



## AS IT IS

# Free Wigs Put Smile on Faces of Kenyan Cancer Patients

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Mary Nafula learned she had cancer a year ago. She survived the cancer treatment, but her hair fell out. The hair loss made the mother of three feel unprotected and weak.

Nafula found help at a beauty **salon** in Nairobi. Women go to salons for haircuts and beauty treatments. But this business in Kenya's capital offers other products. It gave Nafula a wig to cover her head. The wig replaces the natural hair she lost during the treatment.

Nafula describes her new feelings of **confidence** in herself. "We can **embrace** all the **challenges** that **accompany** us, knowing that we are going to heal," she says.

The World Health Organization says cancer is the third-leading cause of death in Kenya. Cancer deaths are rising - from 37,000 reported cases in 2012 to almost 48,000 currently.

Doctor Gladwell Kiarie is a cancer specialist at The Nairobi Hospital. She says the rise in cancer deaths is probably a result of **lifestyle** changes and more testing for cancer.

"We are smoking more. We are taking alcohol more," Kiarie said. "Our traditional diets have changed, and we no longer eat the traditional food that we used to. We have more fatty foods. We have less water and greens in our foods, more processed food."

Kenya's government has launched information campaigns and opened more testing centers across the country. But most Kenyans do not have enough money for treatment.

Nafula said she was lucky enough to be able to pay for her cancer treatment. She says she is happy to have a wig and to be free from criticism on the streets and in the public transport vehicles called "matatus."

Nafula described being very sick and trying to ride in a matatu. She was told “You should not enter the matatu because cancer can infect us.” Nafula added, “I felt so bad.”

Diana Akech is the owner of the beauty salon where Nafula got her wig. Akech started doing beauty makeovers five years ago after a friend got cancer. The friend lost her hair, but Akech gave her a wig.

Akech said she put the story on social media and starting hearing from many people. “Let me say my friend gave me the willpower to keep doing this... She’s in **heaven** right now and I am sure she’s very **proud** of what I’m doing.”

The wigs cost around \$250 each and are paid for by hospitals and businesses.

Recovering from cancer can be long and painful. A wig can reduce the pain and show patients that they are not alone.

I’m John Russell.

*Ruud Elmendorp reported this story for VOANews.com. John Russell adapted his report for Learning English. George Grow was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**salon** – *n.* a business specializing in hair care, beauty products and services

**confidence** – *n.* belief in one’s self; a feeling that one will act in the right way

**embrace** – *v.* to accept (something or someone) readily

**challenge** – *n.* a major test or problem; an invitation to compete in an event

**accompany** – *v.* to go somewhere with (someone)

**lifestyle** – *n.* the normal way of life of an individual or group

**heaven** – *n.* a place in many religious traditions where God lives, and where good people go after they die

**proud** – *adj.* a feeling of deep satisfaction in one's own qualities or possessions

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