



2019 Report on Psychosocial Support



Presented to FORO

BACKGROUND

Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja (RHHJ), a registered charity NGO, has provided home-based palliative care to patients with life threatening/life-limiting illnesses in the Busoga Region – one of the poorest regions of Uganda - since 2005. Presently, RHHJ cares for more than 700 clients of whom 42% have cancer, 41% have HIV/AIDS, 8% have both cancer and HIV/AIDS and 9% have other illnesses.

Friends of Reach Out (FORO) has been a wonderful support to Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja since 2016. FORO has been significant in the development of RHHJ, giving us the opportunity to expand our social support services, using a holistic mode of care.

Your support has also meant that RHHJ has been able to grow to the level where we can further develop and expand our services and reach more people in need of care.

RHHJ's set objectives were:

1. To reduce unnecessary suffering for patients and their families due to their limited resources while promoting their quality of life.
2. To increase literacy levels among the families of our patients.



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

RHHJ visits patients on a daily basis to attend to their physical pain and symptoms caused by their illnesses. However, alleviating the physical pain of our patients is not always enough to meet all of their needs. People who are very ill face more than just physical distress, they also face emotional, spiritual and economic distress, which is why we approach palliative care with a holistic approach. We aim to alleviate the pain our patients face in any and every way possible to ensure that they are able to live their last days in peace, and with dignity.

A lot of our patients are extremely poor, and by the time we reach them they have already exhausted most if not all of their meagre economic resources in trying to get medical treatment for their illnesses. Often, we find them sleeping in dilapidated, dirty houses with barely enough money to eat a meal a day, worried about their families and their children and the future they face without them. Their children often have to take on adult responsibility and are not able to even attend school – thus pushing them further into the cycle of poverty.

We try to attend to as many of our patients' needs as we possibly can. The support from FORO is instrumental in making sure this programme exists. Due to this support, we are able to provide monthly food baskets, shelter, bedding, a monthly comfort fund, school fee support and salaries for our extremely dedicated and hardworking social workers and one of our drivers.

COMFORT FUND

When a family is faced with a life-threatening illness, their economic resources are often shattered which means that they cannot afford to buy even the most basic necessities. For this reason, we provide 60 of our most economically disadvantaged patients a monthly sum of ten thousand shillings (less than US\$3) to try to help them. Many of the recipients of this comfort fund use the money for urgent needs, like charcoal for cooking, soap to wash and keep clean, paraffin to use in lamps for light in their homes, or food while others use this fund to help pay for medical appointments or transport to health facilities to refill their drugs or for medical reviews.

SCHOOL FEE SUPPORT

Thanks to the support of FORO, we were able to enroll 112 children in the School Fee Programme in 2019. In addition to this, we were able to provide each child with school shoes and school bags to help carry their school books and to keep them clean. The aim of this programme is to give opportunity to these children who have already faced some of the most difficult challenges a person can face in their short lives. Children who are enrolled in this programme either have a parent who is sick, or they are sick themselves. Often, they only have one parent and when they fall sick they are unable to provide for them anymore and these children have to stop going to school. We hope this programme will give children a chance to get a good education so that they have a chance at a brighter future. This programme also works to help our patients as they are able to live their last days, and die in peace, knowing that their children will be taken care of even if they are not around



SHELTER

FORO has also supported the construction and repairing of housing for our patients who live in truly dilapidated and uninhabitable conditions. This year, we have built 9 houses and repaired 4 patients' roofs. When patients are provided with a safe shelter, it drastically improves their comfort and safety while also keeping them from becoming more ill. They are covered during rainstorms and kept warm on cold nights and those who have wounds are able to keep them dry and clean with the shelter. Most of our patients are bedridden and spend all day inside, so having a nice, warm, comfortable house to live in is invaluable to helping them to live their last days in comfort.



MONTHLY FOOD BASKETS

Patients and their families, faced with a life-threatening illness – are drained of their resources and are unable to engage in productive income generating activities to provide for themselves. Often, this means that they go without enough food as well. Food is a basic necessity in any case, and for sick patients it is crucial for faster recovery and for adherence to medication. We give 80 patients monthly food baskets, which consist of rice, sugar, soap and beans on a monthly basis.



STAFF SALARIES

FORO has generously supported RHHJ staff for a while, allowing us to expand our social support department so that we can reach many more patients, and provide them with the love and care that they need. Our staff consist of some of the most dedicated, hardworking people there are, and we are so grateful that your support has allowed us to continue to develop in order to deliver the best possible care to our patients.

BETTY

Betty is one of our patients who has benefitted greatly from social support. The first time we met her, she was emaciated, scared and was trying to take care of her three children on her own in a broken down, dilapidated and dirty house. She was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS after she separated from her husband. She was initiated on ART medication to control her HIV, but she did not have enough food to take the medicine with so she could not keep them down. She had completely given up hope by the time we met her. The RHHJ clinical team immediately put her on adherence support, and we counselled her on the importance of taking her medication properly. Our social team also enrolled her in our Food Support Programme which was life changing for her. She was able to take her medication properly, and gain weight again. Just a few months later, Betty is doing so much better that it is hard to believe she is the same woman! Betty's biggest concern has been that her three children aren't in school, and she cannot afford to send them there. Our social team decided to enroll her children on our School Fee Programme, and also to build them a one-roomed house. Betty also benefits from our Comfort Fund Programme, as well as receiving a mattress and bedding. Seeing Betty improve in health and circumstances, the stigma she was facing from the community has left and she has friends again. She even met a new husband. Betty was able to conceive and carry her new baby healthily to term, who was born HIV negative thanks to the adherence and social support she has been receiving. All of this has been possible thanks to the support of FORO. Thank you for your continued support. We know that in the future, we can help so many people like Betty, together.

