



FRIENDS OF REACH OUT'S HIV/AIDS AFRICA INITIATIVE

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Greetings to all from Friends of Reach Out, supporting Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja (RHHJ) in Jinja in Uganda with direct reports from the field from Margrethe Juncker, MD, who works with RHHJ!

Amazing that we are already half through 2018 – what happened? Well, actually a lot for us here at RHHJ. With the support RHHJ has received from you, Friends of Reach Out, the activities here are continuously improving, and RHHJ is reaching deeper into the villages of Busoga Region.



The daily work of Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja (RHHJ) with homebased care for around 450 people with cancer or severe AIDS is going well. Many are benefitting from the treatment programme supported by Friends of Reach Out (FORO), which allows clients with a chance for detailed diagnosis and treatment to actually be cured – and get out of our palliative care programme. However, way too many people come to RHHJ too late, when all we can do is help people to live in peace and dignity to the last day. One of them is Harriet on the photo above. She died at the age of 35 years of a huge pelvic tumor, leaving seven children behind. Her story and many like hers, have challenged RHHJ to work on **two new and important initiatives:**

Sensitization – reaching out to the communities where health services are scarce and people die in medieval poverty. RHHJ has partnered with Uganda Bikers, a fantastic group of young and old



motorbike enthusiasts, who wants to help raise awareness for health. When they show up with roaring Harley Davidsons, the crowds gather and we can spread our messages. In addition we are using the radio and community meetings to let people know about what we do and how we can help.

The response has been extremely good – RHHJ is getting many more requests for our help – and indeed, those people need help. One example is 35 year old Edisa, who has AIDS and Tuberculosis. She has nine children – the last two also have HIV/AIDS – and they live in absolute poverty.

Friends of Reach Out is providing funds for RHHJ to help her with both clinical and social support, and together we shall get Edisa through - she is an important woman, so needed to ensure that her two sick children survive and the rest grow up at least with some love and care.

The other new initiative started in 2018 is screening for cervical cancer. In 2017, 41% of the 192 women with cancer in RHHJ had cervical cancer – most in very advanced stage. There is no cervical cancer screening available in the Busoga Region. Cervical cancer can be fully treated if detected early so Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja decided to offer screening for cervical cancer. Basically we just couldn't sit and wait for the women to come with their late stage cancers.



The programme is still at its early stages, but the results demand us to go on. The women are very interested in being tested, and among the first 120 women screened, more than 11% were positive and in need of further examination and treatment. As the women are poor, FORO and RHHJ will help cover the cost for the further treatment needed. Again, all these women are so important - in their own right and also as mothers with responsibility for many children.

These two initiatives—sensitization and screening for cervical cancer-- allow Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja to reach out to more people in need of our services. Before starting them, we were a bit apprehensive, as we of course shall need more funds to take care of the new clients. However, standing right here knowing that people are suffering and that we can help – we have no choice but to move forward and do whatever we can for these very sick people and their families. *We hope that you agree with us – and that you will contribute to FORO so we can help these people in need. Together we can make sure that many people will breathe more easily and look peacefully at the future.*

We will be very grateful for any contribution you may be able to make. Please send your gift to: Friends of Reach Out c/o Benedicte Vibe Christensen, 1701 Forest lane, McLean, VA 22101, USA, or pay online through our website <https://www.friendsofreachout.org/donate>

With all best wishes for a lovely summer,

Lisa Furmanski, MD, Chairman

Margrethe Juncker, MD (in Jinja)

and Benedicte Vibe Christensen, Treasurer