

Siaya – Programme Visit August 2011

Having spent a fantastic week with the ACE Africa team in Bungoma and having already met a number of ACE beneficiaries, it was off to Siaya for a week in this very rural region. It is staggering that 25% of the population within this region live with HIV and AIDS, and I had some very emotional experiences meeting those infected and affected by the disease.

The first day I spent visiting support groups which have embraced the Community Livelihood Initiative. The groups I met were at different stages of implementation, and it was very interesting to compare newly formed groups with those have been established for many years. Mary, opposite, was keen to show me her kitchen garden, poultry, dairy goats and rocket stove. The group support OVC, PLWHA as well as themselves.



At an ACE community resource centre I met an ACE gardener and he was proud to show me the demonstration garden, flourishing with a variety of nutritious vegetables to provide vital food to PLWHA and OVC. I also was shown the drip irrigation system, which is a simple but highly effective method of ensuring year round water supply to the demonstration garden.

Nyandhi Women's group, were an inspirational group of ladies who are successfully producing nutritious flour as an income generating activity and supply OVC and PLWA with the flour monthly. The group had a posho mill donated by ACE Africa in 2009. I saw the mill at work and the ladies churning out many kilos of flour!

Watching a CtC club in action was a real highlight of my programmes visit. It was great to see, children of a variety of ages discussing culturally relevant topics including HIV and AIDS. I was treated to a performance of poems and songs tackling issues such as child abandonment, drugs and AIDS. After the performance the club then provided me with a tour of their CtC kitchen garden and it was encouraging to hear that many of the children had taken these skills home and had established kitchen gardens at the household level.



Elizabeth, pictured here with her dad, was an incredible lady and the experience I had with her will last forever. Unfortunately she is living with HIV, having being diagnosed in 2006 and unable to walk due to the disease. The disease remains highly stigmatised in the area and the only person she has contact with is her elderly father. Eva, an ACE Africa Counsellor, visits Elizabeth regularly to check her progress and provide her with support. It was amazing to see how Eva could make Elizabeth laugh. As well as providing counselling, ACE Africa provides Elizabeth with nutritious flour regularly to ensure that she maintains a nutritious diet to fight opportunistic infections and remain healthy as long as possible.