

"remember the negative matters more than the positive."

Thank God for social media apps such as Facebook, we are promptly reminded of our friend's birthdays. This is always useful especially for those friends who take the time and effort to send you best wishes. However, if you have not entered other special dates, such as your wedding an-

avail. Who does not remember how many years ago we were warned that cell phones can cause memory loss. Although medical research does not confirm this 100 per cent, I believe it may have a great effect on us. Otherwise, I do not see what else has happened to

what it takes to help grease our memory gears, that they may push us forward. At the end of this, I wish, like many others, to forget all that causes hurt and stress. That is when forgetting truly becomes a bliss.

PARENT

What it means to raise a child living with HIV/Aids

STRUGGLES. At 59, Stella Kabahweza has to ensure that her orphaned HIV positive grandchild has the right food and takes medicine in time. There are moments, she runs out of what to feed this child among other challenges, as **SCOVIA ATUHAIRE** explores.

Raising a child living with HIV/Aids needs commitment and care observes Stella Kabahweza, 59, one of the guardians of children living with HIV/Aids. Kabahweza says if you are not committed, you cannot raise such a child because it is not easy especially if you are not their parent.

Kabahweza who hails from Kitumba A, East division in Fort Portal Municipality says her eight-year-old granddaughter was born HIV positive and her parents died.

"It is really tough raising a child living with HIV especially when you have no food and you are poor," Kabahweza explains.

Her family can afford one meal a day and sometimes goes hungry which is not easy for a child living positively. Such a child needs to eat immunity-building foods but it is a nightmare for Kabahweza's granddaughter.

"I became paralysed 10 years ago after a bathroom fall. Henceforth, my work stopped too but I try my best to make sure that my sickly granddaughter has food. This is because if she takes her medication without eating, she gets dizzy," she says.

Frail

Kabahweza's grandchild has failed to go to school because of frequent bouts of sickness since she does not eat foods which boost her immunity and therefore her body is weak.

According to nutritionists, these children need to eat foods that boost their immunity. "Health workers recommended that we give her high protein foods such as fish, beans among others. It is hard for me to provide because I have no steady source of income and I'm also vulnerable," Kabahweza says. The family mostly eats sweet potatoes and cassava.

She says one should be able to afford required food. "When she has not eaten and

she takes her medication, she becomes dizzy and weak until I get her something to eat," she says. Kabahweza is a housewife.

She says coping is difficult since she cannot do anything by herself. "Because of my disability, I can neither dig nor weed, so my relatives send me a sack of food every week but it is not enough since I have a big family," she says.

Disclosure

She says she has never disclosed to her granddaughter's her status because she is young and fears stigma but she will disclose to her with time.

"We do not discriminate her because anybody can fall a victim. We eat, she plays with her siblings and friends and she enjoys her rights like other children," Kabahweza says. Discrimination could lead to depression.

Also, Kabahweza could not easily tell how her granddaughter was feeling until she mastered certain behavioural patterns. This gave her room to know when to administer treatment or rush her for further medical attention. She monitors her granddaughter's behaviour because sometimes she feels rejected and needs to be engaged all the time.

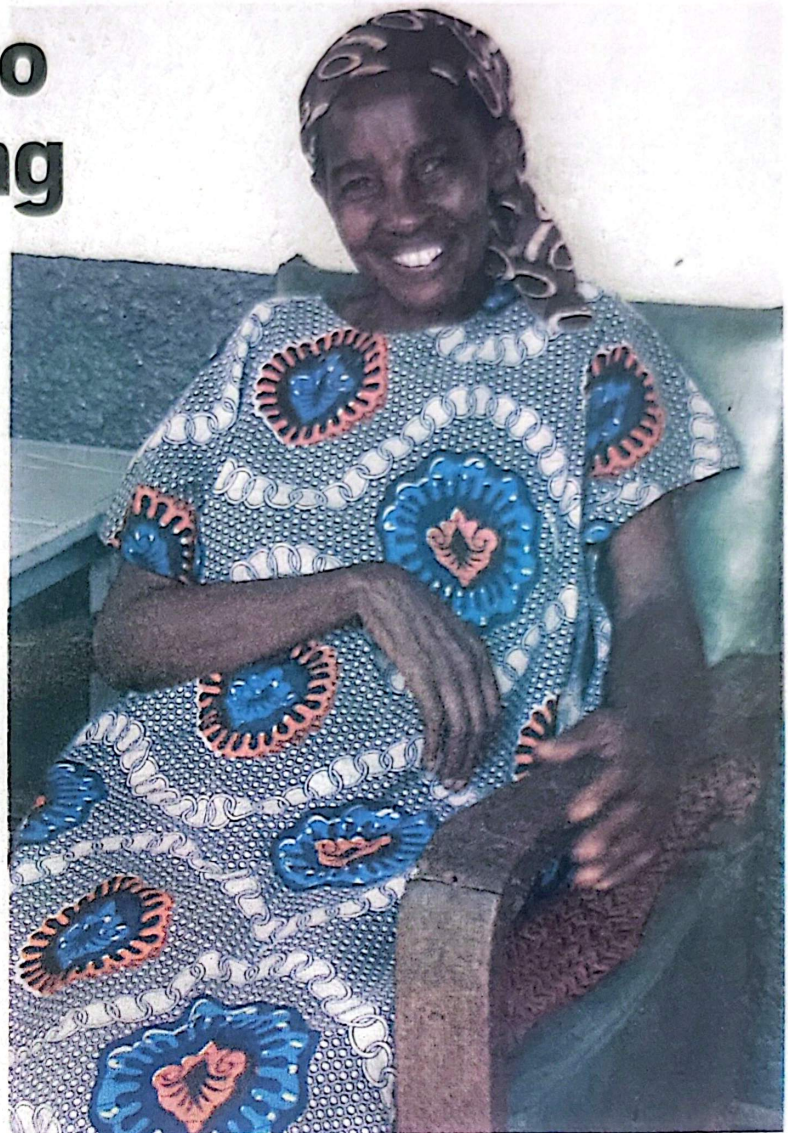
"In most cases, after taking her drugs, her eyes turn red and sometimes she isolates herself for about five hours and later becomes normal," she says.

Challenges

Because of poverty, Kabahweza struggles to ensure her child eats. She sometimes begs for food from her neighbour for her grandchild in case she has run out of supplies.

"I wish I had not been paralysed and had money, my granddaughter would also be going to school like others. When she goes to school, she cannot complete a term because she is sickly," says the 59-year-old.

Kabahweza says sometimes a child tells her that she is tired of taking drugs all the time and it is her duty to convince her so that she can come back to her senses.



Stella Kabahweza shares her challenges of taking care of her eight-year-old granddaughter who is HIV positive in Kitumba, Fort Portal. PHOTOS BY SCOVIA ATUHAIRE

Kabahweza told her granddaughter that she takes drugs to treat skin rashes.

However her health is good because she does not have required meals because her family cannot afford them. Kabahweza's granddaughter depends on sweet potatoes and cassava. Kabahweza says that her family members try their best not to share sharp objects with the young girl to avoid being infected.

"We also do regular blood tests especially her siblings whom she normally plays with," she says.

Being a caretaker, Kabahweza says, has changed her life because it has taught her commitment and care. "Being committed means doing something wholeheartedly. If I had not committed myself, my [grand] child would be dead. Although I do not have food and money, I do my best so that she takes her drugs in time," she says, adding, "we can miss a meal but she cannot miss medication."

They get drugs from Kataraka Health Centre III which is a nearby health centre and it is gazetted to offer ART clinics.