

GROOTS Kiamoria



Gatundu is an area approximately 50 kilometers north of Nairobi. Its population is made up predominately of farmers of the Kikuyu tribe, who grow and sell cash crops such as coffee, maize, beans and potatoes for a living. Because of its proximity to Nairobi, Gatundu has been hit hard by HIV/AIDS and at one time the division was estimated to have the highest AIDS rate in the country. Orphans are a particular problem in this area.

GROOTS Kiamoria, located in the Kiamoria location of Gatundu, was founded as a self-help group in 1997 by 25 women who had the intention of helping each other meet their daily needs. They did this at first by assisting members in cultivating their farms and selling their goods, by helping each other to dig bore holes for water and by assisting in building homes for one another. They also began a merry-go-round scheme in order to share their resources with each other and have started several income-generating activities, including knitting and selling pullovers, making baskets and mats and making fireless cookers. The members have tried to sell these items in many places, but have

had difficulty finding a market for their goods.

GROOTS Kiamoria began its HIV/AIDS-related activities in 2003, when the group joined GROOTS Kenya. Ten members were subsequently trained as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs) in home-based care. Upon returning to the com-



munity, they organized a community workshop in which they further trained 140 people. After this workshop, nine sub-groups were formed, eight of which are organized under the GROOTS Kiamoria umbrella. GROOTS Kiamoria acts as a networking partner for these groups, bringing together TOTs and home-based care workers in order to impart more detailed information and arranging exchanges for groups to share specific skills with each other, usually in the area of income-generation.

When visiting a neighbor to provide home-based care, the caregivers bring food and clothes when they have them. They provide counseling for the sick to help them accept their status and to live a positive life. They also assist with household chores. In addition to home-based care, GROOTS Kiamoria has undertaken an educational campaign. Besides the community workshops they have organized to share information about home-based care, Anti-Retrovirals and prevention of mother to child

transmission, group members regularly attend church meetings, schools, chief's meetings (*barazas*) and other public gatherings in order to share correct information about the transmission of HIV/AIDS and how to care for people who are infected. Since beginning this campaign, GROOTS Kiamoria have seen a great



change in the perception of AIDS in the community.

Because of the high levels of poverty in this area, GROOTS Kiamoria faces many challenges, particularly in the way they are perceived by the community. Home-based care workers share group resources with the people they care for by bringing food, clothes and other necessary items at every visit. This generosity has caused many of their neighbors to request school fees for all of the orphans in the community, which the women of GROOTS Kiamoria cannot provide. Others in the community think that the home-based care workers should bring food and clothes to every disadvantaged person in Kiamoria, but this also is not possible.

Many of the people that GROOTS Kiamoria care for are older people who have been left caring for orphans. One person that GROOTS Kiamoria assists is Carl. He is an uncle responsible for his sister's three children. She left five children when she and her husband died, but the two older girls are now married and on their own. The oldest of the remaining children is 21 years old and in Secretarial college. She will graduate in a year and hopes to get a job. The next oldest is in Form Four (high school) and she wants to go to nursing school. She does well in school and her favorite subjects are biology, chemistry, and math. The youngest child is a boy in Standard Two. After their father died the family was broke because of his hospital bills. Their mother worked very hard to make money for them and put off the constant requests of her family for her to move back to her home. When their mother was sick a home-based caregiver came and taught them how to care and cook for her. With her support and that of their uncle they were able to get through that difficult time in their life.

