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Life and hope for Kenyans living with HIV and AIDS

A Monthly Look into the Mission and Makings of...

# UpendoVillage

current topics >>>

## Drought Crisis in Kenya

The agriculture sector's influence on east Africa is prominent. Farming accounts for a quarter of output and employs nearly two-thirds of the population. Additionally, over a third of Kenya's electricity is generated from dams that are fed by rainfall. Drought leads to hunger, unemployment, electrical outages, and inflation. Inflation has increased consecutively since the beginning of this year, and is reported as 12.5% higher this April, in comparison to April 2010. Kenya has been experiencing a prolonged drought since January, and much of the country relies on relief food and rations from the government. Upendo Village has been experiencing the stresses that come from drought. See how you can help at [www.upendovillage.org/help](http://www.upendovillage.org/help)

## Our Appreciation

Dear Friends of Upendo Village,

Thank you so much for your continuous support! Upendo Village continues to experience, a great amount of change for the better, even as a result of traumatic tribulations. After the robbery in February (see page 2), many supporters came to the aid of the project and staff, offering donations and connections to additional help which allowed for quick recovery of operations. While emotions still run high as the staff heal day-to-day, they find solace in the ability to continue doing God's work, now with a little more peace of mind.

However, with improvements being made to safety and quality of services, operation expenses have increased. Upendo Village faces trials on many fronts to continue to match the growing need for services. The client base increased over 40% this past year. Upendo Village must grow with the need! We are working intently to fund several areas of need, including

operations and expansions that will improve care, safety, and allow for confidentiality for the Upendo Village staff and clients. So, please, take the time to read through this newsletter to see the impact that every dollar has made in changing lives, and continue to think of the difference that you can make. Consider honoring your parent or loved one with a donation in lieu of a gift by helping a mother or grandmother in Upendo Village to care for her family. Honor a new graduate by making a donation in his or her honor

**Upendo Village must grow to match the need!**

to signify the mark that they have the ability to make in the world. Cards are available to print on the website, along with other information that you can provide to the recipient if you choose to do so. Thank you for your support, please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers in this exciting time of growth. Peace and blessings from all the staff!

The compassionate hands of >>>

## Sister Florence Muia, founder and dreamer

*"I believe every single life is worth living. If we can help even one out of the two million, then I think for me that will be a great achievement"*



Sr. Florence Muia, born and bred in Machakos District, Eastern Kenya has been an Assumption Sister of Nairobi for 28 years, that ministers mainly to women and children affected by HIV/AIDS. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

As a visionary she dreamed of a safe haven for women and children affected by HIV/AIDS and

and Upendo is such a sanctuary. She devotes her energy, commitment and skills to the success of this ecumenical project, directing outreach, managing business and securing funding and resources in Kenya.

Sr. Florence is making her yearly trip to the United States speaking of her ministry and raising awareness of the current status of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. If you would like to meet her and hear her speak go to [www.upendovillage.org](http://www.upendovillage.org) to see her schedule and sign up for news and updates.



## See Sr. Florence Speak

**June 7—Wheaton Franciscan Sisters' Motherhouse "Evening with Sr. Florence"**  
Hosted by Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation  
6:30pm-9:00pm~ RSVP Required 630-909-6635~

**June 6— Third Annual Upendo Village Jewelry & Handcrafts Event**  
Hosted by The Rotary Club of Naperville & Meson Sabika  
5:30pm-7:30pm @ Meson Sabika, 1025 Aurora Ave., Naperville. RSVP suggested 630.983.3000 ext. 2

Rebuilding >>>

## Robbery and Recovery

*On February 22, 2011—Armed robbers broke in to Upendo Village grounds. The sisters awoke to find the men in their rooms demanding valuables. Property damage, material loss, and emotional shock resulted. This is the story of the terror the Sisters and staff experienced, the blessings that arose, and how they have coped since that night.*

When the robbers entered the grounds, they cut the barbed wire and alarmed perimeter, overcame the guard, and made their way to the sister's quarters demanding valuables in exchange for their lives. The sister's were quick to oblige, and the men were true to their word, not physically harming any of the sisters or the guard. However, the sister's sat in terror as they listened to the men ransacking their quarters, clinic and dispensary, waiting for their retreat.

After the robbery, total losses and expenses totaled \$37,669 in stolen personal items, property damage, security improvements in lieu of replacement, and heightened operating cost. Before complete information on the robbery was communicated, a fundraising initiative was launched to recuperate losses so services of clients could continue with minimal disruption. Brainstorming regarding how to best improve security followed; with input from Upendo

Village staff and friends of Upendo Village on both continents. Swift decision-making and actions made possible by generous donations quickly allowed improvement of the alarm system around the perimeter of the grounds. A trained guard dog and handler have been added to the staff. Significant increase of security measurers have been made within the sister's quarters, and the dispensary. Replacing the



wooden doors with those of metal, and adding improved security systems within these areas. While the recovery after the physical damage was underway, the sisters and staff still experienced emotional trauma. They decided to meet the emotions head on with a cleansing ceremony as recommended by Sr. Rose Marie Burian of the Wheaton Franciscans.

On the morning of March 21, the staff walked in a procession along the path the robbers took and prayed "Let us cleanse this area of the energy that doesn't contribute to the life and mission of Upendo Village" while incensing the area. Each area that the robbers effected served as a station of prayer, and read a portion of John:10 at each station. Afterwards, the staff felt at peace and started their day. The staff still prays for the perpetrators.

Read more about security improvements and cleansing ceremony at [www.upendovillage.org](http://www.upendovillage.org)



# Upendo Village Today

The Wheaton Franciscans and Sister Florence agreed that they needed to develop a sustainable program with a broad foundation of resources, and Upendo Village was created. Here is what it is today.

**CLINIC**—focuses on HIV/AIDS patients and their families, offering a variety of services; food and nutritional supplements, baby formula to prevent mother-to-child transmission, voluntary blood testing, counseling and provision of Anti-Retro Viral drugs. All this takes place in two small exam rooms where a physicians Assistant nurse and social workers give care and counseling.

**COMMUNITY CENTER**—support group meetings are held to educate the community about HIV/AIDS. Here they learn lessons on proper nutrition and ARV drugs for those with HIV, advocacy rights for women who are often denied rightful inheritance to land or property, community education of the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Because of this education, clients now seek voluntary counseling and testing. Workshops on income generating activities are also held here. Once clients are physically and psychologically strong, they must be prepared to build a future and become self-sufficient. They are taught how to raise goats or chickens, bee keeping, vegetable growing and selling, beading and related crafts, and shoe making.

**WATER WELL**—meals are served after every meeting, but the community center does not have running water. All hand washing and dishwashing must be done outside at the water well and de-fluoridation system that has been



provided by generous donors. This well is shared with the broader community residents to sustain their lives and businesses.

**STAFF HOUSE**—Four Assumption Sisters of Nairobi live here full time to dedicate their lives to serving Upendo Village. There is only one spare room. There is a total of 25 staff members volunteers, 4 of whom arrived at Upendo as clients in despair, as did 12 of the 15 volunteers. Now they live self-supporting lives and take time to give back to the community. Staff members work in cramped spaces without enough space for a computer, records, and meeting with clients, nor is there space to meet with social workers.



## Where your \$ goes

97% of funds donated go directly to help those served by Upendo Village. Upendo is a responsible, trusted organization, with highest integrity. Your gift is supporting Kenyans helping Kenyans and educating them further—helping to restore this beautiful nation, once called “The Jewel of East Africa”

## The Need to Expand

At this time Upendo Village must turn away clients, hampering the ability to help more people with HIV/AIDS. The facilities are overflowing with people in need of care, and the clinic and community center are cramped for space. Work areas are inefficient and unaccommodating. Meals are prepared in an open fire pit and dishes are washed in basins outside, compromising hygiene. Facilities your dollar can help us obtain are:

**KITCHEN & DINING AREA**—this area is desperately in need as all clients arrive hungry and are fed every day. There is no running water. This area would store bulk items including cold storage, a cooking area, and a communal area to eat.

**SOCIAL SERVICES CENTER**—office space as well as room for staff and clients to meet is important for confidentiality. This area would allow for proper storage of records and computer equipment, and will include a waiting area and private meeting room to meet with clients.

## final thoughts...

*FACT: With proper prenatal care, the vertical transmission rate of HIV/AIDS from mother to baby drops from 25.5% to 3.3%. With proper prenatal care, an infant born to an infected mother will have the chance to live a healthy life, free of HIV infection. Leaders of Upendo Village provide that care! Sign up to receive updates on how Upendo is changing the face of Kenya by visiting [www.upendovillage.org](http://www.upendovillage.org)*

### Children of Upendo Sponsorship Program (CUSP) >>>

CUSP currently has 103 children being sponsored through sponsors and donations; 87 children in primary school, 12 in high school, and 4 in college. This year, CUSP will celebrate the first college graduate, a young lady achieving her Bachelor’s degree in Information Systems from Jomo Kenyatta University! CUSP currently has a list of 34 needy children waiting for sponsorship which provides school fees, necessary medical care and food for their family for one year. Sponsors are provided with progress reports, letters and occasionally photos. CUSP also welcomes donations in any amount. 100% of all donations to CUSP go toward sponsorship. If you would like to know more, see the Upendo Village website at [www.upendovillage.org](http://www.upendovillage.org)

### More Ways to Give >>>

Upendo Village takes a holistic approach to promote building a thriving, sustainable lifestyle by providing nutrition, medical care, education, entrepreneurial training, and much more! Here are a few places you can direct your donation to:

**Buy a Goat or Chickens:** Goats and chickens provide nutrition with milk and eggs, and also monetary support through the sale of their products. Goats cost \$150 each, and chickens cost \$15 for a pair.



**Provide Clean Air:** Solar ovens replace the need for open flames in homes that pollute the air their families breathe and depletes the forests. One solar oven costs \$20

More information and options @ [www.upendovillage.org/help.html](http://www.upendovillage.org/help.html)

**Give a Miracle:** A 200 lb. bag of “Miracle” or Uni-Mix flour provides 3500 life-giving servings of food that is known to bring even the most ailing person to their feet in a matter of weeks even without medication! One bag costs \$141



coming soon >>>

## In The Next Issue

Fundraising Update

Funding Distribution Decisions

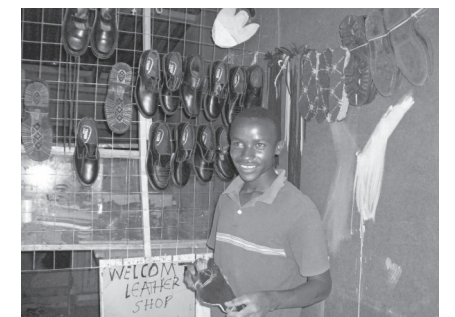
Community Involvement

Volunteer of the Month

A Life Changed

### A Life Changed >>>

Our goal is to create an environment that allows the clients that Upendo Village serves to not only learn how to live with dignity, but thrive in their world. Among many skills that the clients are taught to ensure sustainability of life is shoe making. Here is Zachary’s story.



Thanks to Upendo Village, Zachary is utilizing his skills as a shoe maker and is taking care of a simple home that was built by the Joliet Mission team, and is caring for his five siblings after both parents died of AIDS. Upendo Village offers many opportunities to learn a craft or skill to create artisans that can directly benefit from the sale of their work, including beadwork in jewelry, clothing, farming, cooking, and in Zachary’s case, shoe making.