



## September Update: HIV/Aids & Covid-19 Pandemic

As a non-profit organization working with grassroots youth groups, community women groups, and faith communities on gender justice and women empowerment programs, we continue to appreciate our partners and friends globally for standing with us as we navigate the many silent pandemics triggered by this Covid-19 crisis.

Through this Covid-19 pandemic, we see clearly other pandemics within the society, the magnitude of gender based violence as more women and girls experience domestic, sexual & gender based violence, huge number of teenage pregnancies, economic inequalities as more women struggles to bring food on the table for their families, the plight of vulnerable minorities including people living with HIV/Aids, and the impact of climate change on community livelihoods.

However, through your support, IFAGE has been in the fore-front supporting vulnerable groups to navigate through these pandemics. We are supporting survivors of sexual violence through empowering community lead actors and gatekeepers to effectively identify and respond to sexual violence, we have developed sexual violence case management referral forms and pathways that supports survivors through justice and legal system, and also helps trace perpetrators of such violence. We are involved in community mobilization strategies, creating safe spaces for youths/teenage boys and girls to dialogue about benefits of school and education, how to gain life skills during this pandemic, sexuality and teenage pregnancy education, and engage in conversation about root causes of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

Currently we have 17 active groups with about 30 people each within Bondo and Rarieda region. We meet weekly in different places and with different groups i.e. in churches, community youth forums, and in women led groups - to challenge status quo, change mindsets, give hope and healing, and provide food to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups impacted by Covid-19 pandemic.

We bring you a short **VIDEO** of **Yaw Pachi Support Group** with about 80 members/people living with HIV/Aids. Just before Covid-19 crisis, we/IFAGE provided this group with a tent for hire for their sustainability.



It is important to understand their plight in response to the pandemic, below are the key points they highlighted:

- People living with HIV/Aids have a slightly increased risk of dying from Covid-19 due to compromised immunity.
- They have underlying health conditions that put them to be at higher risk of Covid-19 pandemic
- Poor nutrition and loss of income/job due to Covid-19 is a major reason for most people who default ARV medication at this time.
- Curfews and restrictions on movement put by the government has limited the moral support and income generating activities the group have been doing interfering with their efforts and support system.
- People with CD4 cell counts below 50 or an opportunistic illness in the last six months may choose to take extra precautions to protect themselves from infection. But how will they protect themselves if they can't even get basic needs like food?

Covid-19 has huge impact on people who are already marginalized like people living with HIV/Aids. IFAGE is in the fore-front supporting such groups and please thanks for your support. You can also choose to donate to us to support our course to help communities in Africa navigate through Covid-19 pandemic

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**Thank you for your Support!**

*Sincerely,*

*Rev. Domnic Misolo*

*Executive Director*

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