



BLUE HOUSE CLINIC

Blue House is an outpatient clinic located in Mathare along Juja Road opposite Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA).

It offers TB (Tuberculosis) treatment, TB Screening, HIV testing and Counseling.

Antiretroviral drugs, Treatment of Multiple Resistant Tuberculosis, PMTCT and Sexual Gender Based Violence care are also offered.

All services are absolutely free...

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Unveiling of the Newsletter, written and produced by the youth in Mathare!

By Aurellia Munene

Have you heard the latest news? The youth in Blue House clinic have launched their first ever newsletter. It is fresh, exciting and very informative. It not only targets the youth but the entire Mathare community. It is free. The youth in Mathare felt that this was one way to effectively inform, share their life experiences, create awareness and help reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS.

They are intelligent, enthusiastic and talented young people. They have faced numerous challenges, overcome some and still continue to soldier on. They are indeed a force to be reckoned with. I am proud of the young minds behind this initiative and much honored to have worked with them. Keep it up.

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ment, TB Screening, HIV testing and Counseling. Also Antiretroviral drugs, Treatment of Multiple Resistant Tuberculosis, PMTCT and Sexual Gender Based Violence care are services offered and all absolutely free.

This newsletter is produced by the youth with contribution by the medical teams at the Blue House. The newsletter will address issues like, Prevention of Mother to Child transmission (PMTCT), HIV /AIDS transmission prevention, care and support given after infection, information on tuberculosis, the issues of Sexual and Gender Violence among other topics that affect us. I have no doubt in my mind that you will thoroughly enjoy reading this Newsletter and its subsequent issues, and that issues that will be discussed will bring meaning to each and every one of you. Thank you to all who made this possible. ■

Karibuni sana

NEVER LOSE HOPE

Geoffrey Ochieng explains how finding the will to live has made him stronger

I was in form two, when I decided I had to know. One day I woke up, asked for permission from school and went to a Voluntary Counseling Centre, in Nakuru. I consulted no one. I needed no discouragement. There I learnt that I was HIV positive. I was not so shocked. I was always sick, and I was tired of my classmates always mocking me each time I fell ill. I wished for one moment that my parents were alive. They died when I was only seven years old. I am the second born in a family of three. After my parent's death, we were taken to live with our relatives in Nairobi. It has never been easy, but we had a roof over our heads.

The day I learnt of my status, I boarded a bus, went home and disclosed my status to my aunts. How could I be HIV positive, they asked themselves? To them, I was not sexually active and so there was no way I could have the virus. That same day, they sent me packing and back to school.

With no one to talk to, I decided to start treatment after being infected with tuberculosis and meningitis at the same time. Since then I have been on ARV's. I

moved out of my aunt's place because I couldn't take it any more. It's hard being an orphan and living with this virus too. Taking medication has never been easy. Among my siblings, I am the only one who has the virus. It's a mystery because I am the middle child. Sometimes I ask, why me?

There were days when I felt like ending it all. My sight is far from good. I stumble when I walk, and I hate it when people treat me as though I were a corpse. Some days I wouldn't take my medication, but after a strong debate with myself, I decided I was going to live and not die. Today I take my drugs religiously; there are joys to adhering to the HIV treatment. My CD4 count is increasing, and with that my sight is getting better. I am happy about that. I am working hard too; I want to go back to school. I know that the sky is the limit, and I will not stop at anything. I have to pay my rent and also make sure that I eat well, I am also saving for my school fees. I am only 19, but I will not stop, I have to go the extra mile, and make sure that I have the life that I have always wanted. Blue House, has given me a family, and I always go there whenever I feel low, and I get counseled. I have a great support group. I wouldn't make it without them. ■

SILENCE CAN KILL

Evelyn Akinyi explores the issue of who is responsible for sex education today

Our parents, teachers, religious leaders and the society at large expect us young people to uphold our dignity and morals by abstaining from sex. Is this really practical or achievable?

Who is to blame for all the immorality we see around us every day. Young girls at very tender ages are getting pregnant and are forced to drop out of school; others are exposed to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Whose fault is this?

Everyone is shifting the blame, pointing a finger to the other party. Parents and teachers have left sex education to the other, assuming that either party will take up the task to educate the young ones. Religious leaders on the other hand are treating sex as taboo and some even go as far as condemning those who practice safe sex.

Society's morals have gone to the dogs, quite literally. Today many people have forgotten about their culture and moral values and are emulating and incorporating western culture, exposing and rendering youths vulnerable.

Take for example the story of Wambui. She is 16 years old, living in Mathare slums. She was impregnated by her step father. Despite the fact that Wambui's mother felt that she was providing a father figure and a source of protection for her children, little did she know that she was only bringing home a man who would defile her daughter.

Wambui is now pregnant, and her father-come-lover, is asking her to keep the affair secret and not to tell the mother. In return, she is being promised goodies. A house, everything she wants, just name it, and she will have it. He also wants Wambui to have an abortion. Wambui has chosen silence, the offer is too good.

There are many things happening in the slums. Some so horrid, you can't even put them on paper. Poverty is a riding factor for all these. Nevertheless these things should be stopped, but only if our parents, teachers and the leaders take on the responsibility of talking freely with young girls and boys about sex.

We are living in times where the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global concern; let's talk about sex so that we can all help bring up responsible people, who will make informed choices in life. ■

Interview: Silvia Mueni tells her story

Can you tell me about your self?

My name is Mueni. I am 23 years old. I live in Mathare slums, area four. I just recently did my O levels but I was so sick that I could not finish all my exams. I have been unable to pursue my college education due to lack of school fees. I am now job hunting. In 1994, I lost my parents to HIV/AIDS related illness.

How did you find out you were HIV positive? When I was a little girl, I was always sick, on and off. Everyone thought that I was just a sickly child, and that things would be fine once I grew older. In 2005 though, when I was 18 years old, I started losing weight drastically. I had a swollen neck and was getting quite weak. I lost my appetite and was too tired to even



stand on my own. I couldn't do anything at all. That's when I started asking myself questions about my health. I remembered that mum had died of an HIV related disease. What were the possibilities that I too could have the HIV virus, I asked? The only answer lay in going for a test, which I did. The results glared back at me, I was HIV positive. I was extremely shocked. I retraced my steps. It could only be that I was born with this virus. For one moment I was relieved to finally know what was wrong with me. I could now take the next steps. I was scared, but I had consolation in my heart that things were going to be just fine.

What treatment are you on? At the moment I am taking three types of ARVs, Kaletra, Abacavir and didanosine (videx). Taking these drugs has become a very important issue in my life. Before I started treatment, I was quite thin; I weighed only 27kg with a CD4 count of only 4. Now I am gaining weight, I am 44kg and my CD4 count is rising everyday.

What are the challenges you face? Being an orphan, sometimes I feel like I am alone in this world, and with a disease that is incurable, I find it hard living through the days. I feel like I have to mature faster than I should. People are so mean sometimes. When they discovered that I was sick, no one wanted to share food with me, or even share my things. My utensils were washed separately with jik and hot water. People spread rumors about me, things that I have never come to terms with. No one wanted to pay my college education because I was seen as dead already. I am still alive today, and very healthy. I wish people could get to know more about HIV, then our societies would be different, maybe then we will even reduce the numbers of infections. Today I thank God for giving me good parents in the name of Blue House clinic. MSF has accepted us, provides our medicine and also counseling.

What advice would you give policy makers about treating and caring for HIV+ people? I want to urge the government of Kenya, experts, researchers to try hard and get medicine for all those who need them, and also for new developments in HIV treatment and Prevention. We need a cure; we need to have hope too that there will be medication in the future.

What would you tell other young people who think they might be HIV positive? I would urge them to go to the Voluntary Counseling Centers (VCT), where they will be able to know their HIV status. They will be counseled and if they are positive, they will be started on medication and also given a support group. Being HIV positive is not a big issue. The only thing you have to do is adhere to medication, eat a balanced diet and avoid stress. If I have made it as a young adult, then you can also do it. Let's not hide in our cocoons, let's come out and support each other, regardless of our status. ■

Mathare -



c Julie Damond MSF-



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LAURA'S CORNER

Part one of Laura's autobiography

By Laura Adbhiambo*

My name is Laura. I was born in Alego Subgul division near Usonga, on September 30th 1994. I am 15 years old.

I had five siblings; I am the last born child. Unfortunately three of my siblings died before I could get to know them. I grew up knowing my other two siblings, my sister Caro* and brother Alvin* who I really love and adore so much. We were brought up well, as disciplined and God fearing children. We were the envy of many in our community.

When I was eight years old, mother started feeling unwell. Father tried all he could. He took her to various hospitals, but she never got well. She passed on just when she was being taken into Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The pain was unbearable.

“Everyone believed that I was going to die. Doctors were defeated, and medicine men too. Even I believed that I was going to die”

A few days later Mother was buried. Our lives changed completely. We were never the same again without her. It felt like we just existed without a purpose in life. It was not easy for us to live with a single parent. I think I was hit the hardest; I was still young and needed motherly love. Father had a really difficult time trying to fill in mother's shoes. I was always crying and screaming out for her. He did not know how to handle the situation, so he decided that I would be better off living with one of my aunts in Embakasi.

I stayed with my aunt Emma for one year, after that she took me back home to my family. I was so happy to be reunited with my brother and sister. But not long after I was back home I started getting seriously ill. I thought I was going to pass away and meet with my mother in heaven. Father rushed me to hospital for treatment but unfortunately it did not work because I got worse everyday.

Father had no option but to take me upcountry. Everyone believed that was going to die. Doctors were defeated, and medicine men too. Even I believed that I was going to die.

After all the attempts, my grandmother decided to call in a pastor from our local church to pray for me. By God's grace I got better after some time. If it wasn't for my grandmother, I would have said goodbye to the world and hello to heaven.

I was taken back to Nairobi, to my family that I had thought I would never see again. They were happy and welcomed me back. My friends could not believe their eyes, some of them were looking at me with wide eyes while some even ran away thinking I was a ghost. After seeing me for several days they realized that I was their long lost friend. Days passed and years followed without any problems, until this demon came back to our house in full swing and it attacked my sister Caro*.

At that time I was ten years old, Caro* suddenly became sick. We were in shock because she was the one taking care of us like she was our own mother. My father was stranded and stressed out. I was the one to hospitalize my sister and do all the household chores at that early age, and so I had to stop going to school for a while.

My father and brother had to go to work to get some money for my sister to be taken to hospital. One day, my sister Caro* died on their way to the hospital. They had to take her straight to the mortuary. When my father came home only accompanied by Alvin*, I knew immediately that something was wrong.

A few minutes later two women came mourning sadly. Tears streamed down my brothers' face like a river. He gave me the worst news of my life. I felt like running while screaming, but my feet wouldn't let me. Instead they were shaking and weak, I fell down, and started screaming at the top of my voice. I screamed loud enough so as to wake the dead. “Why is this happening to me Lord? It's like you want me to be left alone in this world. You took away the brothers and sister that I never even got to meet, then my sweet mother and now Caro*. You should have taken me instead.” I felt completely abandoned. ■

Laura's story will continue in the next issue...



Doctor, Doctor!

**Your medical questions,
our answers**

QN: I am a girl who hates her legs a lot. This is because of warts on my skin. I can't put on a skirt because people really stare at them. I have tried podophylin for quite sometime but there is no change. What should I do because I can't stand the Warts any longer...?

Answer: Warts are caused by Human Papillomavirus. They are usually growths on the skin. They can also occur on the vulva and vaginal walls and on the penis. They can also occur in HIV negative individuals but tend to be worse in HIV positive individuals. Just continue using podophyllin on your doctor's advice. It may take a while but just be patient. Also if CD4 count is low the warts may be persistent. You can also modify your dressing, by wearing stockings or leggings.
* Podophylin: a drug used to treat wart.

QN: Are condoms 100 percent effective because some people use it to prevent pregnancy and HIV infection? I think that the virus is too tiny and can pass through the tiny pores of the condom

Answer: Condoms are made of a rubber material called latex that does not even allow water to sip through therefore they do not allow the virus to pass through. However it is advisable to get quality condoms. Ensure that they are not expired before use. They must be stored in the right way and used correctly. Condoms are effective in preventing HIV and pregnancy, but only if used correctly and all the time during sexual intercourse.

QN: Is it true that a person who is HIV- can't marry a HIV+ person?

Answer: It is not true that a person who is HIV- cannot marry a HIV+ person. They can marry for as long as both of them know their status and agree to marry. However they must always use a condom to protect one another.



If you are an HIV positive youth living in Mathare or Eastleigh and would like to contribute to the Newsletter please contact Simon Njoka Gitau on: 020 201 6881 or 020 6760458

An Ambassador for living positively with HIV

By Christine Munene*

I had a vision, to be the ambassador of HIV/AIDS in Mathare slums. I went to people close to me, people I trusted, but they let me down. I asked my teacher for help, and she asked me to leave those matters to those who are HIV positive, not knowing that I am one of them!

Today, however, I have another opportunity. This newsletter has opened that door for me. I now have a chance to be the voice of the voiceless. I want to be that voice, for all those who have been rejected by their own families, and those who still struggle to accept their status here in Mathare slums.

I am 14 years old, and I am HIV positive. I was born with HIV. I know that I will live with this virus until maybe a cure is found. The realization that I am not the only one with this disease, and that there are many who still suffer in silence is my main inspiration.

The Journey of Discovery

First I wanted to find out how many infected and uninfected children will be orphaned by Aids during this generation. And the

number is big, and we need to do something to stop this. It is difficult enough living in the slums, and being at the brink of losing hope makes many people get crazy ideas. I want to be that voice that gives hope and reason to many.

I want to teach each and every person suffering from the virus, that your health should be the most important issue. Avoid things that make you stressed, and sick. HIV is incurable. It is caused by a virus which can be passed through having sexual intercourse with an infected partner, getting into contact with infected blood, and can also be transmitted by an infected mother to her unborn child.

HIV damages the body's defense system, but you can live for long by eating a balanced diet and avoiding junk food. It is also not right for people living with the virus to drink alcohol or smoke, because this will damage your immune system. Managing HIV is easy, all you need to do is adhere to your medication, avoid stress, and also eat well. It's as simple as that. Together we will make it! ■

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of minors.*

D	I	Z	Z	Y	T	W	S	E	X	H	D
T	U	B	E	R	C	U	L	O	S	I	S
V	I	R	U	S	T	U	V	Q	M	V	H
E	S	T	L	F	M	T	E	C	X	A	E
G	G	L	I	F	E	Y	S	I	T	I	A
N	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	F	D	L
O	B	E	E	C	N	A	R	U	H	S	T
Q	V	E	T	E	N	A	R	Y	T	B	H
P	O	S	I	T	I	V	E	D	W	H	S

Can you find the following words in our puzzle?

- Tuberculosis
- Positive
- Youth
- HIV
- Aids
- Health
- Dizzy
- Sex
- Virus
- Life
- Nutrition

Each number represents a letter, therefore what word do the following numbers spell out: 1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5

Clue: Predisposition to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation

The right answer will be published in the next issue.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26



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