



CARe's  
Fields of  
Service:

- Psycho-Social  
Counselling
- Home Based  
Care
- Poverty  
Alleviation
- Defaulter  
Tracing
- Training &  
Capacity  
Building
- Nutrition
- Youth  
Education  
Programmes

Inside this  
issue:

- World AIDS Day 2009 2
- Youth's Perspective 2
- New Faces at CARE 2
- Caroline's Journey 3
- Counsellor Mentoring 3
- Gift from Helen Suzman 3
- Inner-City Teen Outreach 4

# CARe in Action

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## Saving Lives in Alexandra

The late 1980's saw the development of the first antiretroviral (ARV) medications used to combat the AIDS virus. In the twenty years that have passed, numerous pharmaceutical companies and medical research teams have sought to devise a cure, or at the very least a vaccine for HIV and AIDS, largely without success. The advent of new ARV drugs however, has enabled patients living with the virus to extend their lives by not just years, but often by decades.

In the course of the past year, Community AIDS Response has developed an innovative approach to caring for HIV positive clients who have defaulted on their ARV treatment in Johannesburg hospitals. Given a monthly list of names of those who have not collected their medication for three months or more, CARe's fieldworkers attempt to locate the clients and then supportively counsel them towards resuming their lifesaving treatment and care. The Patient Follow-up programme has proven to be so successful at its pilot site, the Themba Lethu Clinic at Helen Joseph Hospital, that our USAID funding partner, Right to Care, has approved programme adaptation and expansion to other clinics served by CARe. Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic (AHCUC) is one of the most recent sites to have CARe fieldworkers assigned for patient

tracing. With a backlog of over 1,200 patients who have defaulted on their ARV treatment from AHCUC, the potential exists for fieldworkers to assist in saving hundreds of lives.



Locating ARV defaulters in Alexandra, a Johannesburg township with an estimated population of over 600,000 people, has proven to be a daunting challenge, but one that we have embraced. Much of Alexandra consists of plots which have been subdivided by its residents to accommodate upwards of 40 people living on the property of a single address. This has made the tracing of single individuals exceedingly difficult. The fact that fieldworkers have maintained a tracing success rate of 80% is a tribute to their dedication and persistence. Fieldworkers often return to the same property as many as three times in an effort to locate a

single individual.

Reasons for defaulting on ARV treatment vary, but often include similar factors. Adverse side effects are common in the first few months after initiating treatment, and though they usually pass, some patients discontinue medication under the impression that it has worsened their HIV symptoms. Additionally, ARV regimens require commitment from the patient; a careful schedule of medication and clinic visits for viral load assessments and CD4 counts. The cost of transportation to and from the hospital, along with the days of missed work for appointments can also discourage patients from continuing ongoing treatment. This is where the essential role of CARe's fieldworkers comes into play. By making clear the risks of defaulting - ultimately death if left untreated - patients are provided with the information and support necessary to successfully return to treatment.

The levels of success in tracing those patients who have defaulted on ARV treatment at Helen Joseph Hospital and AHCUC has led to exciting new programming initiatives in additional areas of Gauteng and potential expansion to additional provinces. We look forward to updating you on CARe's most recent commitment to trace those who fail to initiate prescribed ARV treatment at Leratong Hospital as well.

## A Note From the Executive Director

As 2009 comes to a close, South Africans are looking towards 2010 with collective anticipation. Our country will be in the international spotlight and under the microscope as the world tunes in for the World Cup. But 2010 holds even greater promise for those of us involved in the lives of people affected by HIV and AIDS. In the last months of this year, we have seen news of promis-

ing HIV prevention trials, heard reports of infection rates stabilizing in some countries (though often, as in South Africa, these are still at exceptionally high levels), and seen glimpses of hope that efforts towards prevention and awareness are starting to take hold. These exciting indicators cannot be used as excuses for rest however. The lives and health of thousands are being com-

promised every day and there isn't a moment to spare. We thank you for your support in 2009 and look forward to your continued partnership in the coming year as we, together with you, exert our efforts towards rolling back the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

**Keith Muloongo,**  
Executive Director

## World AIDS Day 2009



First established in 1988, December 1, 2009 marked the 21<sup>st</sup> recognised International World AIDS Day. On that day, countries and organisations around the globe called specific attention to the virus that claims 2,000,000 lives every year. South Africa, a nation at the epicentre of the crisis, has over 17% of the world's HIV infections with a resulting death rate just as high.

The national theme chosen for World AIDS Day 2009 was "I am Responsible... We are Responsible... South Africa is taking responsibility." The Department of Health and South African National AIDS Council selected this banner

to highlight the new era of government leadership in the HIV and AIDS sector that focuses on responsibility, accountability and action. Responsibility begins on a personal level, knowing your HIV status and becoming proactive about personal health, and extends to families and entire communities having open and honest conversations about HIV and AIDS.

In recognition of World AIDS Day, on Saturday 5 December, CARE hosted a community VCT event at the Thabo Mbeki Informal Settlement. The event was family friendly, with activities available to keep children engaged while their parents and caregivers participated

in health talks aimed at encouraging them to be tested for HIV. Close to 600 community members participated in the event, and many courageously decided to get tested and learn their HIV status.

Community AIDS Response is establishing an ever-increasing presence in the Thabo Mbeki settlement through our programme planning for the hundreds of orphans and vulnerable children and their families who live there. It is our hope that open and honest conversations will be held among members of this impoverished community and break away the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS.

"They teach you about things that affect your body like STIs, HIV and ARVs..."

## "The Story of My First Day at the Community Care Centre"

The first day that I went to the Community Care Centre, I was very scared. My friends Glen and Sibongile told me that the Centre was good and that they teach you many things about your life. They also teach you about things that affect your body like STIs, HIV and ARVs. I have learned many things about how people get HIV, and I tell my friends, "Don't be fast to have unprotected sex with a girl because some of the girls could be HIV positive and give it to you." I have also learned that

when people use drugs and share needles, it can put them at risk for getting HIV. I am thankful for the counsellors at the Community Care Centre who have taught me these things.

By: Sinalo Simayi, Grade 8 (name used with permission)

(CARE operates the Community Care Centre in Hillbrow in partnership with the Wits University Reproductive Health and HIV

Research Unit and a number of additional NGOs and community based organisations. Each week, CARE hosts two support groups for youth aimed at HIV prevention and the development of life skills.)



Lorraine Gumedede (L) and Kefilwe Dithlake (R)

## New Faces at CARE

Over the course of the last month, CARE has welcome two new members to its management team. Kefilwe Dithlake has taken on the role of Community Development Manager. She will now guide the Community Adherence Support Programme, the CARE Youth Service Programme and the Youth Advocacy Project. Prior to joining Community AIDS Response, Kefilwe was a social worker in gov-

ernmental and NGO settings and lectured at the University of Witwatersrand. "I have known about CARE since my days as a hospital social worker, and am so glad to be able to play a role in this important work."

Another new face has been Lorraine Gumedede, now CARE's Training Manager. With experience in Training and Development, Lorraine brings a wealth of

experience to the table. She is thrilled to be able to join her passion for assisting people in developing their skills with her commitment to social service.

The team at Community AIDS Response invites you to join us in welcoming Kefilwe and Lorraine! We look forward to the new programme innovations that will arise from their expertise and dynamic leadership!

# Caroline's Journey



It was 1999 when Caroline noticed that her baby boy was losing weight and becoming frail. "When he died he was one year and

11 months. I wondered if he could have had AIDS, so I went and got myself tested. When the test came back positive, I realized that my baby had saved my life. I was so sad, but without him, I never would have known that I

was HIV positive and I would have died too."

The first person that Caroline chose to disclose her HIV status to was her younger sister, who is also living with HIV. Knowing that her sister had felt comfortable sharing information about HIV with her when she was diagnosed gave Caroline the courage to trust her sister with her own test results.

Though she has chosen not to share the fact that she is HIV positive with most of her family, Caroline receives support from the other women in the support group she attends regularly, led by a social worker from Community AIDS Response. Caroline becomes animated when talking about the important role

that the HIV support group plays in her wellbeing, "We support each other and talk about any problems that we have been struggling with even if HIV isn't the cause. We teach each other how to cope. Being able to have these women that you can trust helps you to stay healthy inside, not only physically."

The information that Caroline has gained through her support group has been invaluable. "I know that using a condom now every time my boyfriend and I have sex is going to mean I have a future, because I won't be reinfected." Community partners, like Bryanston Methodist Church have come alongside CARE to help meet the needs of the women in the group by bringing food staples every month. "I actually only

eat a little bit of the food myself. The rest I save for my family because they don't have enough food. I am thankful that I am able to provide for my children with the help of the food I'm given. It means that this group doesn't just help me, but my family too."

"... coursework centring on communication and leadership development."

## CARE's Counselling Mentorship Programme

Counselling is a profession of intense emotions, travelling the road of another person's trauma and grief. It is a road that can feel lonely if attempted in isolation. The first week of September heralded the initiation of a new CARE support programme for counsellors. Geared towards empowering seasoned counsellors to mentor those with less experience, the Counselling Mentorship Programme also provides participants with skills designed to enable them to add value to the daily operations and team dynamics of the busy

VCT clinics and hospitals where they work.

Counselling candidates, nominated for the programme by supervising social workers, underwent a selective interview process to identify those with exceptional passion who might benefit most from coursework centring on communication and leadership development. Programme elements included skills surrounding conflict resolution, tolerance, clinic operations and included instruction on basic computer skills making documentation and re-

porting directly from clinic sites more streamlined.

Putting their newly honed skills into practice, in the month following programme completion, each participant has identified one new counsellor to benefit from a mentoring relationship, extending supervision and support. CARE looks forward to the ways in which this programme will positively impact the effectiveness of our counsellors as they walk alongside clients each day.

## A Gift from Helen Suzman

There are few in South Africa who leave a legacy as rooted in the cause of equality and justice as that of the late Helen Suzman. Elected to the South African Parliament in 1953, she stood unwaveringly against the laws of apartheid during her 36 years representing Houghton as an MP. Always fast in coming to the defence of the disenfranchised, Helen Suzman's tongue was even quicker. Frequently questioning the ethics of racial discrimination in her country, a minister once criticised Suzman for asking questions of Parlia-

ment that embarrassed South Africa. She swiftly replied: "It is not my questions that embarrass South Africa. It is your answers."

Recently, Community AIDS Response was notified that before her death earlier this year, Helen Suzman had nominated CARE to be the recipient of her portion of the royalties from the book *Wisdom*, by Andrew Zuckerman. Community AIDS Response is honoured to receive this gift. We honour Helen Suzman's legacy of shared belief

in the same intrinsic human value and dignity that is afforded to our clients each and every day.



Photo Courtesy: The Helen Suzman Foundation



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### Our Vision

A South Africa that uplifts and upholds the dignity of individuals and communities regardless of health and economic status.

### Our Mission

To be the preferred organization partnering with individuals and communities to find and cross the bridge that provides hope, opportunity and choices over HIV and AIDS and other chronic/communicable diseases in order to promote the well being and sustainability of communities.

### Our Values

Open Conversations  
Dignity & Respect  
Integrity & Honesty  
Passion & Commitment



## Reaching Out to Inner City Teens

An exciting new partnership is being established at CARE! Recently approached by the Makhulong a Matala subsidiary of the Johannesburg Housing Company (JHC), Community AIDS Response has been asked to assist in addressing the needs of over 9,000 people residing in JHC buildings throughout inner city Johannesburg.

Established in 1995, the Johannesburg Housing Company maintains a commitment to urban renewal and regeneration projects in the heart of Johannesburg. Following the establishment of JHC, Makhulong a Matala was launched with the purpose of addressing the social development needs of those low and middle income families living in JHC properties.

At the end of September, CARE conducted a youth outreach event for teens living in JHC housing aimed at raising the level of understanding and awareness related to HIV, STIs, communication skills and elements of healthy relationships. Held in a facility provided by JHC, staff members and social workers from CARE were joined by 70 high school students

for a morning of open and honest conversation. The teens were given the opportunity to speak freely and ask questions that can often feel intimidating or uncomfortable when asked of parents.

Divided into groups of 10, each team of youth was provided with a topic to brainstorm, discuss and then present to the rest of the groups. Though youth-led discussions do have a tendency to stray off topic—often wandering down trails of laughter and mischief—there was immeasurable value in teens getting the facts from one another and relating as peers.

At the close of the youth forum, CARE's team asked the teens for feedback. Would they like to have more opportunities and platforms for questions? What are they thinking about every day that they wish they could talk to parents about? What were they able to take away from the day? Interested in continuing to have frank conversations, the youth also asked if a similar event could take place for their parents. They felt that their parents didn't have the information that they had been able to share with one

another, and that they might feel more understood and be able to speak more openly if they had some help getting the conversation going.

We're excited about the fact that we can assist hundreds of families living in the inner-city through this partnership, families with children who are asking for support in moving towards futures filled with possibility. We'll keep you posted!



**Youth learn about  
HIV & AIDS**