

**Riders for Health Kenya update report – November 2009**

**Mobilising grassroots carers from Western Kenya to reach thousands with hope and support**

Riders for Health’s vision is of a world in which the poor do not suffer and die due to lack of access to health care and other vital services simply because they are isolated by distance or terrain.

One of Riders’ goals is to build and strengthen capacity in the countries in which we operate. To achieve this, Riders is planning to replicate the partnerships we have with grass-roots organisations such as Vumilia in Kenya. These partnerships have a real impact in local communities and are enabling people to lift themselves out of poverty.

**Vumilia Community-Based Organisation**

Vumilia is a women’s group based in the Kabras district, in western Kenya. They are working to overcome HIV/AIDS in their community, through the psychological, social and economic empowerment of women. They particularly focus on mothers who are heads of families affected by HIV/AIDS and ensure that orphans and other children

living with HIV/AIDS have access to support, education and health care.



Vumilia run a number of income generation and improved nutrition projects, including vegetable gardens, sewing and paraffin trading to enable people living with HIV/AIDS to cope practically with their condition.

*Photo: Women being taught income generation skills.*

**The support of GlobalGiving donors**

Thanks to the support of the GlobalGiving donors, Riders has been able to train another two women from Vumilia in motorcycle riding and basic preventive maintenance. Reliable transport makes a huge difference to organisations like Vumilia as it means they can not only reach more people, but also spend longer with them. The mobility and technical knowledge is the vital missing link that is allowing them to reach many more women and children.

The increased number of mobile staff has allowed Vumilia to increase the area coverage of over four locations. Over the last three months they have reached over 1,600 men, women and children from some of the poorest communities of western Kenya with regular care and support.

**The story of Pricilla Imali**

Pricilla is the “mama” of Vumilia. She is sixty-three years old, widowed with one son and has been through so much. In 2005, Pricilla was diagnosed as HIV positive. When her son heard the news, he would not allow his children to share food or to

stay with their grandmother because he feared that Priscilla would infect them. In the years that followed, life was very hard for Priscilla as she grew weaker and struggled to pay her medical bills and buy enough food to stay healthy. She lived a life of loneliness, rejection and stigma and lost the will to fight the diseases.

Priscilla joined Vumilia HIV/AIDS support group, and there she found people who felt for her, grew close to her and cared for her when she was sick. Thanks to their motorcycles, the carers from Vumilia were able to visit Priscilla regularly and nurse her back to good health. They cooked for her and took her to hospital.



*Photo: Priscilla back in good health and ready to help others.*

Vumilia also tried to breach the gap between Priscilla and her son by visiting him and educating him on HIV/AIDS. Last year, the son accepted his mother's status and asked her to forgive him. He is now supporting his mother by paying for medical bills and buying her food. He is even planning to build her a house. Vumilia is reuniting families and educating on matters relating to HIV/AIDS through outreach programme and Ridersis with them every step of the way. Priscilla is simply thrilled to be able to see her grandchildren again.

### **Joining the Vumilia family**

Priscilla has now joined Vumilia's home-based care team. From the counselling she received at Vumilia, Priscilla has the confidence to disclose her HIV status and to raise awareness by talking to others about living with the disease. Priscilla has become an educator of HIV/AIDS to the young people around and mentor to them.



"HIV is not a death sentence; it's a disease like any other disease. Being positive does not mean that you are dying the next day. You still have many years to live so long as you accept your status and take care of yourself, making sure that you have a balanced diet and remain on antiretroviral drugs," explains Priscilla.

*Photo: A Vumilia carer visiting a rural community.*

Having the necessary training and a reliable motorcycle has allowed Priscilla and the other women of Vumilia to help others to live with HIV, as they themselves were helped.

## Building capacity in Kenya

Thanks to the support of GlobalGiving donors and other funders Riders is now managing 70 motorcycles in Kenya used by local care providers for health care delivery. To support this rapid growth of our programme and to ensure that not one of these motorcycles break down, leaving a health worker unable to reach their communities, Riders have taken on our first technician in Kenya, Dan Nyakundi.



Dan is 27-years-old and has qualifications in automotive engineering from Kisumu College and four years experience in the commercial sector as a motor-vehicle technician. He is responsible for servicing each of the motorcycles on a monthly basis in the areas they serve and ensuring that all the carers are carrying out their daily maintenance on their bikes before each journey.

*Photo: Dan carrying out outreach maintenance on a motorcycle.*

“I wanted to work for Riders because I believe in change and that they can help Kenya make real progress,” said Dan.

Riders are very excited by the rapid development of our programme in Kenya and are very grateful to all those who have donated through the GlobalGiving their support.

## Thank you

Riders would like to thank all those who have supported our work in Kenya so far and helping us the train the wonderful team from Vumilia and carers from other deserving grass-root organisations. Without your support, none of what we do would be possible and we are truly grateful for all the generosity we receive.

*Photo: The girls from the Vumilia orphanage.*



## For more information

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