

Rotary Family Health Day held on Saturday May 26, 2012 at Soroti Municipality and Arapai Sub County

Once a year, Rotary clubs all over the world work on selected activities to build better relationships and improve the status of communities they serve on those specific aspects. This year, Rotary Club-Soroti held its Family health day in conjunction with its Partners in Teso- AIDs Information Center (AIC), The Aids Support Organisation (TASO), Uganda Cares (UC), Soroti Development Association & NGOs Network (SODANN), and Teso Cooperative Union (TCU) among others.

Rotarians chose to offer free male circumcision, free HIV/AIDs counselling and testing, distribution of information on HIV/AIDs, the benefits of male circumcision, use of condoms to enhance family planning and provided a list of health institutions for referrals to different communities of Soroti Municipality, which comprise of Northern, Eastern and Western Divisions and those from Arapai Sub county.

Four (4) sites were established to serve all the communities highlighted above. The sites included; Nakatunya, Uganda College of Commerce (UCC), Kichinjaji Primary School, and Moruapesur Primary School.

SODANN was honored to take part in this exercise and was stationed at Moruapesur1 Primary School whereby it oversaw the whole process in this site including; mobilizing people and distributing; condoms to enhance family planning/ as a protection measure from HIV/AIDs, and information on HIV/AIDs.

Activities in Moruapesur Site

The exercise kicked off at 11:00 a.m with a slow turn up of people but the numbers kept on increasing and by 1:00p.m the two councilors from AIC were overwhelmed by the big numbers whose results were already out but were waiting for them to conduct a post counseling with them, one person at a time.

This compelled SODANN to get in touch with the Rotarians (Mr. Olupot Laurence) to add more counselors so as to manage the big numbers; of which he did. More two counselors from TASO were brought in to assist. This helped to ease the long lines.

IMoruapesur is one of the popular slums in Soroti Municipality in Eastern Division. It is situated behind Opiyai rock popularly known as Soroti rock. "Moruapesur" in Ateso means a mountain of girls. Ironically, a majority of them are old women who do not wish to be called old women. If you dared called them, you would attract all sorts of insults for they prefer to be called "Apesur" –girls. It is a metropolitan slum comprising of various tribes from Uganda, most of who work in town and retire in the evening in the popular slum of "girls". There are several activities that are carried out in Moruapesur including; stone quarrying, grinding of grain, brewing and selling of the local brew "Ajono" with so many bars close to one another playing blaring music among others. The ecstasy of socialization in this slum is tantalizing. One would not know when it is midnight or it is coming to dawn.

The whole exercise was successful and it ended at around 5:30p.m when the counselors ran short of the forms that are filled in during pre-counseling session before one can proceed to do the blood test. Because of this, a few people who came in beyond 5:30p.m missed to find out their HIV status but they were referred to go to either; AIC, UC, TASO or any other Clinic that carries out HIV/AIDs counseling and testing but the difference was that now this would be at a cost.

In total, there were 221 people who came to test so as to know their HIV status. Majority were youths, students, a few couples came in to test together, women, men and a few old men.

Questions that arose from the people

QN: Why is male circumcision carried out at this time when the rains are back and men have to cultivate their land?

QN: How long does it take for one to heal after he has been circumcised?

QN: Why are one's results (be it positive or negative) not also shown on the yellow card that he/ she is handed after the blood samples have been taken?

QN: Won't the lab technicians develop bias on some people and they end up giving them the results indicating that they are positive and yet they may be negative?

Rotary Family Health Day at Moruapesur site, Saturday May 26, 2012

The first photo shows couples who had come from as far as Morungatuny and in the company of their children and the next

photo shows couples from within Moruapesur being pre-counselled by counsellors from TASO

At the center is a staff from SODANN reading out the names of those whose results were out. After this, those who heard their names rushed to make lines so as to go for post counselling before they could be given their results.

Two Lab technicians from AIC, taking blood samples of a client so as to test for HIV/AIDS

Some of the women sit while others lie down as they wait for their HIV test results

The third and last stages (Post counselling and receiving of leaflets on HIV/AIDS, safe male circumcision and condoms)

A mixture of the, youths, men and women whose results were out make lines so as to go to the counsellors for post counselling before respective results are handed over to individuals. Interestingly, children even as young as 3 years old wanted their blood samples to be taken so that they can also know their HIV/AIDS status

SODANN staff at the distribution desk which was the last desk to be visited by the clients after they have; tested their blood, gone for post counselling and got results. On the desk were leaflets on HIV/AIDS, safe male circumcision and packs of

Condoms