



GWEIMEN CENTRE NEWSLETTER

A Self-Sufficiency Centre for
Widows and Orphans of HIV/AIDS
Spring 2019

Part of Gweimen's purpose is to treat and care for the widows and OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) that come to the Centre. This issue explains the many ways that Gweimen helps to empower and educate the people we serve, through vocational and widow empowerment programs, AIDs treatment and education, after-school education and nutrition support for the children, and the agriculture program.



An Update from the Executive Director

Having Beatrice on staff and, as she says, “on the ground” at the Centre every day has made a huge difference in the progress and improvement in the programs of the Gweimen Centre. The staff of 15 has regular meetings with clear assignments and expectations, divided into focused working groups: feeding, education, vocational training, medical services, awareness and community outreach, and after school programs.

Feeding and After-School Programs

Currently, the Centre feeds 70 children per day in Kwoi, and another 20 daily in a nearby village. While the Centre spends a lot of time on development projects, we still feed hungry children every day. In order for them to do well in school or so that families who have taken in orphans can handle the extra burden, we provide meals every day to children in need. This is also important for the health of those taking HIV/AIDS medications, which are often difficult for small bodies to handle, especially if the children are malnourished.

Children come after school to be fed but also to receive homework help or to play sports. We now have a reading program for the children, and we have received a donation of several books and a bookshelf. Gweimen also has a soccer team, which played a match for the King's 80th birthday party celebration. Two of our boys received scholarships to the Soccer Academy (located on our former Gweimen property), and one OVC received a scholarship to the college of health technology.

Agricultural Program

Not only can the staff raise food at the new site, like cucumbers, radishes, maize, okra, even rice, but we have set up an irrigation system so we can raise vegetables all year. We also have a flock of 50 chickens and a new chicken coop. Included in our little farm are two goats who both recently gave birth to twins. Praise God!

Awareness Education

More women are coming to be registered with Gweimen than ever before, and we can see an increase in confidence from those who come to the centre to be tested and join our programs without fear of stigmatization or discrimination. Many can see the benefits happening to those who belong to our programs, so they are willing to step forward and be tested. This is acceptance and welcome is what Gweimen means. Many are coming to join the Gweimen family.



The Christmas Party

Our Gweimen Centre Christmas party was a huge success. More than 500 guests attended, including many dignitaries, including the Queen who is our special patron. Each of the 132 widows registered with Gweimen received a gift of 5 yards of new material to be used for a wrapper or dress.

Vocational Empowerment

The vocational unit trained 60 widows and OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) in income generation skills like sewing and baking. As part of the vocational program, the widows have formed small groups by districts with 10 widows in each group. Each group elected a leader and submitted a business plan or proposal. Each group gets a separate bank account, with each member paying a small fee to join (the equivalent of about \$2.00). Each member who joins can eventually receive a loan of about \$200. After 6 months, each one is expected to pay the money back to the fund and the process can be repeated. So far this fund has disbursed \$2300 to 94 widows as loans for various business initiatives.

Health and Community Outreach

Our clinic continues to provide valuable services, both to our children and staff, but also to those who come for common health problems from the surrounding community. Recently, one of our HIV positive children was diagnosed with Hepatitis, which is contagious, and our nurse handled this case according to established protocols. We are happy to report that this child is doing well and has been cleared to join all activities again. The medical staff also visited three high schools and three nearby villages to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and assist with minor medical issues.

Transportation Needs

Gweimen urgently needs a new 15 passenger van so that the programs at the Centre can move forward. Our old bus cannot be repaired any more. After some research we are considering a bus like the one in the picture, which is available in Jos, to avoid shipping and duty costs, which could double the price. A bus like this will cost around \$30,000. Donors have already contributed half of this amount. **If you would like to contribute to the BUS FUND, please contact Mary Sytsma, President, or Steve Van Zee, Treasurer.**