

AIDS is not our problem...

Perhaps we do not say it aloud, but many South Africans act as if the AIDS pandemic does not exist.

The reality, however, is becoming increasingly obvious in the communities around us:

- **Every day 250** HIV+ babies are born in South Africa;
- It is estimated that there will be **5.7 million AIDS orphans** in South Africa by 2014;
- The World Bank predicts that, because of AIDS, the **economic growth rate** of Africa could **decrease by 50%**.

Eldon Howard of *SIM International* sees the AIDS pandemic as perhaps the greatest opportunity for the Church to take the Gospel to a dying world! "Whenever catastrophes upset the status quo, tradition and social pressure loosen their grip, resulting in greater

responsiveness. In the present crisis, many are open as never before to new truth - the truth of Christ."

Petra College and the AIDS pandemic

Petra College sees its training as a measure to help prevent the pandemic, as children are taught Biblical principles and values and, when confronted with temptations, are better able to make the right choices. During the past few years, the College has also been involved in training volunteers who care for AIDS orphans. They have been given the skills to do the following: Lead children to the Lord; counsel traumatised children; stress management; good time management, etc. During this training, students get a great deal of exposure to work with children. With the help of overseas funds, 205 volunteers were



Volunteer workers from the Sizabantwana Project giving out food to orphans.

trained during the past few months.

AIDS is probably the greatest threat to Africa at present. With God's help and with the faith of a David or a Caleb, the Body of Christ can go into battle against this giant and make a difference by getting involved.

From despair to hope

About two years ago Niki's mother died of AIDS. Niki was one year old. Her mother left nothing - just a few children - neglected and seriously ill.

Niki had TB, an enlarged liver and double pneumonia. Her little body was covered in sores, she was grossly malnourished, neglected, and, seeing that she came from a family infected with AIDS, she was probably dying of it. She cried incessantly. Her brother, all of 11 years old, was the breadwinner of the family. He looked after cattle - at 50c per day! He was so weak and sick that he could hardly talk.

George Snyman, founder and leader of *Masoyi Home Based Care* in Mpumalanga, says it was the worst situation he had ever seen in his work with families afflicted by AIDS. As far as Niki's grandmother could see, suicide was the only way out. George agreed to take Niki for two weeks, just to give the grandmother a break. He was sure that the child would not survive anyway - she was dying. George's family took the little bundle of misery to their hearts immediately. She did not sleep and cried constantly, but, just as constantly, they prayed for her.



George and Caroline (second from right) Snyman and their children. Through the unselfish and sacrificial love of the whole family, they brought new hope to Niki (held by George) by making her part of the family.

They will never forget the moment she gave them her first smile! Slowly she reached one milestone after another in her development. Niki is now 3 years old. A pediatrician recently examined her. **He declared her to be healthy and without a trace of AIDS; altogether normal, with no sign of her**

tragic past!

Through selfless love, she was saved from death and put on the road of hope. The Lord is merciful, but He uses people as His hands and feet to spread His mercy. He wants to use you and me to turn the tide and bring hope to children without hope.