

Ministering to HIV/AIDS Victims



An AIDS victim from the village of Macambeni. She died three weeks after this picture was taken.

By Michael and Darlene Goodling

A new deadly virus known as HIV/AIDS surfaced in 1981.

Since then, more than 30 million people have died. No single region on earth has been spared.

CURRENT STATISTICS

In the United States, more than one million people are infected. More than 20 percent do not even know they have this virus.

The disease continues to ravage Africa. It is expected to do the same in India, Russia and China. Last year alone, 1.8 million people vanished from the face of the planet. This year, HIV/AIDS will kill more. All around the world, more than 34 million people are infected. Some 2.7 million people are infected every year. About 7,000 people will become infected today.

There is no cure in sight for this deadly virus. It destroys our communities. It destroys our families. It has left 15 million orphans to fend for themselves ... 15 million children who are currently without hope.

One hundred eighty thousand of them live in Swaziland. More than 25 percent of the population of Swaziland is infected. How many more do not even know they have it?

This is one of the greatest humanitarian crises in the world. Today, around the world, thousands of people will die. Numbers are important to God. He even wrote a book about them called the Book of Numbers. Each number is a real person.

WHAT ABOUT THE INNOCENT ONES?

It is a known fact that most HIV infections occur due to inappropriate behavior, either sexual or by injecting drugs with shared needles. It's also easy to make a judgment about HIV/AIDS based purely on this information.

However, we want you to take a moment and consider the innocent ones ... those babies who are infected during the birthing process or through drinking breast milk. The little boy pictured to the right has HIV. He is an orphan and is just eight years old. He is fortunate enough to be in a child care center where he receives regular meals and antiretroviral (ARV) medicines to increase his quality of life. Still, there is no cure in sight.



We see HIV victims in all ages from two years old and up. They never did anything to bring this deadly affliction upon themselves and yet they are among us needing our love, touch, warmth and care. With your help we are reaching them. With your help they will survive longer with a chance to enjoy life.

A VILLAGE IN GREAT NEED...

The first time we walked into the village of Macambeni, a village of 250, our hearts were stirred. We met with the elders and were given unlimited access. We discovered 60 percent of the village openly admitted to HIV infection. They were hungry and dying, many were trying to survive on a \$1 per day stipend from the government.

We had to act fast!

Our team went in and provided a hot meal for every resident of the village and built a “kitchen” structure to enable the women to cook with an open fire even when it rains. Everything we do is through the connection of local AG pastor, Karen Mandy. After meeting with her in more detail, we now have food deliveries three times per week for 120 people from two years and older.

With regular meals, we have found the death rate has stabilized. By eating better, those with HIV can take their medications without becoming sicker. We are seeking long-term solutions to teach the villagers how to raise their own food and sustain themselves, but for now, we must do everything we can to save lives.

Michael and Darlene Goodling are AGWM missionaries to Swaziland, South Africa.

For more information go to the Global AIDS Partnership website: www.globalaidspartnership.org

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