



KOPLWA HIV/AIDS CENTRE

Nairobi, Kenya

Project goal – Support the KOPLWA centre of Kibera by improving the infrastructure, the education of the children and the sustainability of the centre.

A centre born as a self-help initiative

The Kenya Organisation of People Living with AIDS centre (KOPLWA) was founded in Kibera in 2007. A group of adults living with HIV/AIDS decided to join forces and try to help each other and their children, who were being stigmatized at school. Many of them were women who had been abandoned by their husbands when they found out about the infection, while some were single mothers. The organisation today comprises 72 adults living with HIV/AIDS, and around 70 children under 10 years old, 21 of whom are also HIV/AIDS positive.

Right: KOPLWA centre in Kibera, with one of the women correcting the homework of their children.



Left: KOPLWA centre in Kibera, after being rebuilt with a private donation channelled via Strathmore University in November 2008.



Above: Some of the clothing made for sale.

Left: Some women at one of the gatherings at the centre.

At the centre in Kibera, the members hold gatherings for group therapy, self-help and motivation, which has been very useful in helping them solve their problems. During their gatherings, they also make clothes, drawings, works of art, bracelets, etc. The members and their children live from the proceedings of these sales. They also want the centre to serve as a primary school to provide basic education to the children, many of whom are often discriminated against when they attend other schools.

Kibera – One of the biggest slums in Africa

The centre is located in the Kibera slum, 5km. south west of the centre of Nairobi. Kibera is the biggest slum dwelling in East and Central Africa, with an area of ca. 260 ha. (2.5 sq. km.) and a population of anywhere between 0.6 and 1.2 million people, from all the major ethnic backgrounds. This multi-ethnic nature has led to many conflicts, the most recent being the post election violence in January 2008. The high rate of crime, together with the lack of building foundations (the ground of Kibera is mostly composed of refuse and rubbish) and the cramped sprawl of the area, slows down any upgrading effort in the slum. Moreover, Kibera slum is an “informal settlement” (i.e., it does not officially exist) and therefore the government provides no basic services such as schools, lavatories, running water, sewerage system, electricity, proper roads, etc.

Very densely populated (ca. 300,000 inhab./sq.km.) and heavily polluted by waste, dust and human and animal faeces, Kibera is home to many illnesses and, according to some sources, to more than 300,000 people infected by HIV.



Inside the 10 x 14 feet KOPLWA centre in Kibera after the improvement of the infrastructure with concrete floor and more proper iron sheet walls and plywood interior.

2007 – A group of women from Kibera decide to join forces and found the KOPLWA centre in the slum.

2008 – Strathmore University begins its collaboration with KOPLWA by channelling a 1,800 EUR. private donation from individuals from the Czech Republic to improve the infrastructure of the centre.

2009 – The centre was renovated by painting the outside and with plywood on the interior.

Students at the Community Outreach Programme of Strathmore University have begun collaboration with the centre. The main goal is to give some courses on *living with HIV/AIDS*, as well as support the neighbouring church with the education of the children. Other needs for which funding is required are:

Project	Ksh	US \$	Euro €
Improving the main classroom	98 000	1,300	980
Construction of latrines	50 000	670	500
Painting of the centre	200 000	2 670	2 000
Acquisition of desks	400 000	5 340	4 000
Textbooks and stationery	500 000	6 670	5 000
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1 EUR = 100 KSH (approx.). For further information on the above items and other needs of KOPLWA, please contact the COP at Strathmore University.

Right and below: Children from the Kibera KOPLWA have lunch at the centre.



Left: Lunchtime at KOPLWA-Kibera – The association is using borrowed facilities until the centre infrastructure is improved.



The work of a married couple

Andrew Lumbumba, 37, and Pheobe Risper Opiyo, 27 are both living with HIV/AIDS. They live in the slum with their children. Learning about their infected status was hard. But it was even harder to see how their children were being stigmatised at school for this reason. They also realised that many people in Kibera were experiencing the same problems – so they decided to join forces: “Because of my status, I had the chance to attend some courses on ‘How to live with HIV’ – I found them really useful”, explains Phoebe. She and her husband tried then to find ways in which other people in the slum could benefit from what Phoebe had learnt: “That is when we came up with the idea of the centre,” says Andrew, “a place where any HIV-positive person can find relief through group therapy and receive formation on HIV – and where our children suffer no discrimination and, hopefully, receive some education in the future.”

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A private initiative supported by:
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“We dedicate ourselves to the advancement of education through teaching, scholarship and service to society by providing an all-round education in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility, creating a culture of continuous improvement, fostering high moral standards and developing a spirit of service and respect for others”