



GWEIMEN CENTRE NEWSLETTER

A Self-Sufficiency Centre for Widows and Orphans of HIV/AIDS

Summer 2018



ABOVE: Rejoice, c. 2004



ABOVE: Rejoice today, with Dr. Kadangs

THE VALUE OF EDUCATING NIGERIAN GIRLS

By Rachel Vanderhill, PhD

One incredibly important aspect of the mission of the Gweimen Centre is its support for the education of Nigerian girls, especially those that are HIV positive. According to UNICEF, only 58 percent of Nigerian women (age 15-24) are literate. Educating girls has significant long-term positive benefits for women, their families, and the whole country. A recent World Bank study found that women who complete secondary education (equivalent to high school) earn twice as much as women with no or little education, a significant consequence for their economic well-being. Women who have access to secondary education wait to marry, which helps to eliminate child marriage. They will also have healthier children who will be more likely to go to school. In addition, the whole community benefits from educating girls. Economic studies have found that increasing female education levels has direct positive effects on a country's overall economic growth rate. Investing in female education is one of the best and most effective ways to improve health, education, and economic growth in a country.

Currently, Gweimen provides assistance, including lunch and school fees, for 248 girls. Gweimen assistance is especially important for girls with HIV as families will rarely pay for their schooling. The combination of medical help and support for school means that young Nigerian girls who previously would have died now graduate from secondary school. Please help Gweimen support these girls and expand its assistance to more Nigerian children!

The picture on the left is of Rejoice when she was first brought to the Centre by her grandmother in 2004. She was suffering from a severe skin disease and had many other health challenges due to her HIV status. No primary school would admit her then because she was said to be a witch - that she was responsible for her parents' deaths. We almost lost her, but, praise God, but today Rejoice is almost taller than Dr. Kadangs. Thank God for medical intervention, good nutrition and the tender loving care of the Gweimen family. She's growing into a beautiful young lady and overcoming her health challenges. By the special grace of God, she will graduate from high school next May. God is good!!

Thank You!

As a result of your generous support, the **Matching Gift Campaign** raised over **\$12,000**. Praise God. In order to increase the outreach of the Gweimen Centre in this country, we are always looking for people to add to our mailing list. Please let us know if there is someone you think would like to know more about this amazing work.

AN UPDATE:

Recently, Beatrice Kadangs, the executive director of the Gweimen Centre, sent news to the US Board that the Centre is running low on food. Schools are out for summer break, which increases the number of children coming to the centre for food. It's still two months until the new harvest and many of our widows have exhausted their storehouses of food. We have other families coming almost on a daily basis asking for help with food. Please keep the Gweimen Centre in your prayers as we struggle to meet these needs. Your generous gifts make this work possible



OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY

On June 1, the staff of the Gweimen Centre had a meeting with HIV positive widows/women from the surrounding community. One hundred and fifty-eight women attended. Part of the business of the day was to finalize the plans for small scale business loans to these women through a foundation that focuses on empowering women.

In another local village the staff met with more than 100 women to educate them about HIV/AIDS and offer simple medical services. Some of the other issues addressed included a discussion focused on the use of a toxin infecting local crops. The goal is to help widows and local subsistence farmers to improve their crop yields.

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

In order to expand our ability to reach out to the surrounding community, we need a new 18 passenger Ford van to transport children to and from school, to bring our staff to surrounding areas to conduct educational and medical workshops, and to bring widows/women from the community to the centre for training and activities. We will need between \$40,000 and \$50,000 to make this happen. We are currently doing research to figure out the best way to do this. If you want to help, please contact us.



Numbers...

Mary Sytsma, Board President

When I first started working with Gweimen, part of my motivation was my lack of understanding of numbers. I can't really comprehend statistics with too many zeroes. I can read that currently almost 2 million women and children are currently living with HIV in Nigeria, but I can't wrap my head around it.

But I can see and know the women and children of Gweimen. I can understand that the centre is having a huge impact on 723 orphans and vulnerable children. Almost 150 of this number have gone through the feeding program. We have 346 registered widows. Thirty-seven have graduated from our skills program.

There are many more that have not registered because they are afraid to be known and afraid to have their HIV status known. Some of them come for food in secret.

I also know that since Gweimen started, seven of our children have died. Seven. The staff loved them and knew their names. As a result of my visits to Kwoi, I knew some of them personally. Patience, Ayuba, Tara, Samson, Mu'azu, Martha, Keziah. I may not be able to imagine the millions being affected by HIV around the world, or even those in Africa, or in Nigeria, or in Kaduna State, but I know these. I can also be thankful and amazed that this number of the ones who died in our care is so low.

You may know them too. I have written about some of them in this newsletter. You may have seen their pictures. You may have helped to feed them. You may have helped to place someone in their lives to love them to the end. Thank you for that.

When you support the work of Gweimen, you are supporting real women and children. You are having an impact. You are changing the world – for them.

AUCTION NEWS

10.12.18

One of the ways we raise funds for Gweimen and increase the number of people who know about this work is through our annual auction. This year's event will be **Friday, October 12**, at Crossroads Community Church on Gary Avenue in Carol Stream. We need to get the word out, so more people come and learn about the Gweimen Centre. We can use your help in several ways:

- Donate an item to the auction (gift cards are always welcome)
- Come to the auction and bring a friend, maybe someone who doesn't know about the Gweimen Centre yet
- Volunteer to help at the auction (contact someone on the board for more information)
- Sponsor a basket of items (We will purchase or acquire the item if you help to defray the cost.)
- Pray. This is our only fundraiser of the year. It is also an important way to expand our mailing list. That's why we need to draw in new people to this event. There is urgency to the work Gweimen does, so we want to be able to help as many as possible.
- Join the Gweimen Board

www.gweimencentre.org | 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

BOARD MEMBERS : Sherry Anderson, Greg Bendle, Kathy Carwell, Kelsey David, Irene DeWolf, Suzie Harrod (Secretary), Rick Johnson, Mary Sytsma (President), Rachel Vander Hill, and Steve Van Zee (Treasurer)