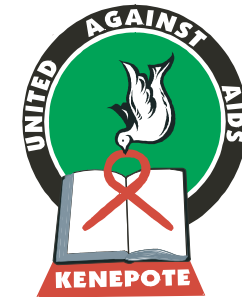


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Kenya Network of HIV-Positive Teachers (KENEPOTE)

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The POLICY Project

PREAMBLE

Teachers interact with many people as they perform their many and varied roles, in classrooms and at school, as teachers, counsellors, role models and parents. They are also leaders in the church and the community, holding responsible positions, and are held in high esteem. Their countrywide distribution enables them to effectively advocate behavioural change since HIV and AIDS is a behavioural disease. “A teacher can save more lives than a doctor”.

PROFILE

KENEPOTE is a network of HIV-positive teachers founded in September 2003 by two HIV-positive teachers (Elsa Ouko, now retired, and living in Kitale, and Margaret Wambete, a teacher at Sosiani Primary School in Eldoret Municipality) after attending the International Conference on Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (ICASA) in Nairobi. The idea of the network had been muted earlier by a number of teachers both in the work place and others who had retired or forced to retire because of their HIV status. Some of these teachers have dedicated their time to running Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHAs); and providing support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs).

Two of these CBOs are supported by World Vision as facilitators in HIV initiatives. They are often used to serve as resource persons by World Vision and other organizations mainly in Rift Valley Province. The

districts that have benefited most from the services of HIV-positive teachers include West Pokot, Baringo, Turkana, Marakwet, Mt Elgon and Narok.

Pioneers of KENEPOTE have served as resource persons for World Vision in Rift Valley Province. In the course of their HIV and AIDS work they have come across many HIV-positive teachers suffering from self stigma, denial, shame, stigma and discrimination.

Some of the challenges they found HIV positive teachers face are;

- Being stripped of all their duties
- Regular transfers that often result in flat refusal or rejection by Head Teachers
- They are ridiculed through songs and discrediting insinuations by students, fellow teachers and parents alike, and denied time off to attend clinics
- They are given heavy work loads that tire and make them burn out at times forcing them to resign prematurely.

KENEPOTE VISION

Aspires to create an environment where teachers with HIV and AIDS will be free from fear, shame, denial, stigma and discrimination; to avoid further spread of HIV and AIDS; re-infection; to have access to information, education, care, treatment and support for its members, orphans and vulnerable children; to uphold the dignity and professionalism of teachers and to ensure that this is not compromised regardless of status, so that teachers continue to serve as pro-

ductive agents of change in the community and beyond.

KENEPOTE MISSION

To build the capacity of its members in advocacy for the reduction of stigma and discrimination, protection of rights of HIV-positive teachers, orphans and vulnerable children; increase access to psychosocial support services and skills to teachers; prevent further spread of HIV and AIDS in collaboration with other stakeholders such as Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), public, private and civil society organizations by bringing positive change in attitude and behaviour of communities to HIV and AIDS.

OBJECTIVES

- Reduce stigma and discrimination against teachers living with HIV and AIDS and orphans in and out of school
- Intensify advocacy and lobbying for protection of the rights of teachers living with HIV and AIDS and their access to treatment, care and support
- Strengthen capacity of KENEPOTE officials and members to ensure implementation and management of the program activities effectively and efficiently.