

## ***Riders for Health Kenya update report – April 2009***

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

Riders for Health is dedicated to overcoming the gap in health care delivery in rural Africa and ensuring that help finally reaches those suffering. Riders has established a locally run, transport management infrastructure that is helping to reach over ten million people with basic health care on a regular basis. Our mission is to reach a further ten million men, women and children with regular health care by 2015.

To achieve this, with the help of GlobalGiving, Riders is replicating the partnerships we have with grass-root organisations in Kenya. These partnerships have a real impact in local communities and are enabling people to lift themselves out of poverty.

#### **Mobilising the carers from Busia**

Thanks to the support of GlobalGiving, Riders has been able to start training the carers from Busia Family Life Education Programme (Busia). The Busia programme is located in the town of Busia on the Kenyan border with Uganda. They currently work in a 15km radius of the town.

*Photo: Children queuing for food in rural Kenya*



The region around Busia is one of the poorest of the country and has the third highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in Kenya. The high incidence of HIV/AIDS means that the social fabric is devastated more in this area than other places in the country. Sickness reduces productivity and leads to poverty. It was the poverty and increasing number of orphans and widows losing their lands which prompted the formation of Busia to tackle these issues.

The Busia 'Ambassadors' create awareness of HIV/AIDS encouraging people to be tested and then provide subsequent counselling. Those who test positive then need to be given the knowledge and support they need to live a lifestyle that will help to control their condition, which includes a diet of nutritional foods. Busia also trains and educates in nutritional food and gardening for nutrition. Alcoholism amongst people living with HIV/AIDS is also a big problem in this region, which the Ambassadors from Busia are now trying to tackle.

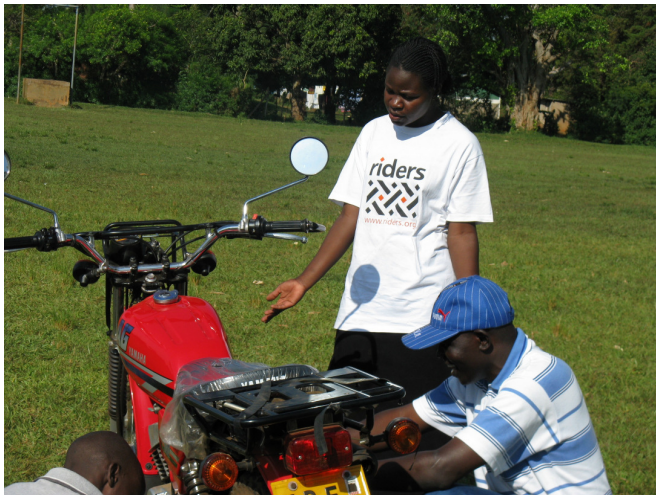


*Photo: Ngwarati Mashonga assembling a motorcycle*

Another of the social problems created for widows of the HIV/AIDS virus is the loss of inheritance when pieces of land called 'shambas' are taken away from them at the death of their husband. In these cases, Busia in provides support and advice to widows, explaining how the law can help them and protect their human rights. They also assist people in writing wills, take rape cases to court and making people aware of their rights.

### **Training carers to ride safely and basic preventive maintenance**

Until now, the care-givers from Busia used to walk to their communities, cycle or hire boda-bodas (bicycle-taxis). This was tiring, time consuming and meant that they could not respond quickly in emergency situations. This led to fatigue and low motivation levels amongst the team.



*Photo: Susan teaching basic preventive maintenance.*

Riders has donated six motorcycles to the Busia. Ngwarati Mashonga, Riders' operations director, and Susan Ngeresa, a Riders trainer, oversaw the training which took place at a location near Busia. Two riders were trained per motorcycle as the Busia care-providers are all volunteers and have to make a living along side their roles within the organisation.

"The gender bias is being reduced in the community. They are seeing even women riding motorbikes and it's a joy in the community," reported one female care-giver from Busia after her training.

"Busia do a lot of very good work and the women, in particular, seemed very committed," reported Ngwarati. "Interestingly, a lot of these women had previously had to ride bicycles to reach their communities and picked up the concept of riding motorcycles very quickly."

The motorcycles will be used to help the 'ambassadors' to increase their reach and their impact for the communities. They should be able to reach up to four times more people which will also improve their efficiency in educating and increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS as well as helping them to provide the extensive support and care needed.



*Photo: Local children watching the training*



The motorcycles will also enable the distribution of home based care kits. Furthermore, response times in the case of emergency will be many times faster. And as the team from Busia are being taught to ride defensively and maintain these motorcycles between services, the care-providers can be certain that their vehicles will continue to run without breaking down.

The Busia programme shows how much communities can do to support themselves and each other despite desperate poverty and Riders is proud to be able to help them thanks to the support of the donors of GlobalGiving.

### **Expanding Riders' work in Kenya**

Riders is also preparing to train the carers from the Presbytery of Limuru over the next few months. The Limuru dispensary caters for the Kikuyu people and Narok mainly caters for the Masai people. In addition to these dispensaries, the Presbytery run a girl child orphanage in Limuru, which currently has 100 children. Riders have also identified new potential partners further south, around Mombasa.



*Photo: Children waiting at a Limuru dispensary*

### **Thank you**

Riders would like to thank all those who have supported our work in Kenya so far and helping us to train the wonderful team from Busia 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.

### **For more information**

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