

# Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative Newsletter



*Issue 1- January-March 2020*

Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative is delighted to share with you our quarterly newsletter that gives you a glimpse of the positive change achieved thus far through our engagements and programs. Have a look at some of the highlights of our first quarter.

## Enhancing Key Population Linkage & Retention in Health Care

*By Alex Mugenyi, Project Coordinator*

As sub-contractors of the Key Populations Investment Fund Project in Mubende and Kassanda Districts, Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative (ROM) held inception meetings with district officials of Kassanda and Mubende district on the 19th and 21st February 2020 at the Mubende District chambers. District leadership were introduced to the objectives of the project calling for their support to achieve the project objectives. The Key Populations Investment Fund (KPIF) project is intended to surge Key Population (KP) led community innovative prevention approaches to enhance combination prevention HIV service delivery at district level; hence accelerating the attainment of the UNAIDS 95,95,95 target for the epidemic control among KPs, and ending forward HIV transmission.

Key populations (KP) continue to lag behind the general population in achieving 95-95-95 HIV outcomes. Current estimates suggest that 47% of all continuing HIV transmissions globally are driven by KP and their sexual partners (UNAIDS, 2018). Local leadership pledged continued support whenever sought. The District Community Development Officer, Dr. Ssebulime Gonzaga called for fostering of positive behaviour change among the target groups noting the need to embrace the prevention packages that underlie behavioural, structural and biomedical interventions.



*Participants at the Key Populations Investment Fund project (KPIF) inception meeting held at Mubende District Council Chambers.*



*ROM KPIF project coordinator (Mr. Alex Mugenyi) presenting the KPIF project road map to the Kassanda District Officials.*

*By Ibrahim Kibalama – Project Coordinator*

With the partnership between ROM and Steven Lewis Foundation (SLF), over 113 Adolescent girls and young mothers have been empowered with hands-on skills to support their financial capability and sustainable wellbeing.

Tailoring, hair dressing and catering skills continued to form the second chance schooling that ROM offers to these young adults that found themselves out of the conventional schooling for one reason or another.

An informal vocational training that lasts six months takes the beneficiaries through the basics of the crafts launching them into the world of work. In addition to the attainment of skills, this cycle benefited from practical entrepreneurship skilling aimed at catalyzing the skills attained into productive jobs.

ROM runs concurrent cycles annually in the second and last quarter of the year offering opportunity to vulnerable young adults as one of the measures to curb the spread of HIV and economic empowerment of the communities for sustainable livelihoods. Young mothers in the care of grandmothers have been prioritized to ease the burden of care from the elderly caregivers.

Last year the skilling and apprenticeship program supported 63 young mothers 34 of whom are already self-employed. Similarly, on February 7th, and 28th February 2020, ROM celebrated 50 trainees from the Kasaala Luwero cycle and 50 from the Kampala cycle that managed to successfully complete.

*“I had no money but am glad that ROM has offered an education to three of my grandchildren. ROM has not only offered education they have supported me through treatment currently my pressure which has always been unstable is now stable.” Rose Nanyonjo 66*

*“I did not hope for this, I will forever be thankful to ROM. I am definitely starting my own tailoring business unlike other youth out there who look for jobs. I also plan to support my grandmother through old age.” Christine Namutebi 18*



*Cake cutting moment at the graduation.*

*By Sarah Nassolo – Social Worker*

ROM peer educators got an opportunity to participate in the Y+ Summit 2020 organized by Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV & AIDS. ROM grooms young champions for positive living. Fostering hope for the future, we believe young people are key in stopping the HIV stigma and nurturing a welcoming world for all.

Enabling messages on gender equality, women empowerment for young people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, Youth as champions of HIV advocacy and Quality living with HIV captivated many, putting them in the direction to act.

Esther a ROM peer said the summit helped her build her confidence and was glad to learn about the gender equality issues as key contributors to new HIV infections.

*“I was able to disclose my status to my friend whom in the past I have been afraid to tell due to fear of being rejected.” Esther R K.*

The summit empowered the young champions to engage with stakeholders on the different issues affecting them.



*ROM peers with the Executive Director of UNYPA Nicholas Niwagaba, Ms. Jackline Kabambi of UNICEF and Nassolo Sarah of ROM.*



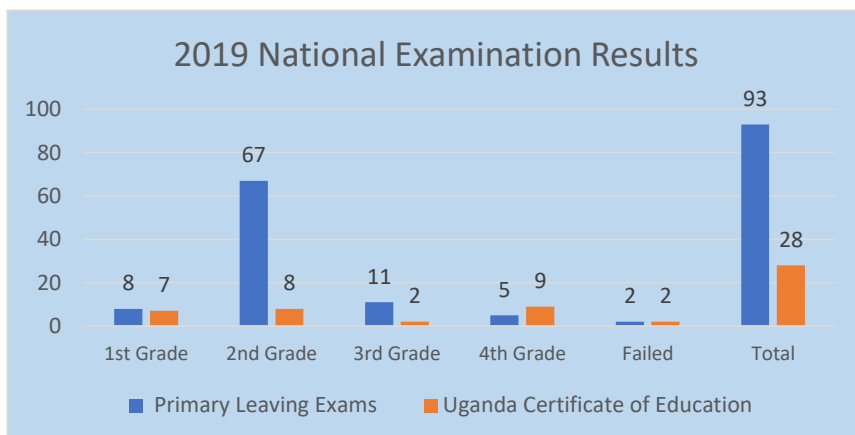
# Empowering Vulnerable Youth to Own their Future

*By Victor Amos Bamutana – OVC Supervisor*

ROM with the support of benefactors continues to support vulnerable children to receive quality education by contributing to their school requirements. School performance is improving thanks to our heightened collaboration with the schools involved. Last year's results are highly commendable looking at the environments where these children reside and the enormous challenges they brave to stay in school.

Only six students were registered for the advanced certificate of education, 4 of which qualifying for post-secondary enrolment.

The negative school level advancement rate that affects the country equally affects ROM that in addition is hit by the inability to raise ample funds to accommodate all to advance far despite the interest. Case in point, out of the 88 that qualified for post primary enrolment, ROM has been able to continue with 26 only in the academic year 2020.



A total of 386 have been confirmed for support at primary level and 112 at Secondary level for the 2020 academic year.

Grappling with the issue of drop outs and sustainability of this support, ROM is nurturing the entrepreneurial mindset of the young ones by introducing them to basic craft making that can support their stay in school. March 2020 the first cycle of beneficiaries was trained in paper bag making inspiring them to embrace the same as a source of income that can support them and their families.

*“When I received the invitation for the training it did not make any sense to me but when I started it turned out to be very interesting. With this new skill I will be able to get pocket money and shop for the requirements as I prepare to join my next level. I have already taught my cousin who is at home due to lack of school fees. Together we can make our lives more meaningful.”*

Okoth Oscar 19 years old, completed ordinary level, waiting to join institution.



*Practical training in paper bag making at ROM Banda site.*

## ROM Champions Point of Care System in ART Management

*By Dereck Musooka – M&E Manager*

Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative (ROM) was the pathfinder of Point of Care (POC) [Uganda Electronic Medical Records 3.0 version], a software developed by CDC/METS and supported by CDC/IDI through the School of Public Health, Makerere University.

ROM has tested how the existing processes would be performed on this new version and ensured that the anticipated enhancements would be realized. The pilot implementation enabled creation of illustrative and graphical client flow chart, work flow charts and formed a basis for training users in operating the new system.

The system is already offering great benefits towards the improvement of our service delivery.



*The team during the UgandaEMR Point of Care system walk through at the ROM pharmacy section during CDC Atlanta's Eric- Jan Mander's visit.*

*By Germina Nanfuka – Communications and PR Officer*

What a joy to get a nod from the Buganda cultural leadership. On the 13th of February 2020 the Head of the Kyaddondo County – the Kaggo, her two deputies plus the entire leadership of Nakawa Subcounty visited ROM appreciating the role of the initiative in fighting the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases.

Owekitiibwa Agnes Nakibirige Ssempe commended the various initiatives at ROM that address the Kingdom's challenges promising to work together in the year when the kingdom health focus is on the prevention of the spread of HIV.

ROM co-founded by a Comboni Missionary Fr. Joseph Archetti thrives in the direction of the Comboni Missionaries based at Boaz Hill Mbuya Kampala Uganda. On February 07, 2020, Fr. Tesfaye Tadesse The Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries (MCCJ) from Rome, Italy accompanied by his councillor Fr. Pietro were hosted by the Chairman of Directors ROM Fr. Anthony Kibira Kimbowa at the ROM facility in Mbuya.



*The Buganda cultural leadership during a tour by the ROM Executive Director*



*The Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries is welcomed by ROM Finance & Administration Manager - Osiema Bernard*

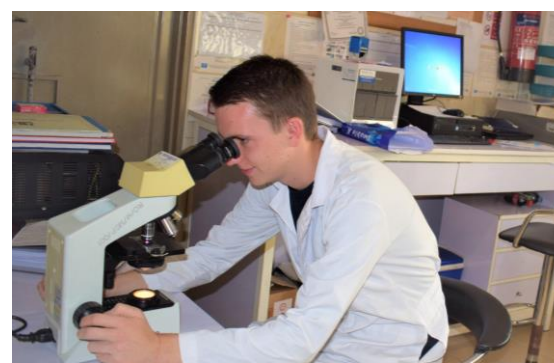
## My volunteership experience at ROM

Volunteering at Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV /AIDS Initiative has been a great experience. I had an amazing time and I am very grateful for everything the members of Reach Out have done for me. The best experience about my work was the learning of new things. Patrick my supervisor shared knowledge, time and passion of the work he does as the Laboratory Supervisor. I was privileged to learn about HIV, other diseases and basics like how to use a microscope correctly. I can definitely use what I have learnt for my medical studies which will be starting soon.

During my stay in Uganda as a volunteer at Reach Out Mbuya Parish HIV/AIDS Initiative, I got a chance to visit places where the very poor people live as part of the communities ROM serves. I have learnt not to take life for granted as many people still live a less dignified life.

I also got a chance to see how beautiful Uganda is. I visited; Hoima, Soroti, the Murchison Falls National Park, Fort Portal, Owen Falls dam in Jinja, the Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kasese and the Sipi Falls. I loved eating matooke and surely will miss the people, Ugandans are so friendly and open minded. I will really miss it here.

*Jan Warneke from Ursula Schule in Germany.*





*By Dr. Maureen A. Atim – Medical Services Manager*

Being a new disease only discovered about 3 months ago, little is known about the corona virus disease (Covid-19). This has led to various speculations being made about the disease regarding its spread and treatment, which causes fear, panic, anxiety and stress among people. Social media provides a channel for fast communication to masses, however during such times of uncertainty, a lot of fallacious information is spread around which causes more harm than good.

Some of these myths and misconceptions include the following;

- Any flu or cough-based illness is Covid-19: The symptoms of the disease may include fever, cough, sore throat, flu and difficulty breathing. However, these are similar symptoms of other respiratory diseases. If you recently travelled from an area with disease spread or had contact with one tested positive, or if symptoms persist, call the numbers provided below for further instruction.
- Covid-19 affects only older people: Older people and those with other underlying conditions are more at risk of having severe forms of the disease. However, all age groups are affected.
- Covid-19 has a cure: Some treatment options are showing promising results, but are still currently under investigation. Supportive treatment and management of co-existing infections is the current practice.

It is vital that information shared about this disease is evidence-based and this can be retrieved from sources such as the Ugandan Ministry of Health (MOH) and other international health bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is true that new information comes in frequently about this disease from ongoing research, however these bodies are working round the clock to ensure that the right information gets to the people. Therefore, to prevent the spread of false information which would deter efforts to prevent further spread of the disease, it is upon everyone to avoid spreading information that is not fact-based.

Also, due to the distressing nature of Covid-19 related news, one should limit its inflow to about twice daily as advised by the WHO Director-General who noted that spending the rest of the time working or doing relaxation activities would be good for one's mental health.

Stay home if you can, wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer frequently, avoid touching your face with unwashed hands, avoid close contact with people with signs of the disease and stay safe! Drink plenty of fluids and eat fruits and vegetables to boost immunity.

In case you develop symptoms, isolate yourself and use a face mask if available to avoid infecting others, cough or sneeze into a tissue and dispose, disinfect surfaces regularly, and call the **MOH toll-free numbers 0800 100066/0800 203033 or send SMS to 8500 for more information, testing and further management.**

**References: MOH, WHO, CDC (2020).**

## Order your Roses bag and support Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Young people both infected and affected are engaged in various income generating activities at ROM to earn a living and stay in School.

Roses of Mbuya is ROM's outlet for their wonderful products. Off the shelf plus customized orders ranging from school uniforms, conference bags, corporate wear and many more are gladly delivered in record time.

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