the community and possesses exemplary skills for Community mobilization while logistical matters require the proximity to the project as Teenagers Plus has just received its first ever funding from the National Aids Control Council through GF TOWA round 4 project to the tune of \$4200 and as such, relies heavily on the goodwill of the community and local volunteers.

Working To Achieve Results

Project Goal

The goal of this project is to support all HIV positive children between the age of 9 to 19 years through a holistic psychosocial support.

Project Objectives

This project aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To create community awareness on the plight of children born and living with HIV and address HIV related stigma and discrimination at home and in schools.
2. Prevent HIV cross infections during adolescence stage through teenagers born and living with HIV by educating and counseling them about their status and instill positive sustainable behavior to curb the spread of HIV.

3. Offer Support for Counselor- assisted disclosures and crisis intervention within family structures.
4. Equip teachers with skills on HIV counseling, Nutrition in Pediatric HIV, ART adherence, Advocacy & referrals for special cases on Child neglect & abuse to relevant avenues.
5. Initiate school based networks of TLWHA, and training of peer educators in Awareness, reproductive health, and advocacy.

Expected Outputs

In attaining the projects goal, below are the expected outputs:

1. HIV awareness/management and ARV adherence, sustainable positive behavior education to the children / teenagers living with HIV in schools and other learning institutions.
2. Increased group and individual counseling sessions for families towards the Counselor-assisted disclosure.
3. Increased youth related activities at community level geared towards creating awareness and stigma reduction to those living with HIV amongst them.
4. Community based HIV+ teenagers' workshops and seminars on PMTCT and prophylaxis treatment, family planning options and reproductive health.
5. Train teachers on HIV counseling skills, Nutrition in Pediatric HIV, ART adherence, Advocacy & referrals.
6. Active networking with other children and organizations dealing with HIV related issues

Expected Results

The project shall be deemed to be successful by accomplishing the following results:

1. 35000 people in the community reached with information on de-stigmatization of children living with HIV in each year of implementation.
2. 1500 children in schools and learning institutions living with HIV reached with HIV prevention messages each quarter.

3. 400 individual / family therapies of children living with HIV and their siblings yearly.
4. 20 organizational TLWHA networks and support groups established annually.
5. 50 Youths living with HIV to be train as peer educators per year of implementation.

Project Delivery Methods

Teenagers Plus is located at Gathiru House along Outer ring road, in Nairobi. This is a strategic location hence easily accessible to our target population living in Kariobangi, Korogocho, and Baba Dogo areas.

- Our target clientele is school based, and these institutions are placed within a radius of less than 5 kms apart hence accessible by the organization without logistical difficulties. The organization intends to visit the schools for awareness during parents / teachers meeting and other school calendar functions involving parents and guardian.
- Teachers' trainings will be held at convenient venues near their work stations to ensure consistent attendance, represent diverse backgrounds, do follow-ups on earlier trainings, and evaluate periodical overall project impact in their individual schools.
- Community awareness will be carried out during public forums through local governments and other social functions.
- Other stakeholders' forums. Churches, mosques and religious affiliated institutions will be addressed in an effort to reach out to the maximum audience possible.
- Individual counseling for HIV+ adolescents and family therapies will be scaled up at our current site but with success of this proposal, the organization will seek to extend these services to households to ensure family level participation in the process.
- School-based networks of students living with HIV will be established to offer support to peers on Adherence, psycho-social issues and encourage positive peer behavior.

- Training of HIV+ peer educators will be done in schools for school based program while for those out of school, appropriate venues within the community shall be sought.

The community as demonstrated above has been actively involved formulation, implementation and sustenance of the organizations' activities so far, and this can only be scaled upwards by added activities in the Maisha Yangu project.

Comprehensive Care Centers offering ART to children in Kasarani will experience less non-adherence cases and lost to follow up reports as a result of the school based TLWHA initiatives.

The overall effect will be a more embracing community, through Awareness campaigns on the plight of HIV+ school children, less stigmatization in schools, HIV disclosure at family levels, improved quality of life for HIV+ school children, informed HIV+ teenagers on PMTCT/ reproductive health, and consequently reduction of HIV transmission during adolescence due to acquisition of sustainable positive behavior.

Teenagers Plus CBO activities are visible both at Constituency level and Location level in Kariobangi. The organization consults heavily on the latter office on data and statistics, and seeks for government Nutritional relief from both offices for the organizations' Orphans and Vulnerable children numbering 164 under its feeding program currently.

Community activities in Kariobangi are deemed incomplete without inclusion of T-plus Kids dancers' comprising of HIV+ school children who are in our program. We use sporting outings to create awareness and indeed Teenagers Plus has three soccer teams comprised of HIV+ students and Total orphans. Teenagers Plus participates in social activities such as Tree planting and cleaning activities in Kariobangi and Korogocho.

Institutional Capacity

Teenagers Plus Community Based Organization has an organized structure which spells out duties and responsibilities of its arms. The committee deals with policy making, programs formulation and administrative duties. Implementation is undertaken by mobilizers, peer

educators and who are members of the CBO liaising with trained counselors and teachers for project delivery. The Project supervisor oversees the projects progress and reports to the committee which holds monthly meetings with all arms to address any projects matters, and conduct monthly work evaluation. All major decisions concerning the organization including financial obligations are made by the committee with consultations with members of the CBO.

- Trained Counselors
- Peer Educators
- Teachers
- Teenagers Plus CBO
- Members.
- Clients and their
- Families

Teenagers Plus CBO is currently wholly run by the community which ensures service delivery on community level, as such; the office has been operating as stipulated in the CBO's constitution. Those working for in its programs despite being professionally qualified in various fields render pro-bono services due funding constraints and as such, for Maisha Yangu project the organization is using community led approaches to minimize on project overheads.

Accountability

Financial management, control and monitoring will be managed by the accounts department through book of account which are be open for scrutiny to donor representatives or external auditors such as the Financial Managing Agency- FMA recommended for this task.

Monitoring & Evaluation, Research and Reporting

Using the Community Based Program Activity Reporting tool-COBPAR, Teenagers plus Community Based Organization makes quarterly reports on all its activities and forwards them on quarterly basis to the National Aids Control Council through the coordinator of

NACC activities at constituency level office- CACC. Maisha Yangu project is no exemption. Teenagers Plus CBO keeps daily records of children intake and their holistic progress in the program. Details of Parents/Guardians, siblings and family members attending to our services are maintained in our records. Monthly de-briefing meetings are held whereby the field counselors and peer educators present monthly reports.

Individual reports are also compiled to make a comprehensive report of each month containing data of children attended to and the overall number of people reached through various project activities.

During the monthly meetings, challenges arising during project implementation are discussed and viable solutions devised. Successes shall be evaluated by client feedback on delayed sexual debut in the case of teenagers or abstinence baseline survey reveals of; reduced HIV infection within this age bracket, number of teachers and peer educators trained, number of TLWHA initiatives formed and activities undertaken and overall community participation in project activities. TLWHA initiatives and activities are published into monthly newsletter for dissemination to adolescents and teenagers in learning facilities.

These reports form the basis under which Maisha Yangu project is monitored and evaluated. Using random sampling bi-annual Questionnaires are distributed to assess the community's overall reaction and response Maisha Yangu project and also captures the community's suggestions on improvements and ideas on TLWHA initiatives.

Project Sustainability

This project is structured to sustain itself after funding through empowerment for the parents and guardians, promotion of Income Generating Activities enhanced to generate revenue for the program activities. Training on skills development and entrepreneurship infuses discipline and drive towards IGA success. The CBO members are mobilized into economic groups and have come up with small scale evolving funds to enable them achieve seed capital for purchase of rabbits, beads and other IGA materials.

Income Generating Activities includes production and sale of jewelry and art work using recycled and locally available materials to local, regional and international markets during workshops, conferences and other public forums.

CBO members are being trained in urban farming like rabbit and chicken keeping, as well as organic garden concepts adopted for increased nutritional support especially for the infected children and to supplement family incomes.

Through nurturing these children artistic talents, out of school teenagers are encouraged to become innovative and create products for sale through concerts and exhibitions. Part proceeds from such sale is ploughed back to support the program while the rest benefits the households.

Training of these youths into peer educators reduces operational costs of the program since they are able to reach out to their peers in the wider community.

Maisha Yangu (My Life) is a tested community initiative which we are convinced as an organization will revolutionize approaches towards HIV in children and adolescents locally and beyond and hopefully pioneer a new sustainable way of preventing HIV infection targeting HIV+ teenagers born under priority area IV of Prevention with Positives.

We urge all and sundry to partner with us in any capacity to “Own, Scale up and Sustain” the Maisha Yangu project towards creating a HIV free generation as we all work towards;

“Ground Zero”

“Zero New Infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS related deaths”.