

# MEDICAL RELIEF ALLIANCE

*Building Bridges, Strengthening Communities*

## Transmara's Naretoi Isampin Rehema Widows Group Prevails in 2009 MRA Goat

Spring 2009, MRA issued a request for proposals (RFP) for our Goat Project that annually provides four goats to six low-income households of people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Thanks to the collaboration MRA has forged in Kenya within the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Kenyans in the diaspora, US and international institutions, our RFP was oversubscribed by over 90%. It is in this context that Naretoi Isampin Rehema Widows Group (NIRWG) garnered highest points based on MRA selection criteria. Together, MRA and NIRWG are in the final stages of placing 'hybrid goats' with the six beneficiary households of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) that NIRWG represents.

Our revamped MRA Goat Project evolved from our ongoing five-year strategic planning process that began winter 2008. One of the items our strategic planning process has tackled thus far is redefining our programs' models while maintaining our mission and vision in light of the challenging economic times.



*Naretoi Isampin Rehema Widows Group in Transmara District, Kenya*

Subsequently, MRA Goat Project has been refined to enhance accountability and increase qualitative project outcomes while using less financial resources. The MRA Goat Project model currently, more than ever, emphasizes 'community ownership' from project inception to completion.

### **Enhancing MRA Goat Project's Accountability:**

Among the elements of the program that were reinforced in the 2009 Goat Project included how resources are distributed and accounted for. The RFP emerged as the most useful tool for screening and identifying not only the most 'needy', but also, most capable Kenyan CBOs. Capable in the sense that they have a history of working with people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and have demonstrated that they have a strong advocacy element necessary in mobilizing their electorate to influence the local political process especially as it

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affects their communities' economic and health dynamics.

The RFP's backend processes included scoring instruments that have been developed by MRA team over the years to ensure that the desired program goals are actually realized.

### **Increasing MRA Goat Project Outcomes:**

In the era of 'doing more with less', MRA team found it necessary to look for ways to make our extremely conservative budget even more frugal without compromising qualitative outcomes. MRA therefore established a tender process to increase competition among Kenyan goat breeders. This resulted in MRA identifying goat breeders with the highest quality goat herds at the best price.

MRA determined that the Toggenburg and Galla goat crossbreed had the ability to enhance milk production thereby boosting both the economic and nutritional needs of the Project's beneficiary PLWHA households.

The crossbreed of these two goats is known to produce high quality and quantity of milk when compared to other local goat breeds. This goat can produce upwards of 4 litres of milk daily as compared to the average production of less than 1litre per day from the indigenous Kenyan goat breeds. Meanwhile, an average low-income PLWHA household in Kenya consumes about 1-2 liters of milk daily meaning that from MRA Goat Project, most households will have a surplus of over 6 litres daily. Nutritionally, goat milk has a higher content of Vitamin B1, B6 and Niacin when compared to cow milk; it is also highly recommended for people who suffer from immuno-deficiency which is the case for all the MRA beneficiaries. Because of its nutritional benefits, the Toggenburg/Galla crossbreed milk is also highly sought and therefore sells very competitively. In fact, a litre of milk from the Toggenburg and Galla crossbreed goats can sell for up to KShs100 (\$1.50)! Therefore, the MRA team is anticipating that we will not only enhance the nutritional outlook of PLWHA households, but also significantly improve household annual income by over 40-60% in the first year of the project!

## *Building Bridges, Strengthening Communities*

MRA projects that each beneficiary household from the project will have the ability to increase their income by an additional 20% every subsequent year of the project as their goat herds grow.

Therefore, the average MRA Goat Project beneficiary will increase their annual income from US \$1,200 to US \$2,400 in the first year with the potential of increasing their income with an additional US \$240-480 annually thereafter. The average annual income of a Kenyan household is \$1,000 based on the latest data from Kenya Bureau of Statistics.

We are optimistic that projected nutritional and economic outcomes of the project will transform how we replicate this model across Kenya and eventually, Sub-Saharan Africa.



*Transmara District Chief Awards certificates to MRA Goat Project Beneficiaries for completing the Microenterprise Goat Breeding and HIV/AIDS Nutrition Management training as the Village Elders and MRA's field contact for the 2009 Goat Project, Ms. Anna Ntaiya (second from left) look on.*

### **Facilitating Community Ownership:**

Often times economic development initiatives negate the importance of first, identifying communities' 'felt need', and secondly, empowering communities to take ownership of their development projects. This occasionally leads to the economic development concept 'dependency syndrome', a phenomenon which MRA team has taken deliberate measures to inoculate ourselves against.

The 2009 revamped MRA Goat project emphasized the need for beneficiary involvement from project inception through to renewal, and replication stages of the project.

MRA in close collaboration with NIRWG, are organizing micro-enterprise trainings, as well as goat rearing and nutritional trainings which are aimed at realizing three main goal projections of the 2009 MRA Goat Project. The linchpins of success will be based on the ability of the beneficiary community's ability to eventually design, fundraise, implement and replicate similar goat projects throughout Transmara district. NIRWG will have undertaken the first project under close supervision of MRA and the subsequent projects will be based on the ability of this organization to mobilize local resources by collaborating with MRA.

Meanwhile, MRA is also aggressively fundraising to enable us launch an additional nine projects in Mombasa, Nairobi, Eldoret, Kisumu and Kisii districts in Kenya, all which scored highly in our RFP process. We remain optimistic that we'll be able to initiate at least 40% of the remaining projects by spring 2010.



*Transmara District Community Beneficiaries Pose with the Toggenburg/Galla Goat Crossbreed which is the first time this breed is being introduced to Transmara District of Kenya.*

Lastly, the MRA executive and leadership team would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Naretoi Isampin Rehema Widows Group for their success in the RFP process and the community development efforts that they have demonstrated to date. We would particularly like to acknowledge Ms. Anna Ntaiya, our field contact and an active member of NIRWG, for the leadership she has demonstrated to date.

## **Save the date!**

**November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009, 6pm**

**Volunteer Meeting @ 20 South Midland Avenue, Kearny NJ 07032 to discuss logistics for the upcoming MRA Walk-a-thon. Our goal is to fundraise for nine Goat Projects estimated to cost \$20,000.**

**For more information on our 2009 Fall/Winter events, please visit our website, facebook and twitter profiles.**

## MRA Embarks on Redevelopment, From the Inside Out

**It has been 7 years since MRA started operations as a US based 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization providing medical relief assistance, HIV testing and counseling and economic empowerment to redress HIV/AIDS pandemic in Kenya.** Our Medical Supplies and Equipment Relief program has continued to focus on rehabilitating hospitals in rural Kenya by providing medical supplies and technical assistance to improve health and quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, our Community Health Outreach program has contributed to redressing HIV/AIDS through our voluntary HIV testing and counseling campaigns, throughout Transmara district in Kenya. Last but not least, MRA Goat Project has been thrust into our signature program that is demonstrating promising successes through integrating political advocacy, health improvement and economic empowerment through goat husbandry and microenterprise projects for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

Despite the successes MRA has realized over the years, our leadership team has continually focused on ways in which MRA can provide sustainable high quality services to all our beneficiaries. Subsequently, in the winter of 2008, MRA founders met to discuss how to enhance our outcomes during this trying time of global economic stagnation. This discussion quickly evolved into an organizational development discourse that eventually centered on three broad items. Firstly, transforming MRA into an outcome driven, performance based organization that is able to demonstrate how each dollar contributed in the US or Kenya impacts a given socioeconomic outcome at the community level in Kenya. Secondly, developing a human capital framework that can herald MRA beyond the foundational outcomes we have realized to date. MRA founders were therefore interested in exploring how MRA can become an entity that not only effects change in Sub-Saharan Africa but a resource for upcoming and existent organizations to tap into as they contemplate redressing HIV/AIDS in Sub-Sahara Africa. All these ideas can only be concretized through amassing sufficient resources that can translate our strategic planning concepts into actual organizational and programmatic realities hence this became the third aspect of the planning process.

With the three cornerstones in mind, MRA founders have secured consulting services to operationalize a five-year strategic plan. The consultants and founders have established that the process will take up to a year to complete, however, crucial elements that can advance the above objectives, are being implemented as we move along with this process. To that end, MRA has redesigned and launched a new website capable of safely accepting online contributions from our funders and support network, In addition to the website, MRA has designed and launched a comprehensive volunteer program and finally, MRA has revamped two of our three program areas.

A lot of the progress we have made would not have been possible without the assistance of our talented volunteers who served as unpaid consultants. For instance, our website redevelopment was budgeted to cost at least \$5,000 were it not for Mike Munene, a Partner at Bluemune TCS (<http://www.bluemune.com>). Mike started the project until Nurbanu Asena of Parson's School of Design took over and ultimately established our current website.

The organizational development process that ordinarily costs over \$10,000 would have been and exercise in futility were it not for Mark Adiedo's volunteerism. Mark has invested upwards of 20 hours a week for the past year...and still counting, to guide us in the strategic planning and organizational development process.

We anticipate that full completion of MRA organizational reinforcement project will be concluded by summer 2010. In the meantime, we continuously need volunteers to assist with other aspects of this project as is described overleaf in our 'Getting Involved' section. MRA's unique organizational structure of being volunteer ran means that 95% of every dollar goes directly to the programs and services for people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya, and ultimately in Sub-Saharan Africa!

## MRA's History & Leadership

MRA was established seven years ago by three co-founders Sarah Walters, Nahashon Ogutu and Beatrice Adiedo, in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa. The organization's mission is simple; to improve the health and quality of life of people living in Sub-Saharan Africa. We do this through three main program areas:

- **Medical Supplies & Equipment Relief Program** that has delivered items of over \$300,000 to Kenyan clinics that are heavily impacted with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- **MRA Goat Project** our microenterprise program has assisted over 30 households of people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Almost 100 goats have been gifted to Kenyan rural households so far through this program. The ultimate objective of MRA's Goat Program is to fight the relentless effects of poverty and malnutrition among individuals and families afflicted with HIV/AIDS.
- **MRA Community Outreach Program** promotes HIV/AIDS prevention through public health awareness campaigns including voluntary HIV testing and counseling.

**MRA is volunteer ran meaning that 95 cents of every dollar donated goes directly to the services and programs that support people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya. We maintain an active board that provides oversight to the organization and a team of part time and one time volunteers who enable MRA meet its mission and vision.**

## Getting Involved

**MRA**

is constantly looking for people to volunteer their time and talent to enhance our mission. We believe that the greatest resource of our organization is our diversity in ideas...and muscle!

MRA is currently accepting applications for:

- **Web Designer** – Required to integrate flash technology to our existent website including undertaking periodic updates. Volunteer commitment is at least 3 months working virtually for 1-2 hours weekly.
- **Marketing and Public Relations** – Required to assist MRA effectively develop a marketing and PR campaign for the current programs. Volunteer commitment is at least 3 months working virtually for 2-4 hours weekly.
- **Special Events Organizer** – Required to assist MRA with Holiday and Other Appeal Campaigns. Volunteer will also assist in organizing walk-a-thons, ride-a-thons and concerts. Other areas of special events planning include facilitating events of round table discussion around economic development discourses in Africa by contacting colleges around NYC. Volunteer commitment is at least 3-6 months working with founders both virtually and in office settings for 8-12 hours weekly.
- **Africa Field Service Auditors** – Usually a capstone activity but other professionals including MDs, program evaluation experts etc, are encouraged to apply. We send out field auditors annually and they typically serve for 2-4 weeks in Kenya. We assist with accommodation and travel arrangements. Volunteers meet the expenses. Volunteer Commitment is at least 1-2 months working with founders on the program projections and outcomes at NYC, then touring the field operations to evaluate and document actual project outcomes. This is a fulltime commitment for at least 1 month.
- **Cinematographers and Documentary Enthusiasts** – Film/Documentary volunteers required to travel to Africa to document programs and beneficiaries. Captured moments will be streamed live where possible to MRA website and used for education and fundraising purposes. Volunteer commitment is at least 1month working in the field.
- **Microenterprise advisor** – Required to assist MRA expand MRA Goat Project nationally in Kenya and eventually throughout Sub-Sahara Africa. Volunteer commitment is at least 3 months working virtually for 2-4 hours weekly. With occasional meetings with Founders.
- **Fundraisers for Corporate, Faith Based, College & School Programs**- Required year round to assist MRA meet its organizational goals. Volunteers with prior experience are a plus; however, volunteers without prior experience but with a passion to participate in community development projects in Africa are encouraged to apply. Volunteer commitment is at least 3 months working virtually for 2-4 hours weekly. With occasional meetings with the Founders.

## Fundraising Junction

In 2009, MRA's projected 20% budget increase (\$10,000) was directly related to the growth of projects in Kenya. In the meantime, MRA like many other nonprofits in the current economic environment, experienced tremendous challenge in raising required funds to operate programs at optimum level.

Nonetheless, MRA backed by long term supporters and foundations including The Go-Fund, still embarked on enhancing the quality of services we deliver to Kenyans, and eventually, to other marginalized groups across Sub Saharan Africa.

This is therefore a tale of the unrelenting support MRA has received in a time where many philanthropic entities struggled to stay afloat.

In 2009, The Go Fund, under the leadership of its Executive Director, Ms. Sarah Walters, provided the anchorage MRA needed to survive these trying economic times. The Go-Fund single handedly enabled MRA retool our signature program, the MRA Goat Project. As a result of this unrelenting support, The Go-Fund afforded MRA an opportunity to bring an additional six households with a member infected with HIV/AIDS closer to health and economic stability. The six beneficiary households represent an estimated 40 men, women, and children. Each of the six households was gifted two high quality goats that are capable of each producing 4 liters of milk daily per goat. That is, each household can eventually have milk production of 8 liters per day of which 1-2litres would be used for sustenance and nutritional reasons and over 6 liters sold at a rate of Ksh.100/liter (\$1.50). Each household would eventually have an estimated annual income of \$1,200-2,400 an increase from \$600-800! With such outcomes, MRA projects many households will be able to climb out of poverty while contributing to their community development processes and most importantly improving their health.

**Thanks to the Go-Fund and our network of supporters, MRA is boldly projecting to launch an additional nine Goat Projects across Kenya by spring 2010! Such an initiative holds a promise of unlocking the potential for households of people living with HIV/AIDS and returning them back to the mainstream, economic, political and most importantly, health discourses in their communities.**