



Solutions:

Giving African Children homes, hope and a future.

Newsletter
of the
African
AIDS
Foundation

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Welcome...

...to the May/June 2008 newsletter of the African AIDS Foundation.

We are an organisation committed to helping the victims of the AIDS crises in Africa.

In this issue:

- A word from the chairman.
- News from Tabitha Ministries
- Volunteer focus
- Fundraiser Music night in Camden
- News of Phumzile

A word from the AAF Chairman Dr John Schwarz:

Do we in Australia live in difficult times? The newspapers seem to scream that we do.

Interest rates, housing affordability, petrol prices, family breakdown, health issues, substance abuse and many other problems produce uncertainty in our lives.

People seek answers in all sorts of ways, and as a family doctor I see up close the pain and suffering that many endure. Having lived more years than I like to admit, and having a big family to worry about, I personally empathise with the kinds of problems that many face in society, so I have to remind myself regularly of the reality of our situations in a historical and geographical sense. My conclusion:

we are the most pampered generation in the history of the world.

Bygone kings and emperors lived barbaric lives compared to ours. Do you know why kings and queens of England used to move from castle to castle during the year? They did so to escape the stench that their unventilated and unsewered accommodation accumulated. Health care, about which many complain, has revolutionised life in the last 100 years.

Just think what we can be grateful for today: immunisation, sanitation, surgery and dentistry made painless with anaesthetics. Consider our increased life expectancy at birth

– it is now 83 for Australian women (a rise of nearly ten years since 1960). If we are hot, we have air-conditioning; if we're cold, we have the heater. When bored, we have television, DVDs, computers and so on, not to mention modern communications, travel ... the list goes on.

Let's look at where many of us live: recently 20,000 people worldwide voted on the best city in the world, and the winner was ... Sydney. We live at a time and in a place that confirm that we are the most fortunate people in history. I need to remind myself constantly of my good fortune and thank God for allowing me to be alive in 2008 and to be an Australian.

But, I believe that this privilege gives us a responsibility to use our good fortune with some generosity.

There are many who have been left behind through no fault of their own – many in Africa – and it is as if they lived in medieval times.

Many people in poor countries live with no earned income. The bottom 25 places of the UN quality of life index are regularly filled by African nations. It is typical in many African nations for the GDP per capita income to be less than \$200 per year – yes, just \$4 per week – with the vast majority of the population living on much less.

In contrast to Australia, Zimbabwean female life expectancy stands at only 34 years, while for males it is 37 years. Meanwhile, many African nations suffer a tragic, silent crisis,

an epidemic of family breakdown far worse than even that in our Australian experience. For example, more than 12 million orphans live in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is currently estimated that 9 per cent of all children have lost at least one parent to AIDS. Child-headed households are increasing every week, and some boys and girls have been bereaved at least three times, having lost mothers, aunts and grandmas as well as dads and grandpas.

Sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10% of the world's population, but is home to almost 64% of all HIV infections, with an estimated 21.6 millions to 27.4 million people living with HIV infection. In 2005 an estimated 2.3 to 3.1 million people in the region became newly infected and up to 2.3 million adults and children died of AIDS related illnesses.

It is unthinkable that in a time of easy communication and travel we would not acknowledge our responsibility to people dying, being orphaned and suffering from easily remedied conditions.

This is why AAF exists and we ask you to continue to help us make a difference. Will you do so? Thank you very much.

Dr John Schwarz

In memorium

Gladys Swindale

1915- 2008

Gladys was an inspirational and passionate lady - who had lived in Camden since 1949.



She saw things very clearly and saw that the people in Africa had enormous needs.

Gladys lived life to the full and when she decided to help she really helped. Cooking, often a wonderful supply of beautiful cupcakes, jams and pickles for sale in the surgery, sewing, knitting, crocheting and most of all praying for the little ones in need in Africa. She was also a forceful advocate for the underprivileged. She was a great encouragement to us and really made a big difference to us and really made a big difference in many lives.

When she passed away she was a great loss to her family and a great loss to the orphans in Southern Africa

Thank God for Gladys.

The AAF Mission:

To assist organisations, programmes, and projects through financial, in-kind, and volunteer support, as they seek to:

- Alleviate suffering for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS
- Reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS
- Strengthen families impacted by HIV/AIDS and
- Rebuild communities affected by HIV/AIDS.

The hard facts:

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News from Philakahle and Tabitha

Peter and Yvonne Gillespie are a recently retired couple who recently travelled to South Africa to visit family. While there they visited Philakahle and Tabitha – 2 groups that AAF support.

They sent us a very positive report:

"While visiting Philakahle a highlight of the visit was having the privilege of joining a Christian team doing a food drop to families of children without parents. It was humbling to see love in a action, providing food, clothing and school fees for these families of 3 – 5 children, ranging in age from 4-14 years without any parents or adult support."



"We visited Tabitha of Pietermaritzburg. What an amazing place and what dedicated staff. Gail Trollip is an exceptional Christian lady who has devoted herself to caring for children under 5 years who have no other means of survival. The orphanage is supported and run by volunteers 24 hours a day. Tabitha also runs it's own school. But the work does not stop there. They also run a programme supplying "Mobile Mums" to over 600 parentless families in the local Sweetwaters settlement.



It is encouraging to see the response of people to the work that we have been supporting.

Volunteer Focus: Jenny (pictured below, at Tabitha)

Jenny is a registered nurse who has worked in Australian hospitals, with great skill and determination. Prior to her nursing course she had spent some time in India with Mother Theresa's mission.

One of the things AAF does is to encourage suitable people to go to Africa to share their love and expertise. The people that go are inevitably blessed and they help suffering individuals that otherwise would often miss out on care. They also are able to be a window that we can look through to see the situation that others live.



Jenny writes to us about a child she cares for:

I hold Sammy on my chest. I pick her up I feel her little bones crackle. I can feel every lump of her spine. Her fluffy hair brushes on my chin. She sits in a pram. A child's pram, but she does not fill it. The toys she holds engulf her tiny, thin body. She looks at me quickly, with big brown eyes, and then looks away just as quickly. When I come near I put my hands out to pick her up and she lifts one tiny hand. The effort for two hands is too much. She arches her back as I put my hands under her arms and around her back. I lift her and lay her on my chest and she sighs as if the effort of the movements took her breath away. She is thin. So thin. I pat her back and can feel every tiny little rib. I pat softly. I breathe softly. I don't want to disturb this world. I smell something. It's an odd smell. It's the smell of decay. I can feel something on my chest. It's her heart. It's strong and fast. I can feel it on my chest. Maybe it's hard for her to lie on her tummy. She does not say. The words are more energy than she has. Her little hand reaches upward and she takes my necklace in her hand and plays with it. I am a soft pillow. I wonder about Sammy in my home surroundings. I wonder how I would react.

She is thin.

So thin.

It's too hard.

She is just a child.

I dare not look too much. I dare not get close. There are others for that.

It's too hard. She is just a child. Her feet are soft in my hands. I run my fingers along the sole of her foot. So soft. So little. I gently put her back in the pram. She looks for her carer then glances at me very quickly, before looking away. She is orphaned. She has no bloodline. She received a terrible gift from her mama. A sickness that eats her away. Somehow she breathes. Somehow she awakes tomorrow. She fights. She is strong. Inside.

Sammy is two years old and weighs 5.35kg. She does not talk, she does not walk, she occasionally smiles and occasionally you will hear a small, very small, chuckle. She is HIV positive and her CD4 count is so low she should not be alive. She is one child I have not yet bonded with. Not on purpose, maybe subconsciously, who knows? She is the stark reality of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. She will go on Antiretroviral therapy soon and she will either thrive or she won't cope with it at all, but this will give her a fighting chance.

She is the stark reality of HIV and AIDS.

Pray for Sammy. Luv Jen

Jenny writes about a visit to 23 year old Mona.

We drive up a path that could be mistaken for a paddock. Six mud huts all lined up in a row come into focus. As we drive closer we see Mona lying on a small mattress outside the doorway to one of the huts. We approach Mona and greet her. Shaking her hand, I feel funny when I say "Kanjani. How are you?" Obviously she is not doing so well. She lies uncomfortably. I can see her hip bone protruding. Her eyes are sunken. Her hair is stiff and dirty. Her appetite is gone. She is severely dehydrated. She has trouble speaking because the thrush that invades her mouth and throat. I ask the carer if they have rehydration and she looks in the medicine bag and finds two sachets. I say that even if she can have a little sip every five minutes she will get a little bit of energy and rehydrate. I say this to Mona's mum and dad and her sister who all look after her. Mona's sister goes to fill a bottle with water. The carer says that they have to boil the water because they get it from a stream. I then ask the carer if they have a fridge they can keep the rehydration fluid in. The carer quickly responds that there is no electricity here. This is something I hadn't considered.

A while later Mona's sister returns with a jug of boiling water and a glass bottle. The carer talks to her and finds out that she had to go find the firewood to make the fire, to boil the water to make the rehydration. Something so simple in my world was a half an hour process in this community. A drink of water is a process for anyone, let alone caring for someone who has incessant diarrhea who can't get any sustenance.

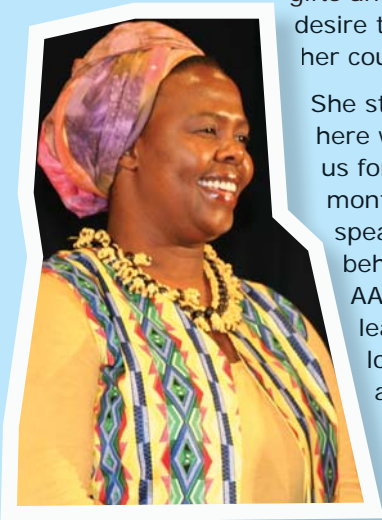
Put yourself in Mona's shoes. Reliant on her sister and her parents for everything. Imagine being 23 years old with HIV.

Imagine being 23 years old with HIV.

News of Phumzile

written by Dr John Schwarz

Many of our readers will have met Phum (pictured left). She is a young Zulu woman who has enormous gifts and a deep desire to help her country.



She stayed here with us for six months, speaking on behalf of AAF and learning a lot about all sorts of things that were

very different to what she had experienced growing up in a rural setting in Africa.

We learnt much from her and we share a conviction that what Africa needs most is educated, dedicated, ethical leadership.

Phumzile has shown us that she is an ideal candidate to fulfil this role and she has now returned to South Africa with the zealous intention of achieving great things for her country.

She has enrolled in a degree course in Cape Town and will study theology and development. We know much about the college and are confident that it is an ideal setting for her to develop and expand her natural gifts. Phumzile has already started the course but will require ongoing help with fees, text books,

accommodation, food etc. Her family are unable to help her and the very high unemployment rate makes getting student type work very difficult.

We are determined to help her and now ask for contributions for her ongoing education as we are very certain that this will make a very positive contribution to the country.

Rosalie and I have worked with her in the rural area from which she comes and also know her very well from her time here and are excited about this opportunity. She will continue to assist us when we visit South Africa. If people were sufficiently generous the giving exceeded Phumzile's needs, we would use the extra fund in other education projects, of which there are many.

Please give generously.

Wonderful concert in Camden Civic Centre

Sharon Pascoe-Thomas and Geoff Hoskin with the help of others organised a wonderful fundraising concert at the Camden Civic Centre on the 2nd February.

More than 500 people were entertained by a superb musician, Danny Elliot – winner of the 2007 Mo Award for Entertainer of the year. Danny played 8 different instruments ranging from bagpipes to grand piano and sang beautifully to rapturous applause. A number of local musicians gave wonderful support.

Phumzile spoke movingly of the problem in Africa and her desire to educate girls and women in South Africa to effect change and turn the devastating effects of the epidemic.

Our Auction was conducted expertly by John Walsh and the whole evening raised over \$15,000 which will make a wonderful difference to lives of suffering people in Africa.

We are greatly indebted to the Camden community for their encouragement and support.



Danny Elliot



John Walsh presenting



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www.africanaidsfoundation.org.au

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- Having a meeting in a club, school, church, home
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