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**' I've realized
that HIV does
not define me..'**

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KENYA

Summary

2021

|| ROTARY FOUNDATION GLOBAL GRANT PROPOSAL

“REDUCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & ACHIEVING POSITIVE PEACE BY EMPOWERING WOMEN AFFECTED AND INFECTED WITH HIV IN THE SLUMS OF KISUMU, KENYA”

SUMMARY

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most continuous violations of human rights across the globe. According to the World Health Organization, a high prevalence of violence is associated with higher rates of HIV infection among marginalized populations. Evidence shows that living with HIV constitutes a pronounced risk factor for experiencing GBV.^{1/} Many women in Sub-Saharan Africa, like Kenya, are disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2016 alone, 34,000 adult women were infected with HIV, compared with 22,000 adult men. Kisumu contributed to 9.5% of the total number of people living with HIV in Kenya and is hence ranked the third-highest area throughout the entire nation of Kenya according to the National Aids Control Council of Kenya as of 2015. This prevalence is associated with high poverty levels that push people into commercial sex work and sex in exchange for a steady supply of fish, which is then used for trade. Continued engagement in such risky behaviors perpetuates poverty among children who are often left as orphans with the deadly menace of parents related to HIV/AIDS, which is highest along the Lake Victoria shores than in other parts of Kenya. In this region, people with HIV/AIDS, especially women and girls, have been sharply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. While our project focuses on a specific target group, we believe that if anyone is disparaged, prospects for positive peace for a population are reduced.

In order to achieve positive peace, we believe it is necessary to create the conditions where women in these fragile and vulnerable communities can become more resilient and enjoy greater confidence such that they can participate in sustainable changes that enhance their lives. The project aims to empower up to 100 women in three slums of Kisumu (Manyatta, Nyamasaira, and Nyalend) who have been infected with HIV and thereby adversely affected. We propose to create Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in at least three community-led centers that will empower women to make positive changes for themselves and their families, thereby lessening the debilitating discrimination they face as a consequence of their HIV infection.

^{1/}Addressing the links between gender-based violence and HIV in the Great Lakes region.

- Every SHG will be led by a women leader who will be trained with conflict prevention/resolution skills and other soft skills (e.g., the ability to work with others, inspire leadership and collaboration, resolve disagreements, and lessen interpersonal strife) needed to lead community-based activities and health campaigns to foster greater public dialogue, respect, tolerance and awareness in schools, families, and other local groups with the goal of reducing and preventing GBV. Research from Robert Putnam (*Bowling Alone*), of Harvard, suggests that development of soft skills is a greater predictor of success than technical skills, because they enable people to more effectively navigate around impediments to progress and to foster better, more effective interpersonal relationships. We believe such soft skills will allow women to overcome prejudices related to HIV and facilitate elements of positive peace among other women and ultimately throughout their communities.
- Up to 20 SHG will be created, and they will be thoughtfully designed to allow women to draw strength from one another while encouraging each other, therefore allowing women and their families to affirmatively confront the stigma, violence and discrimination that they encounter every day. These groups will enable them to overcome the headwinds of discrimination, violence, and victimization that stand in their way to liberate their human spirit.
- The SHG's will develop strong local networks and offer a platform for acquiring technical and entrepreneurial skills to achieve economic independence and reduce tensions and conflicts in these communities due to hostile societal attitudes toward them. Advancing gender equality, equity, and women's empowerment will help reduce incidents of violence toward women as they become more affirmed and self-sufficient. We believe dignifying women with HIA will reduce violence against them and their children through full involvement and participation in social, economic, and political spectra at all levels and bringing women and children into the mainstream of development.

Local and International Rotarians, in collaboration with Rotary Peace Fellows, are seeking at least \$45,000 to directly impact 100 women affected and infected by HIV in three villages of *Kisumu City, Kenya: Manyatta, Nyamasaria, and Nyalenda*. We expect that this project will indirectly impact up to 500 people; create 3 community-led training centers, train 20 women peace leaders, and create up to 20 Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

OVERVIEW

1. Background

With a population of 48,397,527 (July 2018 est.), Kenya has been experiencing rapid population growth, as a result of its high birth rate and declining mortality rate, early marriage, and childbearing, along with the lack of family planning, contributed to more than 40% of Kenyan's population of under the age of 15. Kenya's persistently rapid population growth strains the labor market, social services, arable land, and natural resources. Because of the HIV epidemic that started in the 90's, the government stopped its efforts in slowing the country's birth rate. (Source: CIA).

According to studies, Kenya's stagnant economy and political issues during the 1980s and 1990s led to an outpouring of Kenyan students and professionals seeking permanent Western and Southern Africa opportunities. Since its independence in 1963, Kenya's relative stability has attracted hundreds of thousands of refugees escaping violent conflicts in neighboring countries. For example, there are approximately 300,000 Somali refugees in Kenya as of April 2017.

Kisumu is the third-largest city in Kenya after the capital Nairobi and the most important city in Western Kenya. Officially known as Kisumu City (and formerly Port Florence), Kisumu is the Kenyan inland port city on Lake Victoria and the capital city of Kisumu County, Kenya. At an elevation of 3,711 ft, the city has an estimated population 500,000. The metropolitan region comprising the city and its suburbs and satellite towns of Maseno, Kondele, and Ahero has an estimated population of over 1.5 million as of 2017. As the principal city of Western Kenya, Kisumu is the headquarters of the Lake Region Economic Block, which is a conglomeration of 15 counties in Western Kenya. Kisumu town (capital of Nyanza Province) is located on the northeastern shore of Lake Victoria, which is known for its lakeside viewpoints at Dunga Hill Camp and Hippo Point.

Kisumu is the commercial, industrial and transportation center of Western Kenya, serving a hinterland populated by almost four million people. Kisumu is an important connection in the trade route between Lake Victoria and Mombasa, due to its water and rail connections. It also serves as the chief terminus for the agricultural produce of Nyanza and Western provinces. Industries in Kisumu's most important industries are the manufacturing of textile, agricultural products, and brewing.

2. The Challenges

According to the World Bank, Kenya has made significant political, structural, and economic reforms that have primarily driven sustained economic growth, social development, and political gains over the past decade. However, Kenya's key development challenges still include poverty, inequality, climate change, and the economy's vulnerability to internal and external shocks.

More than 1 billion people in the world live in extreme poverty (defined as living on \$2 or less per day) and many of them being women. Recent research suggests that while both men and women suffer the consequences of living in a cycle of poverty, women have fewer resources to deal with sustained, intergenerational extreme poverty. Many women in Sub-Saharan Africa, like Kenya, are disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2016 alone, 34,000 adult women were infected with HIV, compared with 22,000 adult men. The adult women accounted for 910,000 of the 1.6 million people living with HIV in the country. According to UNAids, women also face challenges with sexual and reproductive health issues such as limited access to family planning and stigma and discrimination when they seek services.

Women and girls make up about 50.1% (Kisumu Population Data) of the total population of the slums of Kisumu City and the gross inequalities and inhuman conditions they endure in such areas both as a result of poverty and poor infrastructural development, and in general, is a key factor contributing to Kisumu city's extremely poor human development index in the slum areas. The situation of women and girls in Kisumu slums is particularly dire and presents real concerns for prospects for fair treatment, access to justice, and overall human rights protection. Of the 390,164 people that currently live in Kisumu County, 51% are women of reproductive age. Many of the women in Kisumu slums are widows and heads of households with hardly any access to property, health care, and education. Maternal mortality rates in the slums of Kisumu City are amongst the highest in Kisumu slums. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies in slums of these areas are common. Girls who get married or give birth at a young age have a greater vulnerability to health risks. 65% of women between the ages of 15-64 participate in the domestic hard labor workforce (Kisumu Population Data).

Women bear a disproportionate brunt of the hardships occasioned by poverty, conflict, natural disaster and a deeply clan-based culture that promotes strict male hierarchy and authority. A critical element of hardship emanates from the women's increasing roles as providers of basic needs or amenities to the household members – which are typically extracted from natural resources, i.e. land, water, vegetation etc. In these circumstances, women come under extreme pressures and violence, which further complicate the already stressful conditions which persist in Kisumu city. Religious and cultural limitations further exacerbate this on the role and status of women in Kisumu County. As a result, deeply rooted gender inequality prevails; Kisumu women are either excluded from decision-making and asset ownership or operate through a patriarchal

filter, which is dictated by the cultural beliefs of the Luo community, who are the principal inhabitants of this region.

Women and girls of this community often suffer cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, including Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), a general lack of access to formal justice mechanisms, and extreme marginalization and repression under the traditional and harsh implementation of harmful cultural practices of the Luo Community. In the slums of Kisumu City, the practice of women inheritance, substance abuse among children (including girls), and early marriages remains widespread in its severest form.

The continued insecurity in most parts of these slums in Kisumu City further aggravates the dire situation of women and girls as this presents threats to humanitarian organizations thus limiting their capacity to provide full assistance to Kisumu City's citizens in critical need who live in such slums. To address manifest gender imbalances and respond to the acute challenges women and girls face in the slum areas of Kisumu, WAPC as an organization reaffirms and emphasizes child protection and Gender Equality and Mainstreaming as "an irreducible condition for inclusive, democratic, violence-free and sustainable development." Thus, WAPC intends to make women and girls' concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programs in the political, economic, and social spheres of life in Kisumu environs.

Through linkages and partnerships, WAPC's and U4C's proposed mutual project results from wide and inclusive consultative meetings with all the stakeholders within the area. They identified the need for any possible action. Notably, WAPC observes that women and girls' gender roles have been stretched beyond traditional limits to meet the family and local community's new domestic, social and economic needs. Many women are now taking the main role in domestic decision-making and working in whatever way they can to provide an income for their families, even where men are present in the household. Women have been at the forefront of emergency care and social recovery efforts at the community level, often playing active public roles to influence and mobilize support.

There is a great need for this project because slums within Kisumu City have been without proper management in place for an extended period. This has led to a lack of existence for human rights and democratic space for its citizens, especially women and girls. Women and girls are the most vulnerable groups among the population living in the communities described above. This group is vulnerable to violations from the armed groups and deep-rooted cultural practices in the Luo Community. Illiteracy also continues to serve as another plague that hounds the society, further jeopardizing any hopes of women knowing their rights.

In Kisumu City, women have remained unrepresented in social, economic and political arenas due to weaknesses associated with a complete lack of non-gender sensitive policies, lack of economic capacity, cultural limitations and domestic burdens, and clan-based representation system. As such, women have remained victims of serious neglect and abuse within these societies and families that are charged with the responsibility of providing care and protection. As their rights get violated, women and girls are further forced into harmful cultural practices.

Ignorance among community members and law enforcement agents is a significant setback to the realization of women's rights. Most of the local administrators do not understand that Harmful Cultural Practices such as women's right of inheritance is among the main causes and widespread of poverty and health risks such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic; moreover, early pregnancy and marriages are among some of the reasons behind a disempowered society. There is, therefore, need for them to be educated on, and sensitized to, the existing legal documents that are meant to protect the women and girl-children for instance the UNCRC acknowledges the rights of children in a full international human rights treaty; rights to survival, protection, participation and development, the ACRWC that complements the UNCRC in that it directs parental responsibility to care and protection of their children.

Kisumu contributed to 9.5% of the total number of people living with HIV in Kenya and is hence ranked the third highest in the entire nation of Kenya according to the National Aids Control Council of Kenya as of 2015. This prevalence is associated with the high poverty levels that push people into commercial sex work and sex in exchange for a steady supply of fish for trade. The continued engagement in such risky behaviors perpetuates poverty trends as children are left orphans with the death of HIV/AIDS menace is highest along the Lake Victoria shores compared to all other parts of Kenya. The HIV prevalence rate in Kisumu stands at 19.9%, which is 3.4 times higher than the national prevalence rate, which can be estimated at 5.6%. The prevalence rate among women in Kisumu stands at 21.2%, which is way higher than that of men in Kisumu, which stands at 18.3%.

In Africa, women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10% of all businesses (USAID). In Kenya, approximately 85% of women-owned microenterprises and small businesses are in the informal sector. Women in slums like Kisumu City face many gender-based barriers when they want to get educated, especially when they want to start a business. Women & girls make up about 50.1% of the Kisumu City Population, and the gross inequalities and inhuman conditions they endure in such areas, resulting from poverty and poor infrastructure. The situation of women & girls in Kisumu slums is particularly dire and presents real concerns for their fair treatment, access to justice, and overall human rights protection. Of the 390,164 people in Kisumu County, 51% are women of reproductive age, and many are widows and heads of households with extremely limited access to healthcare and/or education. 65% of women (ages 15-64) participate in the domestic hard labor force and suffer cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, including Sexual and Gender-

Based Violence, a general lack of access to formal justice mechanisms, and extreme marginalization and repression under the traditional implementation of harmful cultural practices of the Luo Community.

In Kisumu City, women have remained underrepresented in social, economic, and political arenas due to lack of non-gender sensitive policies, lack of economic capacity, cultural limitations, domestic burdens, and clan-based representation systems.

- Women and girls make up about 50.1% (Kisumu Population Data) of the total population of the slums of Kisumu City and the gross inequalities and inhuman conditions they endure in such areas both as a result of poverty and poor infrastructural development, and in general, is a key factor contributing to Kisumu city's extremely poor human development index in the slum areas.
- The situation of women and girls in Kisumu slums is particularly dire and presents real concerns for their fair treatment, access to justice, and overall human rights protection. Of the 390,164 people currently living in Kisumu County, 51% are women of reproductive age.
- Many women in Kisumu slums are widows and heads of households with hardly any access to property, health care, and education.
- Maternal mortality rates in the slums of Kisumu City are amongst the highest in Kisumu slums. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies in slums of these areas are common. Girls who get married or give birth at a young age have a greater vulnerability to health risks. 65% of women between the ages of 15-64 participate in the domestic hard labor force.
- Traditional ideas about the roles of girls and women restrict their contributions to Kenya. These ideas hold women back from contributing to important development goals, especially in economic growth, nutrition, and food security.
- Women in Kenya are underrepresented in decision-making positions. They also have less access to education, land, and employment. Those living in rural areas spend long hours collecting water and firewood, interfering with school attendance and leaving them with little time to earn money or engage in other productive activities.
- The untapped potential of women and girls is gaining greater attention in Kenya. The country's new Constitution, passed in 2010, provides a powerful framework for addressing gender equality. It marks a new beginning for women's rights in Kenya; seeking to remedy

the traditional exclusion of women and promote their full involvement in every aspect of growth and development.

- When Kenyan women have the freedom to reach their potential, all Kenyan families and communities will grow stronger. USAID is empowering women to exercise their rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. Our partners bring the perspectives of women and girls and their full participation to the frontlines, and men and boys are essential partners in this effort.

3. Needs Assessment

i Furthermore, WAPC, U4C, and Rotarians, performed an assessment process that focused on getting up-to-date socio-economic statistics of the region, conducted interviews with local authorities, leaders, professionals (teachers, doctors, and trainers), women, and social auditors assigned by the community itself, using the *Zopp Methodology*². This methodology allowed the team to systematize the information and identify the community's existing problems in economic development. This 'problem tree' analysis and the 'solution tree' provided an overview of the range of interventions needed to occur to solve identified problems. This also allowed us to assess the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and assets of the community of Kisumu City Slums.

A needs assessment was also carried out with a survey of 60 women from Kisumu City Slums, including those who participated in WAPC programs in the past years and women who haven't participated. The purpose of this statistical survey was to demonstrate that women in this community have the desire and willingness to learn different skills and that they want to participate in the labor market or become entrepreneurs. The following groups, persons, and organizations were consulted and/or surveyed for the assessment:

- Local community structures, including; CBOs, women groups,
- Church leaders
- Local authorities
- Political leaders
- Educationists
- Village elders
- Barazas (public meeting place)

The following needs have been identified:

²/ The ZOPP approach (*Zielorientierte Projektplanung*), or GOPP- Goal Oriented Project Planning, provides a systematic structure for identifying, planning, and managing projects developed again in a workshop setting, with principal interest groups

- ✓ Inadequate capacity for family life.
 - ✓ Inadequate capacity on economic and entrepreneurship development.
 - ✓ Sexual and domestic violence.
 - ✓ Drug and substance abuse.
 - ✓ Child neglect/malnutrition.
 - ✓ Relief of need for prostitution as a critical source of income.
 - ✓ Poor infrastructural development.
 - ✓ Insecurity.
- Other methods were also employed to survey the community and to collect and evaluate its feedback.
 1. Observation
 2. Community interviews (one on one and group interviews)
 3. Focus Group Discussions
 4. Questionnaires