

**Purpose:** This paper chronicles the development of Upendo Village of Naivasha, Kenya as a best practice of Faith-based organizations in providing access to care and treatment for persons with HIV/AIDS and their families. The process took over two years. This project exemplifies essential program procedures and financial mechanisms that could be repeated in the implementation of the “Three By Five” Plan commitment of the U.N., as well as other programs.

## Upendo Village Naivasha, Kenya



Kenya is a tourist country with its beautiful natural resources, national parks and sunny beaches. Agricultural products include cut flowers, tea, coffee and pineapples. Yet large corporations own the resorts and people cannot afford to buy the produce that they are hired to harvest.

Upendo Village first began as a dream with Sr. Florence Muia, ASN, an Assumption Sister of Nairobi. As she reflected on the HIV/AIDS pandemic in her country, she realized the need for a Kenyan project by the Kenyan people. Approximately 2.2 million Kenyans are living with the HIV/AIDS virus. Her vision was for a safe haven for women and children affected by the disease. She wanted to call this sanctuary Upendo Village: upendo is the Kiswahili word for love. She received encouragement from Sr. Marge Zulaski, OSF, a Wheaton Franciscan, who helped her to contemplate her dream, and to define what she could do and how to get others involved. Sr. Marge saw Sr. Florence as a motivated, “take charge” person from a stable religious community. Sr. Marge had spent some time in Africa as a teacher and she understood the extent of the crisis that Sr. Florence spoke about. Sr. Marge introduced Sr. Florence to the Wheaton Franciscan community leadership in order to help her realize her vision. Sr. Sheila Kinsey, of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office, gave additional mentoring to Sr. Florence as she developed her project. The Wheaton Franciscans have been involved in HIV/AIDS ministries for eleven years, focused on a variety of advocacy efforts and services, which include housing for persons with HIV/AIDS.

### PARTNERSHIP

**Encouragement.** The Wheaton Franciscans believed in Sr. Florence and in her potential to realize her dream. That belief brought about a partnership between the Wheaton Franciscans and Sr. Florence. Sr. Florence shared her knowledge about the needs of the Kenyan people and educated the Wheaton Franciscans about her culture. The Wheaton Franciscans employed Sr. Florence for two years for the purpose of developing Upendo Village. Sr. Florence was born and raised in Kenya. She deeply understood Kenya’s problems on a personal level and had much insight to offer about appropriate solutions. As a Kenyan, Sr. Florence stressed that the African people themselves must be a part of the solution to their problems.

**Power.** Sr. Florence sensed that owning her own power was a crucial aspect of aiding her country’s crisis. She knew that she must become a partner, not a subordinate or a dependent. This created an opportunity for her to make a lasting difference.



*A temporary kitchen is under construction*



*The kitchen complete*

**Resources.** Both the Wheaton Franciscans and Sr. Florence agreed that in order for her to develop a sustainable program she needed to establish a broad foundation of resources for Upendo Village. In her experience, unsuccessful missionary activities happened when an established ministry was handed over to the Kenyan people without accounting for the original donor costs or providing for an adjustment period. The cost would then be passed directly onto the clients. Up until that point, they had not been paying for services and were shocked by the costs of the services that they had been receiving for free. Because of this, the sisters were unfairly perceived as commercializing and profiting from those services. Consequently, Sr. Florence knew she had to embrace her challenging role of diverse fund development for Upendo Village.

**Listening to each other's wisdom.** There was a great willingness to learn and to become educated. We attended to different issues and carried diverse cultural values. It was helpful to listen to each other's wisdom. For example, Sr. Florence felt the importance of having someone present in Kenya to pursue the community and build rapport with the local people. Given the stigma of AIDS, her assistant had to be a Kenyan, because people generally find it easier to confide in someone from their own culture. It takes time to gain confidence in order for people to open up. Small Christian communities, where trust had already been established, were fertile places to develop these bonds.

Sr. Florence visited a number of programs in the Chicago area that had relevance to Upendo Village. Such programs included a local AIDS organization, a domestic violence shelter and a comprehensive agency that served a variety of needs of persons who are poor. From these visits Sr. Florence gained insights about policies, regulations, and job descriptions that would help her in establishing her own Not-for-Profit organization. She also became involved in national and international AIDS organizations and met people from the National Catholic AIDS Network, who challenged her and helped her refine her dream.

The U.S. culture brought pragmatism and a business sense to the partnership. Sr. Florence and the Wheaton Franciscans used capacity building to develop the skills that allowed her to create progressive goals and practical, realizable business plans. In this way, Sr. Florence did not develop a program through crisis management, but through stable, sustainable project management. She learned techniques on working with the boards of these charitable and not for profit organizations and how to provide the essential information they required in order to help her. Sr. Florence became skilled in political advocacy and visited elected officials to promote help for the HIV/AIDS crisis.

**Small Faith-based Communities.** In Kenya, these small faith-based communities provide prayer support and address the needs of their members. These are resourceful groups that meet weekly, during the day or after work. These structures are contained within a parish and are part of the leadership structures of the parish. The parish council leadership is also part of the faith-based communities. A trickle up effect takes place. The small communities elect leadership, and a delegation is sent to a sub-parish that in turn sends delegates to the parish council.

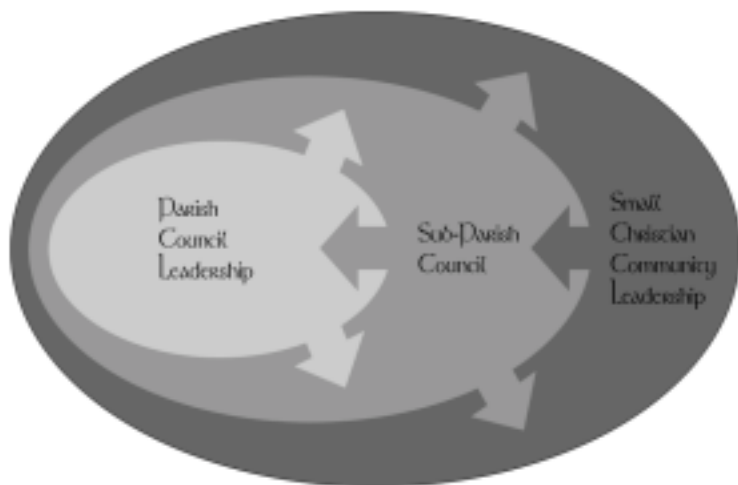
So in essence, if a small faith-based community cannot solve an issue it is brought before the sub-parish. If they cannot resolve an issue, it is brought before the parish council. This process allows a solution to occur on the lowest level possible, which is a more effective and sustainable process.



*A client receives a meal at Upendo Village*

The small Christian communities range in numbers from six to twenty persons. The sub-parishes have from one hundred to five hundred members, and each parish can have from five to ten sub-parishes with membership totaling several thousand persons. The bishop of the diocese has authority and leadership for all of the parishes and Catholic programs.

Respecting this framework, Sr. Florence spoke to her community leadership (the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi), which gave her a letter. She presented this letter to Rt. Rev. Peter Kairo, the bishop of Nakuru. He spoke to the pastor in Naivasha and asked if he could accommodate the Upendo Village Project. The pastor in turn brought the proposal to the parish council leadership in his parish who then brought it down to their own people. These people started talking about the



project in their sub-parishes and then to the faith-based groups of the people in the villages. In this process, Sr. Martha Mune, Sr. Florence's assistant, became part of the local leadership and when Sr. Florence is home she becomes part of this leadership as well. The Naivasha parish is composed of fourteen sub-parishes.

#### **Importance of a listening presence.**

The leaders in the small faith-based communities are respected persons of integrity. They have the ability to spend time relating to the people. This helps

develop rapport, and people gain confidence in what the leaders are doing. Once the people can see that something is truly a service, then they will embrace it. The leadership structure for these communities is the same for sub-parish and parish. Persons elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer.

#### **Presenting need to parish council.**

When Sr. Florence presented the Upendo Village Project to the parish council, the members were elated. They had thought about doing something, but they did not know how to go about it. Sr.



*Land donated for future development*

Florence asked for three acres and they happily gave her four. In addition, the council gave two classrooms on the parish grounds as a beginning space for Upendo Village.

**Ongoing involvement of faith-based structures.** Sr. Martha, Sr. Florence's assistant, continues to meet with the small faith-based communities. Ordinarily, it takes days or even weeks for trust to be established, but Sr. Martha was willing to be patient, to sit and to talk. She persistently developed the needed support of the members of the Christian community and of their leadership. At first their faith seemed slow in forthcoming, but with her patience and conviction they became confident and knew that she had their best interests at heart. As an example, she needed photographs to document the project to present to funding sources in the United States. Because she had gained their trust, Sr. Martha was allowed to take the photographs. Thus, by starting from a

pastoral perspective, Sr. Martha created enough trust for the project to be documented in the hope of obtaining further funding.

**Networking among churches.** The various denominations in Kenya work together to share resources and to meet the needs of their people afflicted by HIV/AIDS. For example, one church would provide food, while another offers shelter and yet another educational materials. The African Inland Church (A.I.C.), a Protestant church, provides information, medical resources, training for staff and assistance for orphans. The Medical Department of the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, which oversees all health services in the diocese, provides information on HIV/AIDS and training for staff.

**Networking among communities.** Naivasha General Hospital has a staff specializing in infectious diseases. Longonot Mobile Clinic provides medical care and client referrals. The Department of Health of Naivasha Municipality performed inspections and approvals for healthy environments. The Department of Social Services registered the project and granted Upendo Village a certificate to apply for facility needs and recognized eligibility for government funding available for that municipality.

**Program planning.** Progressive planning helped Sr. Florence to become more concrete in determining what was viable for her project at each stage of its development given the available resources at the time. This experience helped Sr. Florence to see her project as a set of progressive stages.

**Realizing a dream.** In Kenya, Sr. Martha oversaw the renovation of the two donated classrooms that would serve to house women and children with HIV/AIDS, and provided home visits to offer supportive services. When Sr. Florence visited Kenya, she spoke about her goals and talked with the people. The community now shares their dream. The people of Naivasha do not think of it as Sr. Florence's project, but "our" project. From one person, they all became dreamers. Now these dreamers span two continents, linking people of hope in Kenya and in the United States.

**Board oversight.** Sr. Clare Nyderek, OSF, Sr. Beatrice Hernandez, OSF, both Wheaton Franciscans, and Fr. Larry Reuter, Sr. J., were influential in helping to develop the board. John Bielski, an attorney on the board, drafted the by-laws and made the proper state filings. In the beginning there were unclear expectations of the board's role with Upendo Village. With time, the board has embraced the ministry as their own. They are indeed stakeholders in Upendo Village. The board has established credibility for Upendo Village in the United States. When Sr. Florence returns to Kenya, Sr. Beatrice will become the Executive Director of the Upendo Village Project in the United States. Sr. Florence will continue regular contact with the board of directors as well, and will be the director of the project in Kenya.



*Upendo Village Board Members. From left: John Bielski, Sr. Florence Muia, Fr. Larry Reuter, Sr. Beatrice Hernandez, Sr. Clare Nyderek and Ann Wohlberg*

**Assumption Sisters oversight.** The Assumption Sisters of Nairobi has an umbrella organization that oversees all the projects of their community. Members of this committee visit the projects and set general policies. Each project's administrative regulations, which it sets for itself, are derived from general policies from this committee. The sisters then know what the congregation expects.

**Not-for-Profit Status and Tax-exempt Status.** The project was to be of the Assumption Sisters, so Sr. Florence applied for Not-for-Profit and Tax-exempt status in the United States for Upendo Village. In doing so, she followed all the requirements of the I.R.S. In addition to making donations tax-exempt for donors, these privileges establish legitimacy and help control expenses for a Not-for-Profit organization. Sr. Florence has also gained valuable knowledge in navigating the intricate processes to achieve Not-for-Profit and Tax-Exempt status and in working with the U.S. governmental and I.R.S. regulations.

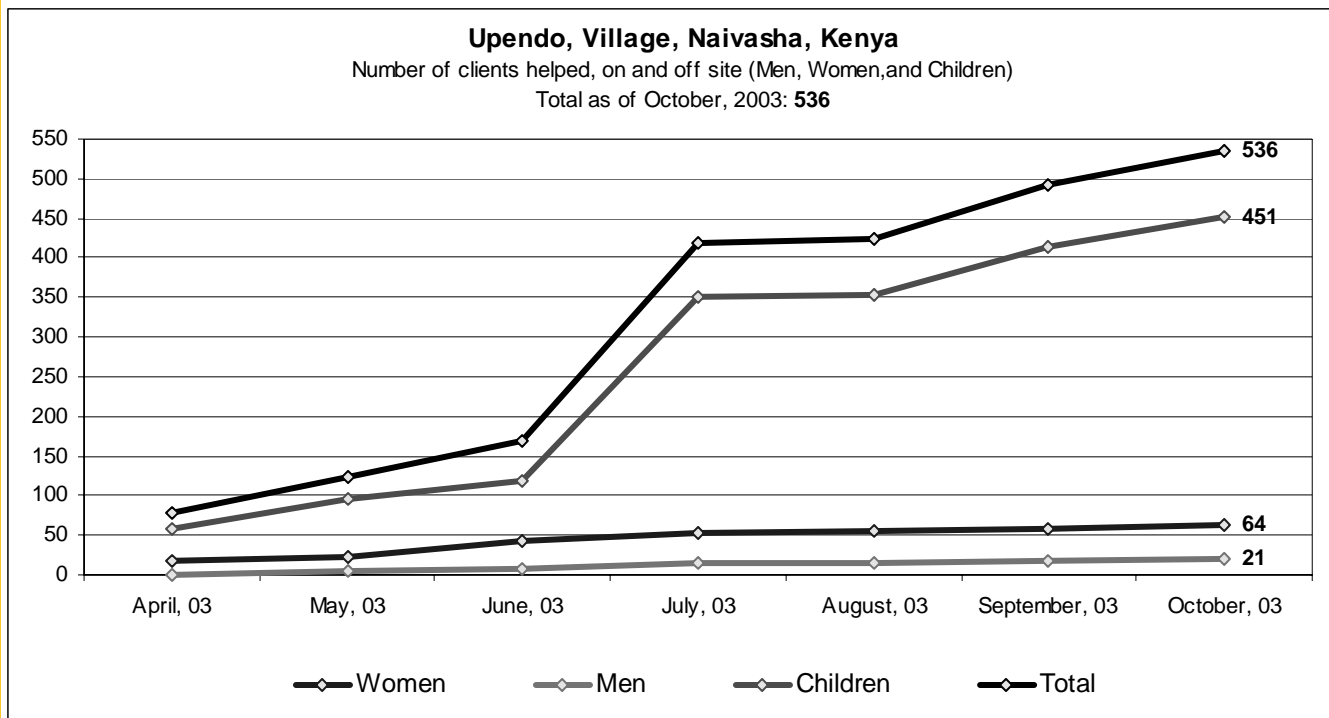
**Education.** Much time has been spent in creating awareness in the United States of the African HIV/AIDS pandemic. Sr. Florence also had to convince people that her project had a firm practical foundation and that it would be successful. As is often the case, funds were slow in the beginning. Yet, with seed money for the renovation of the two classrooms and construction of two adjacent buildings, she was able to get her project rolling. Once people began to see results, donations began to increase.

**Grant writing.** In the beginning there was much trial and error in seeking and writing grants. Sr. Florence hired a professional grant writer to develop a template for grant proposals. Ann Wohlberg, an Upendo Village board member and a successful grant writer, helped Sr. Florence with some of her grants as well.

**Rotary Club Connection.** A rotary club in the Chicago area connected with a rotary club in Kenya, who agreed to act as the receiving entity. The club is funding a forty-foot container to be shipped to Kenya. High school students from St. Scholastica and grade school students from St. Joan of Arc are collecting items to fill this container.

**Communication.** Sr. Florence has established a web page, designed and updated by Kenyan students studying in the U.S. Sr. Martha is in contact with Sr. Florence via phone calls and e-mails. They connect with each other about twice a month.

**Publicity.** There have been a number of interviews in the Chicago area media. Sr. Florence has given a number of mission talks in the Joliet Diocese, Green Bay Diocese and the Chicago Archdiocese. She has spoken with colleges and with the American Medical Students Association.



*Upendo Village began offering services in June, 2002, but more funding became available in April, 2003, to establish the project. Subsequently, many more clients were able to be served. As of October, 2003, 536 clients have been helped.*

Sr. Florence was involved with Bono of U2's Heart of America Tour at Wheaton College and is an active member of the DuPage Global AIDS Action Network (DGAAN).

**Connection to the Sister- to-Sister Program of Sr. Margaret Farley, RSM.** Sr. Florence went to New York for a consultation meeting to share her experience with the sister group that was to visit Kenya. Sr. Florence has community members who have been influential with the Association of Sisterhood of Kenya (AOSK). It was through AOSK that Sr. Margaret Farley, RSM had the Sister to Sister Program in Nairobi in 2002. The Upendo Village project is an excellent example of how to involve faith-based communities in the treatment of people with HIV/AIDS.

**Connection to the "3 by 5" Plan.** The UN strategic goal is to have three million people receiving treatment for AIDS by 2005. A major strategy is to work through the faith-based communities. Since it is imperative to establish trust, it would be good to work through the connections of the religious communities, whose members have already developed connections and relational skills. AOSK would be an excellent avenue for this kind of work.

## THE PROJECT

Upendo Village, NFP, is a project designed to respond to the local women and their children living with HIV/AIDS. The project provides them with resources and support to improve their health, increase their lifespan and plan for the future. Upendo Village is not a hospice program where death is the final outcome, but a life-affirming mission. The staff and volunteers provide hope, love, services and resources so that families can be strengthened and can plan for their future.

## Program Options

**Basic Health Care:** Urgent medical needs for the Upendo Village residents and the off-site clients are addressed, including medical care by nursing staff and access to prescription drugs and advocating further access to governmental medical systems.

**Counseling:** Residents and clients are provided with guidance and education in the areas of nutrition, health education, HIV prevention and mental health services.

**Job Skills Education:** Women are taught skills that will enable them to become self-sufficient. They learn how to tend kitchen gardens and how to keep chickens for their own nutritional needs as well as to provide poultry and eggs for resale.

**Temporary Shelter:** Women and children who come to live in Upendo Village must be HIV positive. Residents are provided with clean, comfortable living space. Hospitality is also offered to clients who travel far to attend the hospital.

## Accomplishments

S. Florence Muia, ASN, has been working on her project since May of 2001. Her accomplishments from that time until the end of October 2003 are:

**A Board of Directors** has been formed, and is meeting regularly to meet the needs of Upendo Village, NFP.



*A client receives medical care.*

**The Internal Revenue Service** has designated Upendo Village, NFP, a tax-exempt, Internal Revenue Code 501 (c)(3) organization.

**Upendo Village, NFP** has acquired a temporary site in Naivasha, Kenya, at a local parish with the conversion of two classrooms into living spaces. An onsite staff has been assigned.

## **Current Services**

### **Home-Based Care Program (HBC):**

This is a program that is providing counseling, nutrition, food and medicine to their clients. Currently, Upendo Village is providing home-based care services to men, women and children infected with HIV/AIDS. Most of these children are below fifteen years of age and have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Counseling services are offered to clients and caregivers, providing gloves, disinfectants, teaching them how to prepare a balanced diet, and provide vitamins and other basic treatments. They are also working in collaboration with a neighboring public hospital for referrals and are visiting those admitted.

### **Pre-testing and post-testing Counseling Programs:**

Upendo Village offers voluntary pre-test counseling to those who want to be tested for HIV/AIDS as well as follow-up sessions after the test. This is an important component for prevention as well as early treatment intervention. This program has helped 125 persons to date.

### **Community Education:**

This is a program designed to bring AIDS awareness, education and prevention to a community through seminars and workshops. It targets both the youth and the adults. This program has helped 2,673 persons to date.

### **Peer Counseling:**

At the moment, Upendo Village has only two full time staff members. In addition to the team, they have trained two women volunteers, who are part of the clients living with AIDS, to assist in peer counseling. The volunteers bring a sense of hope, meaning and encouragement to other women who are in the verge of despair.

### **Care of Orphans:**

Care for orphans is a crucial aspect of Upendo Village. This is the most vulnerable and disadvantaged group in the society today. Upendo Village is committed to the care of orphans by providing them with proper nutrition, counseling, healthcare, education, placement with extended family member(s), and providing income generating opportunities for the family as a means of empowerment towards the future support of the child.

### **Temporary Shelter:**

Upendo Village provides temporary shelter to women and children living with HIV/AIDS who are traumatized and in need of immediate shelter as they work with them to deal with issues and look for solutions. Women who travel to attend the hospital are also provided with nutritious hot meals and accommodation while in transit. This program has provided shelter for four women and children since April, 2003.

### **Staff:**

There are four staff members: Assistant Administrator/Accountant, Social Worker, Cateress and Night security guard as well as twenty-eight volunteers in Naivasha. The staff has been working hand and hand with faith-based communities to identify and train volunteers in the villages to assist in the HBC program. The volunteers are recommended through the faith-based communities and address the physical, social and psychological needs of the clients. A grant was recently received to hire a nurse to help provide basic medical services, and the hiring process is now underway.

# Resources

**Grants** have been obtained from a variety of faith-based groups such as dioceses, religious congregations, parishes and schools.

**Donations** have come from universities, medical students and concerned individuals. St. Joan of Arc Parish and Deacon Joe Dalpiaz have raised and donated money and goods for Upendo Village.

**Partnerships** have been forged between such organizations as a Chicago based rotary club and a rotary club in Kenya. They are currently transporting a forty-foot container from the U.S. to Kenya, filled with a variety of need resources: furniture, clothing, school supplies and personal hygiene products donated by a number of American organizations. Partnerships have also been created with other organizations such as Global Alliance for Africa, and East African Program in order to obtain funds for Upendo Village.

**Contacts** have been made with legislators in the U.S. and specific help has been given by Illinois Representative Henry Hyde's office for leads to other granting sources. Sr. Florence has visited Rep. Hyde's office twice to advocate for funds for Upendo Village.

**Educational materials** include a PowerPoint Presentation that is adaptable for various groups. In it, Sr. Florence gives an overview of the HIV/AIDS crisis as it effects Kenya. Photographs of Upendo Village and some of the people it serves put a human face to the all too familiar story of suffering that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has caused.

To date Sr. Florence has raised over \$125,000. This is beyond the seed money gifted by the Wheaton Franciscans for Sr. Florence's salary and benefits for two years and the renovation of the two classrooms for the project. This money will go towards the payment of a nurse, cook, housekeeper, administrator/counselor, assistant administrator, utilities, food and medicine for the residents and an automobile for local operations and community outreach.

## FUTURE DREAM

### Land:

In 2002, four acres of land was donated to Upendo Village, NFP for a permanent site in the small town of Naivasha (fifty miles north of Nairobi). As soon as funds are available they will start building so that they can expand services to more clients and embark on basic training for them. There is no duplication of this service in surrounding areas. The closest similar program is fifty miles away. As more people in the surrounding areas become aware of Upendo Village, more people in need come forward. Upendo Village hopes to continue to reach out to as many people as possible so that Kenya, and Africa as a whole, can reclaim its future.

This report studied Upendo Village, NFP, from May 2001 until November 2003. Upendo Village is an ongoing project

Upendo Village Website: [www.upendovillage.org](http://www.upendovillage.org)

For more copies of this report, or more information, please contact the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office of the Wheaton Franciscans.

phone: **(630) 784-2555**

email: [justicepeace@wheatonfranciscan.org](mailto:justicepeace@wheatonfranciscan.org)

web: [www.wheatonfranciscan.org/justice/justice.html](http://www.wheatonfranciscan.org/justice/justice.html)