

ST. ANTHONY AIDS SUPPORT GROUP

MAJENGO CATHOLIC PARISH- ELDORET-KENYA

BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. ANTHONYS AIDS SUPPORT GROUP

The Parish Priest and the Parish council established St. Anthony's support group in 2003. This was as a result of increasing number of HIV aids victims and Orphans. The aim of the group was to journey with the affected and the infected. by offering Home Based care and counseling in and within our Parish without any discrimination. Other activities includes visiting the infected, affected, orphans at their homes, reaching our Estates in Small Christian Communities that are created as per Estates, to offer awareness, creation of stigma reduction, offering education, assistance to school going orphans, and provision of food and medicine to the sick.

MANAGEMENT

St. Anthony group is located at Majengo Catholic Church, the Parish Headquarters. It is surrounded by various estates, which are densely populated and are slum areas. The has a Committee that is managed by the patron the parish priest, One Sister, the Chairman, Secretary, and the treasure. The organization structure is as follows:

- + The chairperson.
- + The coordinators
- + The Secretary as the Programming Manager.
- + The Assist. Secretary as the Programming Officer (information / education).
- + Nine members are field mobilizes / counselors.
- + Two home based health care providers.
- + Office Assistant.

In total, we have eighteen members in the group. All the above management team has been trained in Education for Life, Basic counseling skills and Home based health care. The Diocese of Eldoret sponsored the courses. The members have been assigned to operate and reach the needy, visiting our laid down structure of Small Christian Communities and the outstations of Majengo Catholic Church. Members meet every Sunday at 8.30am. After first mass. We also have mass on every first Saturday of the month.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Out of the data collected on the affected and infected, we are able to draw the needs and resources assessment which forms part of the information that we communicate to the Diocesan Aids Committee for consideration at Diocesan level since we work hand in hand with them.

Responsible Persons

The St. Anthony Aids Support committee is coordinated by :

- + Parish Priest (Patron) – Fr. Vincent Sunguti.
- + Chairman – Nicholas Okinyo
- + Secretary – Philip Wamlwa.
- + Treasure AnnFrancisca Njoroge.
- + Project Coordinator Sr. Judith Mose.

PROGRESS

Since the inception of St. Anthony Aids Support group, a lot has been achieved mostly because of commitment of the members who dedicate themselves to serve others voluntarily. Infact most of our funding come from members own pockets and offerings. The people who do all these financial help in cludes myself (Parish Priest and also Sister). We sacrifice from the little we get from our Christians. We are attending to at least 10 patients so far this year but last year we attended to 26 patients. We are also attending to 23 orphans where 16 are in school but 7 are not in school. They dropped out, some because of stubbornness, some due to carelessness of the guardian and some due to peer pressure.

Our intervention so far has been;

- Counseling of the infected and affected towards stigma reduction.
- Socio-economic support for orphans e.g. providing food, school uniform, and medical assistance.
- We have established a programmed where our clients are counseled and tested free of charge at the Ancilla Medical clinic that belongs to the sisters. Those who test negative are advised to live a meaningful life and those who test positive are further introduced to AMPATH- a special programme for Hiv/Aids at Moi Teaching and Referral Hosp. In Eldoret.
- Out of the contributions we make monthly together with other donations we get from the church, we make weekly visits to the sick and the poor and give small donations of food and small funds for medicine. We also give little

- token to orphan and patient caretakers to start small business in order to be self reliant. This is only when we have enough funds.
- St. Anthony also holds prayer sessions every week for the purpose of praying for the sick and the poor and seeks solace from God.

CHALLENGES

Hardships have been our big hindrance in achieving our objectives. Lack of funding has been our big problem owing to the fact that our main donation has been from members of the church, well-wishers, and the very members of the group. Despite all these, the number of people in need has always been on the rise and two others who were very destitute and died in our hands despite the treatment that they received. Millicent Odhiambo a patient of ours died in Hospital in 2004 and left behind a bill of Ksh. 45,000, and we tried to persuade the Hospital authority to waive off the debt bill in vain. We ended up organizing a donation meeting and raised the money. Teresia Nyambura our patient also died on 30th. July 2004, leaving behind a bill of Ksh. 42,000. We had to plead with Hospital authority to waive off the bill and they waived off only Ksh. 30,000. We raised the other Ksh. 12,000. If we had cash, their lives could have been prolonged a bit in a good hospital. Yet we still have others even now.

OUR FUTURE PLANS

St. Anthony's future plan is to engage in income generating activities that will enable it to stand for a longer period of time since the problem at hand will have to be addressed for quite a long time given the steady growth of the pandemic.

If we get money, we intend to:

- + Offer typing, printing and photocopying services using computer printer and photocopier.
- + Open a Pharmacy shop to sell drugs.
- + Print T- shirts to advertise our work and educate community on health matters.
- + Construct residential houses for renting on a piece of land donated to the group by the church.

This is a brief report about St. Anthony AIDS Support group in Majengo Catholic Church, Eldoret – Kenya.

Report prepared by Fr. Vincent Sunguti, The Parish Priest of Majengo Church.