



The Gweimen Centre Newsletter

A Self Sufficiency Center for Widows and Orphans of HIV/AIDS

Spring 2018

"Learn to do right. Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)

An Empty Pot



Last year we told you about a widow who had lost four of her children and who could not provide food for the two children she had left. She and her remaining children had many health problems, not the least of which was malnutrition. She was also struggling with depression. Her situation was very dire.

The staff of Gweimen continues to work with her, and she is doing much better! Praise God! She has been telling stories of her struggle to the other widows, relating how she used to put water on to boil in the afternoon, even though she had no food to put in the pot. Her children would fall asleep waiting for something to be added so they could have something to eat. Today they are getting enough to eat. She has insisted on calling the director of the programs at the Centre her mother. She feels loved and supported.

Because of treatment received at the hospital and through our clinic, many of their health problems have been addressed. She has hope for a future that includes food to add to her cooking pot.

Life Skills Unit



Florence, a young widow, has been coming to Gweimen for three years. She started training in the baking unit, graduating in 2016. At her graduation, she received a baking oven from Gweimen. She started her own business, and she is now supplying three villages with her bread. Every morning, Monday to Saturday, people line up to buy her bread, which they sometimes sell in their own villages. She also sells cakes for special occasions.

Her little business has made enough money that she purchased a new oven that can bake forty loaves of bread at a time, of various sizes, expanding her business so that she can support herself and her three sons. Her youngest son is now able to go to private school, and she is paying his school fees. She currently earns the equivalent of \$70 per week.

She loves to come to the women's support group and is becoming a leader among the other widows. She has also become a voice for Gweimen, recruiting other widows to come and learn skills, encouraging them to become self-sufficient. Currently four more widows are enrolled in Gweimen programs because of her example and influence. This is just one example of the kind of skills program available at the Gweimen Centre. Other women are learning to sew, and when they graduate, they receive a sewing machine. Others are learning to knit and work with knitting machines. Others are making purses out of plastic bags which they can sell. Sometimes guests are brought in who can teach particular skills. We have already graduated 38 women from these programs.

New Space / New Partner

The Gweimen Centre in Nigeria has had an ongoing construction project on the permanent site outside the village of Kwoi. It has been an expensive and laborious project with quite a few setbacks. As a result, the Gweimen Board in Nigeria has entered into a three year agreement with Kato International Training Academy to trade use of the sites (with an option to extend this). The Academy, which hosts sports camps and other educational programs, needed more open space outside of the village and Gweimen needed secure space closer to the activities and schools in town.



This collaboration is working well. KITA has completed the wall at the Gweimen site and installed a security gate. They have also completed the drilling of a new well, and they are employing four full time security staff. Attacks from Fulani herdsmen and increased security challenges have made this expense necessary, but these costs were not sustainable for Gweimen.

Thus, we have traded the Institute for a spacious place right in town which can accommodate our programs for less than \$2000 in financial outlay (for benches and white boards for the classrooms). The new space even has a play-ground structure!

As part of our collaboration, the director of KITA has donated ten laptops and other computers for use by our children. The Kaduna State Government will be sending a computer teacher to instruct the children at a very small cost to us (\$28 per month). This Youth Corps member will teach the children basic computer skills, English and Math after school, starting right after Easter. The classes will be open to staff and widows as well as the children.

We are praising God for these answers to prayer.

Prayer Requests

- ◆ Two of our cooks have been on sick leave. Please pray for their recovery.
- ◆ We are currently feeding 70 orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) at a cost of more than \$800 per month.
- ◆ Gweimen is in dire need of a new 18 passenger school bus. The estimated cost is \$41,000.
- ◆ Because the skills training unit is growing, the Centre needs six new sewing machines at the cost of about \$100 each,



News from the Executive Director

Dr. Beatrice Kadangs completed a year of sabbatical from Bingham University in January of 2018. For her sabbatical year, she has been working full time at Gweimen with tremendous results. As of March 1, 2018, Beatrice has been granted another one year leave of absence to continue her work at the Centre full time. We are really grateful for this news. Here is what Dr Kadangs wrote in November about working full time at Gweimen:

Because I have been involved full time at the centre while on Sabbatical from Bingham University, I have been able to work side by side with the Gweimen staff almost on a daily basis. Unless I am traveling to do fundraising or to acquire food and other necessities for the daily operation of Gweimen, I am there, sleeves rolled up, pitching in on the day to day.

This has helped us to sharpen our structural plan and set up an organizational chart for the staff. **Gweimen now employs 14 people.** There is an administrator on site daily who reports directly to me. We have weekly staff meetings to plan day to day and weekly events. Every morning at the centre, the staff begins the day with prayer.

Each unit of the organization reports monthly. The six units are feeding, health clinic, skills, storehouse, accountant and our vehicle maintenance. This system has really helped us to communicate better and to address any issues as they arise. I also spend quite a bit of my time traveling to raise funds.. I am probably on the road between 10-14 days a month. The goal of this travel is to raise awareness of the work of Gweimen and to encourage financial support or gifts in kind. I was also thrilled to be able to travel to the US to be in Wheaton for our annual fundraising auction in the US in October.

The widows continue to participate in training sessions in three main areas - sewing, knitting, and baking. Currently, every widow who registers will be trained in all three areas so that they can broaden their opportunities for income generation. The University of Kentucky has also agreed to send staff that will teach widows how to start, grow, sustain and multiply a small business.

With the guidance of Dr. Kadangs and our board chairman, Joshua Maikori, the Gweimen Centre is putting in a lot of effort to put together an efficient organization chart to make Gweimen more efficient.

Praise God With Us

We give God thanks for the results of our Matching Gift Drive! We collected a total of \$4,275 from donors, which was matched by anonymous donors for a total of \$8,550.

The Gweimen Centre, a 501©(3) Non-Profit Organization

Board Members:
Sherry Anderson
Greg Bendle
Kelsey David
Suzie Harrod (Secretary)
Rick Johnson
Mary Sytsma (President)
Rachel Vanderhill
Steve Van Zee (Treasurer)

Auction News/Save the Date

We are also grateful that last year's auction raised \$12,400. The date for this year's auction is October 12.

To Donate:

Give online at:

www.gweimencentre.org

or mail your check to:

Gweimen Centre
PO Box 1517
Wheaton IL 60187

If you have items to donate or you would like to be involved in some way, please contact Mary Sytsma at dmsyts@comcast.net.