



Newsletter

African Centre for HIV/Aids Management – Volume 1, Number 2 2003

Behind the bars of HIV/Aids

CEMETERIES in South Africa are gradually taking in a young generation, said Channel 5 Eyewitness News anchor Harris Faulkner in one of her reports to American network KSTP. HIV/Aids is robbing South Africans of their hard-won freedom and killing them.

Together with photojournalist Jason Hanson, Faulkner accompanied a group of medical professionals and faith leaders through South Africa in October/November, focusing on the plight of people with HIV/Aids. The trip was the result of the hard work and bridge-building of Rev James Cassidy and Arm in Arm in Africa, a humanitarian outreach group based in Minnesota in the US.

The team visited areas ravaged by HIV/Aids, other diseases and poverty, such as Malungeni in the former Transkei and Guguletu, the site of the social responsibility project of the African Centre for HIV/Aids Management.

In Malungeni, children who don't die as a result of Aids, may soon be orphaned by parents who do. In a hospital in Guguletu there is the smell of urine and sweat, the windows are open, flies are everywhere and the risk of contracting dengue fever or TB is high.

Gravesites have become a common meeting place, said Cassidy at a large cemetery that is growing by the day.

"It's going to be like this for a long time from now," Rev Spiwo Xapile from the J.L. Zwane Presbyterian Church in Guguletu told the group. "Africa will never be the



Just like these children gaze at the photographer from behind a wooden fence, millions of South Africans need to be freed from behind the bars of HIV/Aids. (The children pictured here are not necessarily HIV positive or Aids orphans.)

same. We are losing people."

He added that he had a lot of respect for Minnesotans because "they have always stood with us in the most difficult times – and I would like to ask them to continue doing so."

The group of Minnesotans saw the worst of South Africa together. Back in their own country, they are now concentrating on what's next.

Their focus will be on the prevention of HIV transmission through massive education programmes, as well as the treatment of people who already have full-blown Aids.

"When there are ads on billboards concerning safe sex, they are so small one can hardly see them," said Archbishop Harry Flynn of the St Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese.

Channel 5 Eyewitness News anchor Harris Faulkner and photojournalist Jason Hanson from KSTP. Visit their website on <http://www.kstp.com>



"The world of Aids and the horror of Aids needs to be put before children in classes and young adults and all the rest in a more systematic way."

Education is key in freeing our people from behind the bars of HIV/Aids.

* Other Americans have also given their human and financial support, e.g. a group from Dallas who gave R90 000 to help the children from Guguletu.

Getting the masters going



Pretoria group



East London group



Stellenbosch group



Umtata group



Durban group



Midrand group

IN August and September this year Proff Jan du Toit and Johan Augustyn went on a roadshow to visit the students who are now busy with their masters degree (MPhil).

They presented classes in six central locations so that the students did not have to travel to Stellenbosch.

The classes stretched over two days – the first day concentrated on research methodology (which also forms a part of their course), and on the second day students presented their research proposals, after which the professors also offered individual assistance.

The students are working on some very challenging and interesting topics, such as “The contribution of the so-called sugar daddy phenomenon to HIV/Aids and sexually transmitted infections among secondary school girls”, “Corporate social investment towards Aids orphans in South Africa - current trends in the motor manufacturing sector and guidelines for corporate action”, “The effect of conducting workplace voluntary counselling and testing onsite on VCT uptake”, “Possible barriers preventing the use of nevirapine by HIV positive pregnant mothers”, “To determine the reason why people who are diagnosed HIV positive are keeping quiet as if nothing happened”, “Why are all the efforts not working - what went wrong in the prevention battle?”.

* There are currently 58 MPhil students, from the groups that completed their PDM in 2001 and 2002.



Prof Jan du Toit, director of the African Centre for HIV/Aids Management, and Prof Pierre André Kombila, Gabon's Director-general of Health in Libreville. Kombila visited Stellenbosch for discussions around a partnership agreement with the Centre.

Reality of HIV in SA

BASED on the national HIV and syphilis antenatal sero-prevalence survey of October last year, 26,5% of pregnant women were HIV positive in 2002 (2001: 24,8%).

In the Department of Health's survey report it was mentioned that South Africa's epidemic seems to be stabilising.

The fact that increases year on year are slower should be cause for satisfaction, said Stephen Kramer, Aids strategist for Metropolitan. Still, we're not seeing a drop in prevalence rates, simply because new infections remain alarmingly high and exceed the death rate of infected people.

The province that recorded the highest HIV prevalence is KwaZulu-Natal, with 36,5% (2001: 33,5%). The sharpest increase was in the Western Cape (from 8,6% in 2001 to 12,4%), and there were also increases in Gauteng (for the first time above 30%), Northwest, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo.

Women aged 25-29 continue to be the most affected (34,5% HIV positive), followed by women aged 30-34 (29,5%) and 20-24 (29,1%).

Based on the results of the 2002 antenatal survey, an estimated 5,3 million South Africans were HIV positive by the end of 2002 (2001: 4,74 million).

HIV/Aids continues to be one of the biggest challenges in South Africa today, alongside poverty, unemployment and other social ills, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang said in the survey report.

The challenges of preventing new infections and providing treatment and care remain, the Minister of Health said, and continued to say that while we see a stabilisation in prevalence rates, HIV and STIs remain causes for concern and demand more attention and intervention. These are not only challenges for the health sector, "but for society at large".

Partnering with the ILO

TOWARDS the end of the year, in Cameroon, the temperature averages 40 C and the humidity 100%. It's easy to think of better weather for a 3-day workshop. But in the Centre's partnership with the ILO that's exactly where Prof Jan du Toit and Johan Augustyn were off to. But then, Africa is a tough place and a job in HIV/Aids takes commitment!

From 24 to 26 November the Centre, in partnership with the International Labour Office from Geneva, presented a workshop in Douala on HIV/Aids and the world of work.

Before the professors could pack their bags, a lot of planning had to be done. The Centre received a visit from Franklyn Lisk, Director: ILO programme on HIV/Aids and the world of work. During his visit, Lisk also met with the vice-rector, Russel Botman.

All the planning resulted in a 3-day workshop packed with fresh and topical information. The first session explored how the ILO's constituents respond to the epidemic and allowed a sharing of information on subregional and national issues and activities, and increased understanding of opportunities. This was followed by a session aiming to increase the understanding

and confidence in using the ILO Code of Practice and the accompanying training manual, focusing on strategies and tools to mobilise and support the ILO's constituents. The third session aimed at helping delegates building capacity and developing as well as implementing HIV/Aids workplace policies and programmes. The workshop was concluded with a session that showed the delegates how to implement workplace HIV/Aids programmes in order to contribute to their national effort.

The workshop was attended by the leaders of labour departments, trade unions and employers of seven African countries – the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Cameroon.

It is significant that the workshop attracted senior representatives from different sectors, said Du Toit. The time is past that HIV/Aids can be seen as a health issue – the pandemic is a management issue that influences every sector of society.

Du Toit is excited about the potential future impact of this workshop, and the African Centre's continued partnership agreement with the ILO.



A big group of this year's PDM students, lecturers and support staff at the winter school, which was held in late June on the Stellenbosch campus. It was a lot of hard work, but also a lot of fun outside the lecture rooms.

Winter school a hub of activity

WHILE the lecture halls and school classrooms were empty and the shopping centres and movie theatres were packed, it was get-down-to-work time for our PDM students.

From 23 to 30 June this year's PDM group gathered at Stellenbosch University for the annual winter school. They came from all over South Africa, from neighbouring countries and even from Benin, China and the Ukraine.

During the winter school students get the opportunity to tap the knowledge of their lecturers face-to-face. The rest of the year they study via written lectures on the WebCT system. Workwise the winter school was no breeze. The students had to attend lectures, analyse case studies and do presentations as well as projects.

The activities weren't restricted to the lecture rooms – the group also got

the opportunity to meet role players in the HIV/Aids arena and to do site visits at various HIV/Aids related projects. One of the highlights was the Policy Project's classes regarding writing and implementing HIV/Aids policies.

A first for this year's winter school was a newsletter full of information about happenings around the PDM and at the African Centre for HIV/Aids Management. This was well received, and students were invited to send comments and contributions.

But the week wasn't all about work. On the first night the students, lecturers and other people contributing to the course were invited to a cheese-and-wine function. People got to know each other a little better, while enjoying good food and wine.

Two days later, after visiting an HIV/Aids centre, the students were

taken on a scenic tour around Cape Town. The next evening, the night before the concluding Friday, everyone was treated to a traditional South African braai (barbecue). A relaxing almost-end to a week packed with excitement on all levels.

Organising a week like this takes a lot of coordination and good old hard work. A truckload of gratitude therefore goes to the Stellenbosch team for taking up the challenge.

Thanks to Proff Jan du Toit and Johan Augustyn, as well as all the other contributors involved. And a special word of thanks goes to the support staff. Without people like Renice Williams, Anja Karsten, Bianca Farao, Karénsa Klopper and Ernest Samuels the smooth flow of events would not have been possible. Take a few deep breaths before next year!



AFRICAN CENTRE FOR HIV/AIDS MANAGEMENT

This newsletter was compiled by Amelia Burger. Please send any news items or events you want mentioned in a future newsletter or on the centre's website to Anja Karsten at aids@sun.ac.za.

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