



Ministering to adolescents Living with HIV

Navigating HIV in a Pandemic

I think if there was one word to describe the last year, it would be “vulnerable”. No one is immune from COVID-19. No one is immune from feelings of isolation. No one is immune from the toll the pandemic has taken on the economic infrastructure.

Maarifa was able to meet in-person in a few clinics at the end of 2020. We were able to provide psychosocial and spiritual counseling to ALHIV during the HIV clinics held in Lari Subcounty; however, the positivity rate in Kenya rose to 26.6% in the first three months of 2021, plunging the country into its third lockdown.

The Maarifa peer mentors, Esther and Kelvin, continued to provide individual counseling to those who attended clinics and also in churches and home visits when appropriate. They were able to visit 14 homes and speak to guardians. The peer mentors noted that a few of the teens were on the verge of being homeless because their parents or guardians had lost jobs due to Covid-19.



Clinics are reporting tens of thousands of girls under the age of 18 getting pregnant between 2019 and 2021 as a result of economic and social tension and school closings during this period.

When schools close in the US, there is virtual learning. In Kenya when schools close, students go home and wait. Students are idle and vulnerable.

All of the teens currently participating in Maarifa live in rural, poverty-stricken areas. Many such areas have limited to no access to health care. They were dependent on hospital programs that facilitated their mobility to and from the hospital. Peer mentor home visits were greatly appreciated by families as government curfews made moving about difficult, exacerbating the isolation and hardship they faced because of the pandemic.

We are endeavoring to find ways to use the Maarifa curriculum in new and innovative ways to reach adolescents where they are. Those include a WhatsApp group for ALHIV, where they can communicate freely with one another and stay connected as well as receive group counseling and Maarifa content from peer mentors.

Win-Win

Joshua enrolled four of Maarifa’s ALHIV, in a training program to make masks for other adolescents living with HIV and their families. This is a win-win. We have run out of masks to distribute to ALHIV in need. Through these young women Maarifa will be able to distribute, for free, 1000 washable face masks for teens and children living with HIV and their immediate families. This is a way to empower these young women, who already have basic tailoring skills, with relevant sewing skills, so they have the ability to generate economic growth and produce income for themselves and their families. They will also be taught to make washable sanitary towels and detergent (soap). The goal of this endeavor is to have these four teens train other teens within their cohorts.

As they learn, they will make masks and the trainer will pay them for each one that meets quality standards. They will also carry home some masks, detergent, and washable sanitary towels which they will either use or sell as startup funds for their enterprise. (More information on this training and pictures in the next newsletter!)

Joshua has also targeted families and social groups at Kijabe Cichiengo where some of the teens' parents and guardians do business. He interacts with them every Sunday for one hour through Bible Study. He listens to their needs and they pray together. He has distributed 130 masks to 52 families. Among those who attend are men living with HIV.



What Now?

Joshua and Maarifa's peer mentors, Esther and Kelvin, have been working overtime to support ALHIV through small support groups when possible, through Whatsapp groups set up especially for communicating Maarifa's curriculum, and one-on-one calls and texts and home visits to encourage and give counsel to ALHIV. It's a ripple in the ocean. But what we need is a tidal wave.

A tidal wave of prayer for Kenya!

- Prayer for transformed hearts and minds of Kenyan leaders that put Jesus and others first.
- Prayer that the spread of COVID can be stemmed and that the vaccine can be distributed equitably.
- Prayer that medication for those living with HIV is accessible for those who need it.
- Prayers for Joshua, Kelvin and Esther who implement Maarifa in Kenya - that the alternative avenues to minister to adolescents living with HIV prove effective.

From the Home Front

I first and foremost want to thank you for supporting Maarifa through 2020, a year that tested faith and finances. While fundraising was more difficult than it might have been, I was so encouraged by those who prayerfully contributed to our efforts to reach adolescents living with HIV with not only practical information but also Gospel truth. Joshua, Esther and Kelvin are the boots on the ground, but they could do nothing without you!

Please go to God in prayer for how He would like you to support Maarifa in 2021. We fell far short of our goal last year, but then obviously could not scale up as we had planned to do. The Lord provides for His plans – not ours!

I will be contacting you in the next few months to check in with you about how you fared during the pandemic, how I can be praying for you and if you would like to increase your support in 2021 and answer any questions you may have.



You can also expect another Maarifa newsletter in May with personal stories from adolescents living with HIV.

Only praises this month for the Steyns:

- Daniel and I were able to get our first Covid shot the beginning of April.
- Nadia and I both celebrate birthdays this month, 5 and 50 respectively!

The Lord is good indeed!

GIVING

checks should be made out to **Globe International** (write Maarifa in the memo)
P.O. Box 3040 • Pensacola, FL • 32516-3040

ONLINE GIVING

www.mymaarifa.org/donate



www.globeintl.org