

The Mtsi family

You can tell you are nearing the Little Angels Life Care Centre in Orange Farm by the children playing on the jungle gym under a big tree right outside the house. These children living with HIV have found a new home and have become part of a loving family.

The heart of this family is Seipati Mtsi (50), who is supported by her mother Ivy (70). Although the family recently moved to a new home, separate from the care centre, Seipati's daughters, Tsidi (21) and Mpho (13), and her granddaughter Itumeleng (10), have lived with and accepted the children in their mother's care as part of their family.

Seipati is a calm woman who, after a difficult marriage, seems to have found happiness in her life and work. The children have given Seipati a life filled with love, just as she, her family and helpers are giving the children a home filled with love and a chance to play and be children.

Seipati (50)

In 2000 I got divorced from my husband of many years and decided to make a big life change. At that time I did not know much about HIV or AIDS or about abused children. I had worked at the checkout at Pick 'n Pay and at Checkers. My husband had been abusive to me and for a long time I did not tell anyone. It took me five years to finally move out. I could never relax at home and I had been admitted to the hospital twice. They said it was stress.

I moved into a makuku (shack) in Orange Farm and lived there for one year. I was selling food at a taxi rank to save money to build this house. For a while we were six women here – my mother, my two daughters, Itumeleng and myself. Then I decided to open a crèche for neighbourhood children.

It wasn't until 2002 that I received my first HIV-positive child. A sister from a clinic here in Orange Farm brought me two children. They were brothers – Jokani and Refilwe. As word got out that I was caring for HIV-positive children more kids kept coming. Soon the parents started to pull their children out of my crèche, this was in 2004 – they were afraid. So I decided to concentrate on HIV-positive and abused children and my neighbourhood crèche changed into a care centre for children with HIV. I am now caring for eight children aged one to 12. Two of them have fathers, two of them have mothers, and the

rest have no family. Sometimes the kids see their parents, but mostly they don't because they were abused. The crèche is also open to children who need a few days away from home – sort of an emergency place of safe keeping.

I have been taking classes in early childhood development. I want to develop a place that can give children opportunities to be children – to play, to dress up, to pretend and to make-believe. We have costumes, games, books, toys and all kinds of things to help them play and develop.

“A life filled with love came as a miracle.”

For a long time it was my mother Ivy, my daughters Tsidi and Mpho and my granddaughter, Itumeleng, who were helping here. We all lived together and just loved the children. That was most important to all of us, to give them love. Recently my family moved to another house nearby as

they needed their own place and the crèche needed to expand. But my mother is still my strongest support. She is always helping out. Mpho takes the children as her brothers and sisters and Tsidi is now married and living in the United States. She sends me money to help support the centre. She still comes to visit.

I have become born again in so many ways. I am a different person – before I was unhappy, I didn't always respond to people. Now, when people come by, they go away happy. It was a miracle for this to happen to me. Right at the time that I needed to make a life change, when I also needed love, the children were brought to me. It gave me a new life.

Still, this is a tough job. Most of the kids now are on antiretrovirals (ARVs) which they can get at Kopanong Hospital. Dealing with poverty is the biggest challenge. I need money for clothes, for trips to the hospital, for food. Sometimes it takes more than a year, even with papers, for the kids to get grants. I have just registered as an orphanage, so I am hoping to be able to raise more funds. But that is hard also.

I end up teaching the children all kinds of things. I often ask myself how and when I will tell them that they are HIV-positive. How will I tell them to condomise? Hopefully by then they will be able to understand it all. Teaching them about death is the hardest. One child came to me and said: “They put my mom in a box and covered her.” I teach them that I am their new mother.

I am at a point now where I feel confident to do my own thing, and I am going to do it whether people like it or not. I am not afraid of anything, I feel brave and of



course I pray. I have a lot of faith and I have a lot of love. I hope that the home and the crèche will grow, that we will be able to have more children.

There have been some recent articles about our place in the newspaper. We were asking for help and I was surprised by how big the response was – from businesses, from ordinary people offering clothes, food and toys, the jungle gym was donated, and building supplies. It has come from all over – Sandton to Pretoria.

Barlow World has contributed a refrigerator and washing machine and also building supplies. We will be able to remodel the house to make it bigger. Now we have four rooms and a kitchen. I want more rooms and

a bigger bathroom inside. One company will help us to paint the house and finish the yard so the kids can have more room to play.

We now also have a housemother, Martha, and a teacher, Fikile. They are all wonderful. Martha's own children come to be with the children, caring for them, changing their nappies and all. They know that they need to wear gloves but that does not stop them from caring for them.

You know, the kids have become my boy friends and girl friends and we are blessed with whatever we have – even if it is only pap and tea. ○



Back from left to right: Selinah Mashinini (35), Dudu Mashinini (Selinah's niece, 12), Agnes Mokwena (Selinah's sister, 41), Beauty (Selinah's daughter, 17). Front: Lucky (Selinah's son, 8).

The Mashinini family

Selinah Mashinini (35) is a single mother living with HIV. She lives with her sister Agnes Mokwena (41) in a one-roomed flat in Alexandra, Johannesburg. Selinah has two children: Beauty is 17 and Lucky is eight. The sisters have also adopted Dudu (12), their brother's daughter.

At night the spotless kitchen is turned into a bedroom for the three children, while the two sisters sleep on the double bed. The family exudes a sense of warmth, closeness and fun. Although Lucky has not been told about his mother's HIV status, they talk openly about AIDS.

Selinah is a volunteer home-based caregiver and counsellor at the Community AIDS Response Centre in Norwood and also volunteers at the Esselen Street Clinic. Agnes is the sole breadwinner through her work at a hair salon in Johannesburg's northern suburbs.

Agnes Mokwena (41) – Selinah's sister

When Selinah first told me she had HIV I did not believe her. I said: "Selinah, are you joking?" I thought she was testing me. When we were kids we used to fight sometimes and even now we fight. I always tease her. We try to make this sickness light for us. I will just say: "You have got AIDS, you can die tomorrow." And she will say: "At least I know my status. You could also die tomorrow!"

When she was very sick I would say to her: "If you mess in the bed, I'm going to give you a hiding." But she knows I love her. That time when she was very sick her mouth was pink. She was a skeleton. She was not eating. She would keep vomiting all the time. Caring for somebody that is sick is hard. I had to carry her to the toilet. I had to take her to the hospital every week. The kids were small. I always tell her that if I weren't here she would be six feet under.

I lost lots of things because of my sister. I had two taxis and one car. I could not have time even to go out with my fiancé. He was threatening me: "I bought you this, I did this for you." Meanwhile he was forgetting that there was somebody that is also important to me that I had to look after.

There was a time when I was not working and I would make arrangements for Selinah to be taken to hospital. She would ask for food but I did not have one cent. I kept on asking people to help, but they get tired. Then one day I got up at 7 o'clock in the morning and I walked from

here to Rosebank looking for a job.

Selinah does not want me to have a relationship. When I come home late, she becomes worried. She chooses boyfriends for me because she says: "I do not want you to be like me, like a potato. I want you to look after my kids." When I tell her she must not have boyfriends she says: "I am still young. My doctor told me that I can have a boyfriend as long as I stay safe." I say: "The doctor is telling a lie. You have got children. You have got food. You look nice. You have got everything."

I feel that maybe if she has a boyfriend she will return to the way she was before she got better. I even feel jealous because I feel like she is my girlfriend or my husband. We are used to being together all the time. What makes our relationship work is in the heart. I do not have any children and I could be staying on a

big property but I am here because of love.

I do cope. To me it's like the worst is over. I mean it's like bread and butter to me. I'm so happy to see her well like this and I always say: "God, thank you for everything. Thanks for food. Thanks for work."

Beauty Mashinini (17) – Selinah's daughter

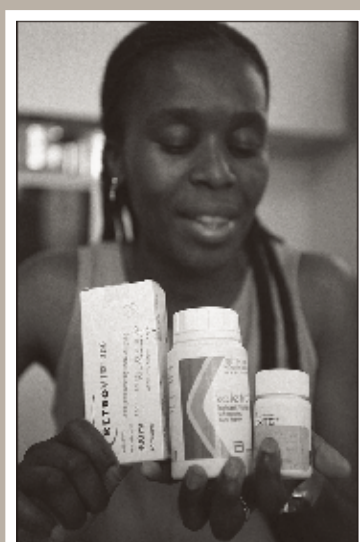
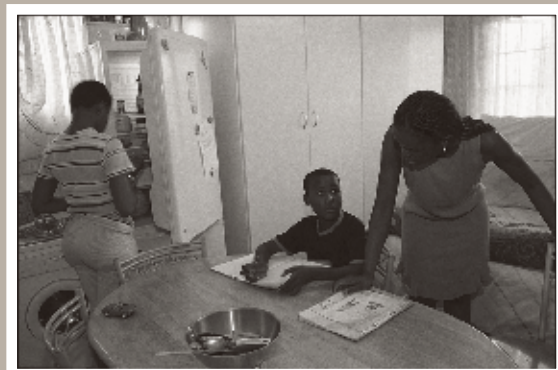
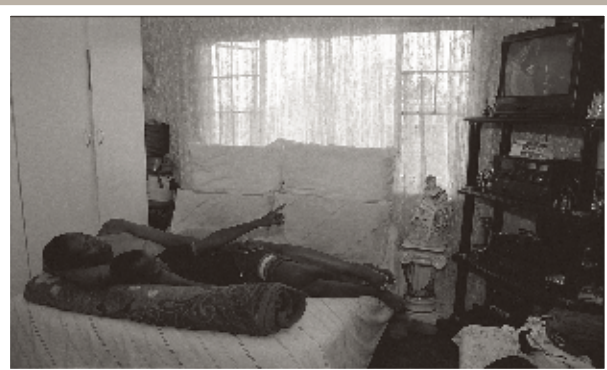
I found out that my mom was HIV-positive when I overheard her talking to her friend. At that time I did not understand what the disease was and how she got it. I could not understand why she did not tell me when she got the results. I felt so small, like she did not trust me.

I was sick and cross at the same time. So I talked to my teacher about it and cried. I did not know what was going to happen to my mother. There were times when it affected some of my marks. But my teacher told me not to worry so much about my mother, just to go with the flow. She always says: "When you have problems come and talk me. When you need anything, like money for trips at school, come and talk to me."

At the time I was not aware of any other kids whose parents were HIV-positive. Now some of my friends also have people in their families who have some kind of disease. It's no longer a drama or something unusual.

At school we have life orientation classes where they teach about AIDS. There was a man who has lived with AIDS for 10 years who came to our school to talk to us. It was an inspiration to me.

But I think a support group for children whose parents are HIV-positive would be good because sometimes I feel



a bit down.

We try to eat a healthy diet, but sometimes you want to eat some food my mother does not want. For example, she does not want spices and sometimes you feel like she is being unfair.

She is so overprotective. I'm in grade eight, and it's like she has to hold me so that I don't fall. Sometimes when I ask her if I can go out she wants to know where I am going, with whom and at what time I'll be back. If I tell her it's a sleepover or a house party then it's: "You cannot go. They might put drugs in your drink." But she is okay. She allows boys into the house. Instead of having them stand out there throwing stones at the door or calling for me, she wants them to knock and introduce himself. Sometimes I appreciate it. Other times I do not.

Sometimes she gets sick but she does not want to tell us and you can see that she is hiding her pain. She feels like she is becoming a burden to us. Sometimes when I have to stay here and look after her, I do feel that she is a burden. I feel like this is too much for me and I just go away. I tell her that I will be back just now, but I go away for a long time. When I come back she says: "You do not care about me. You would be happy if I die." She says I am making her sick and all those nasty things. But it is just that sometimes I cannot be there for her.

And then there's my aunt. If I ask my mom if I can go somewhere, it's like: "You know what your aunt is going to say." And I say: "Sometimes you need to make your own decision. I'm your daughter and I feel like I have to talk to you, not my aunt." She wants my aunt to be involved because she is the breadwinner.

What would make a difference is if other relatives could open up. Sometimes it is clear that some of them are HIV-positive but they don't want to open up because they want to give an impression that the person was poisoned or the ancestors are unhappy. My mom just opens up to everyone. That also makes me cross.

Most of my cousins go to township schools and I'm the only one who goes to Northview, a multiracial school. When I try to say something they feel I am trying to prove that I am better than they are. They sometimes call me a coconut – "black outside and white inside." We used to go to the same church but I had to find my own church because of their comments. They just don't want to see people getting somewhere. They want people to always come to them and beg for something.

But my family appreciates my mom. She is an example to us all.

Selinah Mashinini (35)

I found out that I was HIV-positive in 1995 when I went for prenatal care. That time there was no Nevirapine or AZT and I asked God for my child to be born negative and God heard my prayers.

I went for about a year without telling my family my status. It was stressing me. My family did not know what was wrong and they took me everywhere for help. The witchdoctors lied and said that my mother's family bewitched me. This caused the two families to fight. I

was also worried that if I died my children would need someone to live with. So, when after a year I realised I was still alive, I decided to tell my family.

At first they didn't believe me because I was picking up weight but eventually they accepted. They were supportive. Now I have told everyone, except my son Lucky. I will tell him when he is 10. I think he will understand, although my daughter told me that after I told her she did cry. She thought I was going to die then.

I have asked my sister Agnes to look after my children when I die. It was very hard because I was crying as I was talking. Agnes said: "You are not going to die. You are going to live with me and the children." I told her: "I do want to see my children grow up and my grandchildren, but if God wants me I cannot do otherwise."

That time I was so sick. I was praying to God not to take me away from my children because Lucky was only a couple of months old and I wanted to see my him grow and hear him say, "I am hungry," or "I want to go to the toilet." I think God heard my prayers. Lucky is eight years old now, and I was asking God for only two years.

The kids do understand my illness. I know that they have had difficult times when I was sick and the stress was too much for me. I was arguing and telling them things I should not have. Like I told Beauty that she does not care about me because I was a burden. But you start to get to know each other better and we have love for each other. If Beauty goes and visits somewhere I miss her.

My sister and I have also come to know each other better. I know when she is angry – she will just argue and I will shut up and give her space and let her argue until she has satisfied herself. If I tell her I want my own house she gets angry. My sister is protective of me. She does not want me to have a boyfriend. But, I am still young. I still have feelings. They are not dead.

I decided to work as a volunteer home-based caregiver and peer counsellor because I thought it should be nice to help other people who are not open about their status. I have learned many things through this job and it means a lot to me. I become so delighted when I help at least one person a day. What I have experienced is that if someone in your family is HIV-positive, you start to care for other families too.

HIV is not here to kill us. It is here to teach us how to love one another, how to care for people and how we must be faithful to our partners and each other. I am trying to make others see that if you are infected you must learn to carry that hard stone so that it is easier for our families. I know it is a challenge to have a person who is HIV in the family because at times that person has many complications and you must care for that person when they are sick. It's when you show that person love that they will see that they are not alone. You can show care by touching that person and listening to them.

Be patient. If you become impatient, I will see that I am no longer the person I was before and I will think that people are afraid of me. We do not need people to carry us on their backs, just to hold us and listen to us. ○



Back from left to right: Jacobus De Wee (Naboe's husband, 34), Naboe (32), Front from left to right: Siddique (Naboe's son, 14), Fatima Abrahams (Naboe's sister, 21), Samier (Naboe's son, 4), Mohammed Salie (Naboe's son, 16).

The Abrahams family

Naboe Abrahams and her common law husband, Jacobus de Wee, live in a garden shed in the back of her parent's yard in Hanover Park, Cape Town. The youngest son, Samier (4), lives with them while her sons from her first marriage, Mohammed (16) and Siddique (14), live in the flat upstairs with Naboe's parents.

This is a tough place to grow up in. The playground near the flat is covered in concrete and littered with broken glass. Life is a continuous and lonely struggle for members of this family. Naboe's first husband died of AIDS. She is also HIV-positive and not only battles to come to terms with the illness itself, but also with the denial all around her. When we went to interview the family in 2005 she was pregnant with her fourth child.

Naboe Abrahams (32)

I told de Wee that I was HIV-positive when I was pregnant with Samier but he thought I was making a joke. He doesn't want to use a condom. He even said to me last week if he has the virus he wouldn't get tested. I said: "If you are not going to be careful, who's going to look after the children? I mean it's a big thing if both of us have that virus."

This baby I am carrying wasn't planned. I went for sterilisation but the doctor wasn't there and the papers weren't filled in right. When I started to feel funny I went to a nurse that I know in Hanover Park and asked her to do a pregnancy test. She said: "Naboe, don't tell me." I said: "Just take my urine and do the test." She said: "Naboe, you know that you are pregnant."

She did the test and it came out that I'm pregnant. My husband was there. They asked me if I want to terminate the baby and I said: "I don't believe in abortion. If the baby is positive I must just live with it."

Our childhood wasn't easy. I didn't want to listen to my family so I ran away. I was 15 when I got married to Mohamed. He was 38. It was a very quick marriage because I was pregnant. He died in 1993. I was wondering what he died of and so I went back to Groote Schuur hospital to ask the doctors. But they didn't want to open the files. When I fell pregnant with Samier I again wanted to know what my first husband died from. I assumed it was AIDS because every time I go to the hospital, when I come into the room everyone is quiet. They finally told me in 1999.

I found out that I was HIV-positive when I went to Mitchell's Plain Maternity Unit. They asked if anyone wants

the test. It took only 15 minutes for the results to come. It was a shock. Everything was falling apart. I was pregnant with Samier. I didn't want to speak to anybody. I was quiet for that whole year.

When I was six-and-a-half months pregnant I had an appendix operation. At seven months my water broke and I was admitted at Mowbrary Maternity. Samier weighed 1.8kg. He was very small. They gave me Nevirapine. Some of the patients said that it doesn't always work, so I left it to God. I was so glad when I first saw Samier, I held him and he was so tiny.

"A hectic load."

They tested him at six months and at nine months. We were waiting there in that room and I was thinking: "Oh God, please don't let Samier

have the virus." When the sister said he is negative I was crying with happiness.

At that time my family were not so close. My mother didn't know that I was HIV-positive, but she picked something up. She could see that I love Samier so much. She asked me: "You were not like this with your other sons, so caring, so loving?" I said, "It's just that he is very tiny".

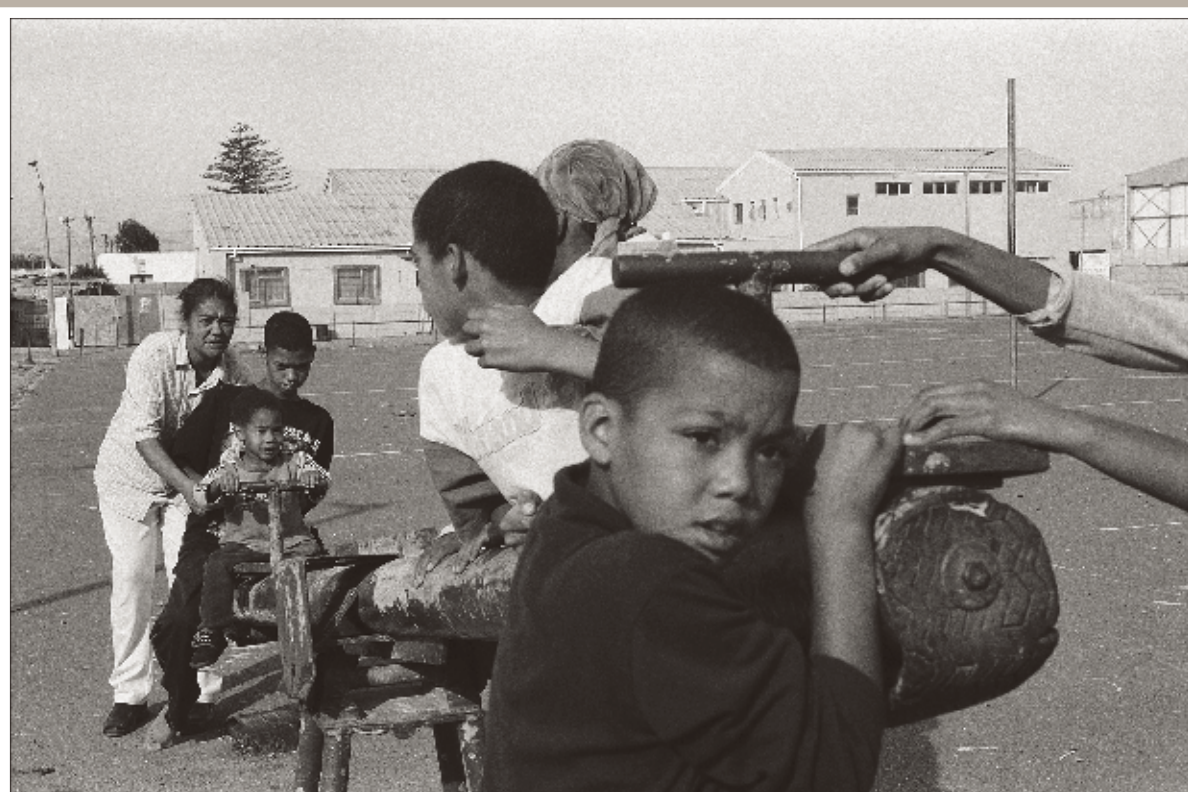
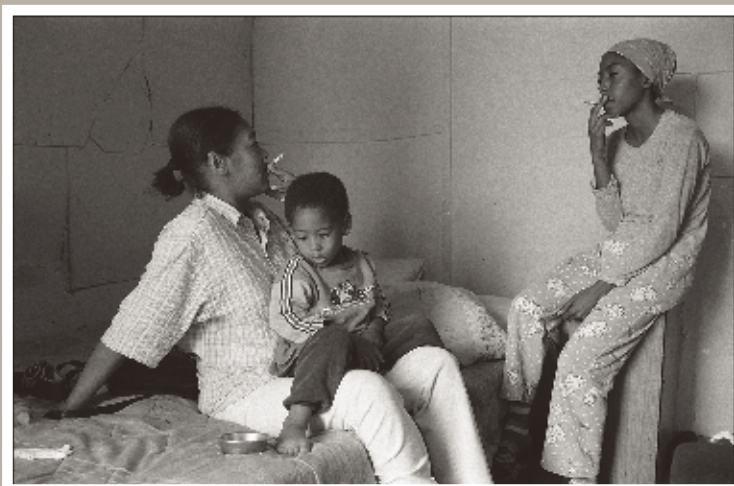
Later, when Samier was getting sick, the doctor at the Red Cross Children's Hospital asked me if there is any sickness. So I couldn't say 'yes' or 'no' because my husband was sitting next to me. I had always been lying about where I was going when I went to the Positive Muslim support group.

I told the doctor: "I'm HIV-positive." My husband heard what I said. Everything was very quiet. When we came home I said to him: "We must talk now."

I gave him a beer and he drank the second beer and he got in the mood to talk. He asked: "Naboe, why didn't you tell me in the beginning?" I said: "I was afraid because I don't know if you would leave me."

The first person in my family I told was my cousin. We were so close. But she told her other sister and brother and she broke that confidentiality. I was cross. I could see that every time I used their toilet they cleaned it. So I started using the bushes. When her baby was born I couldn't touch it because I could see she was thinking I was infectious. But now they are supportive. Sometimes I haven't got food and they will bring some. They will ask how I am or give me money.

One day I was sitting with my family watching TV. They were showing a program about AIDS. That afternoon I said to my mother: "I have something to tell you. I am HIV-positive." My mother was quiet. I think she was very



disappointed with me. My sister Fatima also came into the room and was very shocked to hear the news. My mother said she knew something was bothering me. I did feel some relief. It was such a hectic load.

My father is the only person who doesn't know. I don't know how he is going to accept it. I must find out from his doctor if he can take that news.

I told Siddique and Mohammed two years ago. Siddique was in standard four. That day they were not in school. They were sitting there and I said: "I have something to tell you. I'm HIV-positive."

I could see in their faces that they were shocked. They did cry but Siddique was so ashamed. I can still hear his voice. My husband was sitting here. I didn't realise it was exam time and it was very hectic for Siddique to study. I did ask the social worker to see how his work is going at school.

That year he was in a school play about AIDS. I think he was sad when he was on stage. One of the teachers asked him: "Siddique, are you okay?" That night he came to me and we were alone and he asked me a lot of questions. I said it is not the end of the world. His main concern was what's going to happen if I die. He knows if he needs something I will buy it for him.

I don't know what is in Siddique's mind because most of the time he was brought up by my mother and father. I don't know what my family is thinking, or my sister. I don't know how Fatima is going to react if her boyfriend finds out. It's a struggle for me because they don't talk to me and say how they are really feeling. They must just open up. Fatima supports me and goes to counselling, but she is not committed to tell her friends. I also think my mother is ashamed to talk to other people because they can reject her or they won't come to their house.

We do have fights. Sometimes I can see in my mother's face that she wants to ask me something. If she could just really open up. I know she didn't have a wonderful childhood either and I can see her point that I wasn't open enough, but I'm open now and I want to reach her, but I can see it hurts her.

My mother has asked me what is going to happen if I die, who is going to bury me? I told her she must not worry because I have arranged everything. There is a Muslim organisation that has trained the people who can wash us. The moment you die, after 15 minutes they will know that the virus is dead and nothing is wrong with that body.

There are still things that must be settled. This is not a house for my children's future. I have to find a decent place. If I am not there they mustn't struggle with money and with a place to stay. I know my sister is there but she will get married. She must take responsibility for Mohammed because he also has epilepsy. If anything happens to my mother then Fatima is the guardian. It is a

big responsibility for her, especially because she is young. I know she loves them and that they make her very cross.

Sidique Abrahams (14) – *Naboe's son*

I first heard about HIV and AIDS when I was in Grade six, about two years ago. My mother told me that she is HIV-positive but I have tried not to think about it. She is normal. My teachers also don't know about it.

Jacobus De Wee (34) – *Naboe's common law husband*

I was trained as a machine operator, but in 1997 I was retrenched. That time I lived in Bloemfontein. So I did a course in security. I tried to get a job in Cape Town but you have to buy your own uniform and they pay you very little.

Naboe told me in 2002 that she was HIV-positive but I did not want to believe it. She was six months pregnant when she told me. I know about HIV, sexually transmitted infections and all that stuff, but I want to see a doctor's letter. She must be tested in front of me.

I did not think about it much at that time because there was a lot happening and she also told me that she wants another baby and that we must try for a girl. I told her I did not want any more children because I already have a lot. I have two boys in Bloemfontein from a previous relationship.

I haven't told my parents about it. Naboe has also not told her father yet. The right time will be when we get married, either in church or at the magistrate's court. We are currently married, according to Muslim rites.

I haven't been tested yet. I am so scared to be tested. If I get tested and find that I am HIV-positive it will mean I am going to die. I don't want to hear that news.

At the moment I do not use condoms. I am a bit confused – I believe 90% that Naboe is not HIV-positive and 10% that she is. If Naboe wants me to go with her to the doctor and get tested I will go. Naboe goes to the Positive Muslims support group. I will go there if they invite me.

The people around here know that Naboe is HIV-positive but I have not felt pushed to deal with any of that stuff. Actually, I am not concerned about what people think of me. What I do not like is for people to say bad things to my wife. I will not tolerate that, she did not ask for that sickness.

We have decided to go to Bloemfontein at the end of the year and stay with my family there. If something happens to her I will do whatever is necessary and when I am done I will carry on with my life. I don't see any difference whether Naboe is HIV-positive or not. I am responsible for her. I will make sure that I see to her needs. I will do what I have to do until the end and she will rest in peace. ○



From left to right: Natalie Markland (Keith's daughter, 18), Keith Markland (42), PJ Sabbagha (30).

The Markland/Sabbagha family

Keith, PJ and Natalie live in the Johannesburg suburb of Melville. Their house is also the office for the HIV/AIDS work that Keith and PJ do. There is always lots of activity around – with artists, dancers and AIDS activists meeting in the garden planning events.

Keith is an engineer by training. He worked in that profession for De Beers for almost 20 years before heading their in-house HIV/AIDS project. Recently he left the company to work with PJ on the Anti-Retroviral Theatre and Forgotten Angle Theatre projects – both of which use culture to do HIV/AIDS education and training with young people. PJ is a dancer and choreographer. In 2005 he was awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award for dance. Together with Keith, he has created an annual event called 'When Life Happens', which brings together artists, musicians and performers for a week of activities for World AIDS Day.

Natalie, Keith's daughter, recently moved from Durban to Johannesburg to live with her father and to study business. She has a part-time job as a waitress at a near by café and often joins her father and PJ in the workshops that they run.

Natalie Markland (18) *Keith's daughter*

I found out about my dad's HIV status when I just turned 16. We went for a holiday to the Kruger Park with PJ and my dad and my aunt. When my dad told me about his status the first thing I said was: "Well I guess you'll have to stop smoking." The rest of the holiday was fine. I kind of forgot about it, pushed it away. Everyone was expecting me to break down and I didn't. I still haven't.

The first time I met PJ was when I was in standard eight when I did a show at school. I was still staying in Durban with my mom at the time. PJ and my dad had driven down to watch. I didn't know at that stage that my dad was gay. I just thought PJ was one of his friends. Then, one holiday PJ picked me up from the airport and we spent the first three days together because my dad was working. Then I kind of clicked – something is not really normal here. I did feel a bit uncomfortable about it because I didn't know anybody that had gay parents or a gay brother. But I fell in love with PJ. He was like my best friend and my second dad. PJ and I are kind of similar emotionally and we think and feel the same. Like when we get cross with my dad. He is a typical male; he doesn't wash dishes. He is spoilt.

After I left school I moved here to study at the

University of Johannesburg. What has been difficult is leaving my mom, I think she got a bit worried and overwhelmed. Sometimes I also think I would love what my friends have – a mom and a dad living together, with brothers and sisters. But I think I'm very lucky to have such a wonderful father and mom and PJ. They are very understanding and loving.

At first I saw that it is not very normal for a white family to have HIV. Amongst my peers it's not something you would really talk about. Now I do feel stronger and

a better person instead of being an average teenager that doesn't get educated at school about AIDS, and stereotyping the people who have it.

Seeing what amazing work PJ and my dad are doing has also changed my way of thinking about people. They have HIV workshops in schools where

they bring people together and do dance and poetry. It gets you thinking in a different way about people.

I do tell the people I trust about my father's status. My first expectation is for them to resist and go: "Oh no!" But they don't, which has been so surprising to me.

But discrimination hurts. People who don't actually know what the virus entails just make assumptions and I want to say: "Excuse me, do you actually know what you are talking about?" If I meet people who are thinking negatively about it, I try and give them something positive to think about. But I never mention my dad.

Part of me hurts also that my dad has to take all these tablets every day. There is always that question in your head somewhere: "What if the medicine doesn't work anymore and he becomes ill?" Although another part of me pushes the whole thing away – I need to deal with it. It's part of my life and of who I am.

HIV itself isn't such a horrible disease. There are so many different ways people can live their lives and be happy and support one another. It is something that God has put in my life and I believe that things happen for a reason even if you don't know what the reason is. It's not really nice to say it, but in a way I'm glad that I have the life I do. I'm fine. I'm happy.

Keith Markland (42)

I had to disclose to Natalie because of the job I was offered with De Beers as an AIDS coordinator. One of the requirements was full public disclosure and I didn't want her to find out from a third party. At that time I had been seeing a therapist and we worked out a strategy for telling Natalie – exploring the possible reactions and

"What affects your wellness is relationships."



how I should respond. It was not just about saying I am HIV-positive – it was about who I am and that this is part of my life. I also wanted to allay any fears she might have around loss.

Before I told her I had worked quite hard at nurturing my relationship with her. We had gone down to Durban a couple of times to visit her, including a surprise visit for her school musical. It was important for the two of us to build a loving, trusting and honest relationship, so that by the time I told her we would have created a safe space. We organised a trip to the Kruger Park with my sister whom Natalie is close to. And when I told her, she handled it very well.

It was easier for me to tell PJ because I had been through the process a number of times already. I never just go and blurt it out to anybody. I told him as soon as I realised that there was something developing between us.

It was actually quite a strange process to disclose to everybody at work. Up until that point I had only told some key people. The day I disclosed I moved to an office in another building because of a concern around discrimination. But I must say, I found very little discrimination.

On the very first day of my new job I had to address the annual HIV/AIDS symposium. There were over 200 people from all over the world that work for De Beers and I had to stand up and give a testimony as to where I come from and what I have been doing. Shortly after that I had to address the top management for an hour.

I realised that leadership has got to come from all levels – from the top, the bottom and the middle. You can have somebody at the top of the organisation spearheading something; and then you have this massive bottom tier that is motivated and driven to deal with the issues, but if there is a breakdown in the middle management you get stuck. This is also true in the family. I cannot have Natalie and PJ falling apart. Because at certain times I tend to fall apart and I need the support. I have forced them to be stronger.

When I was first diagnosed with AIDS in 1996, I was told I would live 10 years. Those ten years have passed and I have now been told I will live for the next 20 to 25 years. The goal posts are constantly moving. This has had an impact on my decisions around how much I want to give to a relationship. My fear has always been not to put too much burden on other people. But the growth and personal development that I got from my relationship with PJ has been extraordinary.

In the initial couple of years after the diagnosis I went through a stage where I did not know what to do. Now I am trying to understand what this thing is all about. What it is doing to my body. What helps my body fight it and what is going to improve my quality of life.

What affects your wellness is relationships – whether there is a strong sense of trust, of openness, of honesty. Whether you are feeling secure and you are able to manage your situation. PJ and I are very honest and straightforward with each other. I am one of those

traditional English people who didn't show their feelings so I had to work on being more communicative. If something is not working, or either of us is feeling abused in any sort of way, then we speak out.

It's very important in terms of trying to get people to understand HIV and dealing with it, that you find commonalities. We all know what loss is. We all know what fear is. So if we can understand our basic humanity then we can start talking. On another level we have to single out HIV because it requires specific areas of attention and focus in order to ensure that the people are well and productive.

PJ Sabbagha (30) – *Keith's partner*

It was a very conflicting moment when Keith told me that he was HIV-positive. I don't think I had ever felt so in love with anybody in my life before. Everything was feeling so perfect. Before, I had been going through a difficult, dark time and suddenly everything was opening up and there was love in my life. I remember running to a friend the next day asking him what to do and he said: "How often do you find love?"

When I first met Keith, he wouldn't allow anyone to need him because he was scared of the pain they might experience if they lost him. But it was impossible to have a relationship with someone who didn't want to be needed and who couldn't let himself need as well. That was something we spent a long time working through. I think we pushed each other's boundaries quite strongly. In my mind the person I love could never be a burden. Should the worst happen I would want them to be entirely dependent on me. It's about developing a trusting, honest and open relationship where we can need each other – not a debilitating dependence.

Initially the virus can create a whole series of barriers that you need to choose a way out of. The first barrier is on a physical level and the first step is to understand what the virus is all about. From there I can make decisions. Keith and I have learnt to accept HIV as part of our lives. It doesn't dominate our lives. We don't talk about it all the time. If your emotional needs are being met and all types of things spoken through, then life can go on.

If you can't talk about sex there is no way you can talk about HIV. People have sex and want to have sex so I don't think preventing the spread of HIV is about behaviour change – it is about the way in which we manage that behaviour or the level of honesty or openness around that behaviour. It seems that people are asked to change their behaviour before they are even totally aware of what their behaviour is.

Through our work we are trying to impart our understanding and acceptance to other people. Everything we put out in terms of art or theatre or training comes directly out of what we are learning about each other and our relationship. At this moment the most critical thing in terms of developing coping mechanisms is human relationships. In many ways HIV is accelerating extraordinary learning processes. ○



Back from left to right: Portia (16), Seun Motsoeneng (24). Front from left to right: Winnie (13), Piet (23).

The Motsoeneng family

The Motsoeneng children lost their mother to HIV in 1997. In 2000, their father died from an AIDS-related illness. In 2004, their grandmother died from AIDS.

At the time of our interview the five children still lived in the house they grew up in, renting out the garage to a small business so that they can earn some money. The phone they have access to belongs to the tenant. Their house is scrubbed clean, with a couch, an empty bookshelf and a broken TV. Although there is an indoor toilet and bath, the bath has no running water. The kitchen shows the effort that the family takes in keeping the house in order. The children are committed to supporting each other and to keeping and building their family life. Disclosure has been very difficult in the family and the children seem unsure how to handle it among themselves.

This interview was difficult for them as they have not had many opportunities to talk about the loss of their parents. At various points during our interview each of them was overwhelmed with tears, especially Jan (19) and Piet (23), who found it almost impossible to talk.

Seun Motsoeneng (24) – oldest brother

I was never told that my father was dying of HIV. I thought it was TB. Our grandmother did not want anyone to know that he had HIV. She thought that we would be expelled from school if they knew my mother had died of HIV and that my father was sick with it also. Even so, the neighbours were suspicious and no one was talking to us about it. We suspected that something was going on because our father would wear HIV/AIDS t-shirts.

After he died and I started to get involved in HIV/AIDS activities, I started to put things together. He had many of the symptoms that we were learning about. It wasn't until I had a conversation with a neighbour about my father that I was told what he had died of. My neighbour had to tell me. It made me angry that no one had told me before. But you know, they say that in our culture the children should not know the cause of their parents' death.

I decided then that my younger brothers and sisters should not be told about how our father died as they were still very young. I felt that they would not understand. We all knew that our mother had died of AIDS though, because she had told us.

Now I realise that we are all affected and that we should be told. I feel lucky that I understand what was

going on, but at the time it was not something that any of us talked about. HIV is not something new, it is just a sickness and anyone can be infected, even if they know about it.

It is better to know the cause of death, otherwise we blame other people, or other things. Many people have been suspected of witchcraft because of HIV. But it is all lies that create hatred between people. My grandmother blamed my mother for my father being sick. She would say that my mother used to go out when my father was

away. But I know my mother better than anyone, I was with her a lot. My father would leave the country for a long time too, and even if he was around on the weekend he would spend time with my brothers and sisters, not me.

I was never very close to him because he was not around a lot. But even so, he was my father, and when he was sick and no one else would take care of him, it was my job to care for him. I accepted that.

When he was sick at night it was me who cared for him. I would give him his tablets, cook for him, and do errands for him. I am the first-born so I had to take care of him.

I try my best to care for my brothers and sisters. I am the head of the family now. I have tried to keep up with my schooling but I have failed twice. I think it was too hard to study on an empty stomach. But I have never given up because I know that I have to be strong so that I can help my brothers and sisters fulfil their dreams.

I used to sell things in town on the weekend and then during the week I would sell snacks and sweets at school as a way to make some money so I could pay the school fees of my sisters and brothers. The other money I use to pay rent.

I haven't really told anyone before what it has been like for me, what I have been going through. Sometimes I cry, but men are not supposed to cry so I have to keep things to myself. I do not talk about how I feel. Sometimes I feel depressed. I do not know what to do, but I try my best to make my brothers and sisters happy.

When my parents passed away I thought it was the end of the world, especially because my father died in front of me. I thought, "No, I cannot cope." I used to play soccer and everyday I would think about HIV/AIDS while I was playing soccer.

I used to have friends that were bad company for me,

"When a home does not have a mother, everyone can see it."



but when I realised that I no longer had parents I stopped hanging out with them. I did not want to involve myself with bad habits because if I did who would take care of my brothers and sisters?

I used to sit down and talk with my grandmother about life issues. I would ask her advice so that I could survive. From these conversations about our ancestors I joined the church. My parents attended the Zionist church, which believes in our ancestors, but that is not where I go.

Going to school and working hard makes things easier so that I can succeed. Going to church and praying for things to clear up helps too. I encourage my brother and sisters to go to school, to do different activities and mostly to respect other people. If you respect other people your life becomes easier. But life is difficult. When a home does not have a mother, everyone can see it; even the life that you live in that home is difficult. When there is no mother life is difficult.

Portia Motsoeneng (16) – sister

I was 11 years old when my mother passed away and 14 when my father died. Our granny just recently died also, she used to come and visit and help us care for our father. Our relatives stopped visiting when they realised that our father was sick. We last saw them at his funeral.

I was closer to my mother but I was encouraged by my father to be good in school. He wanted us all to be the best of the best.

I was a little scared of my father. I would go to town with my mother. I would also stay with her during the holidays. I was scared of other people when I was younger so I spent a lot of time with my mother. I wish I could share with her that I want to be a bank accountant. Now my brothers help me, but I wish I had someone I could go into town with and buy some new clothes.

I am lucky. I have a few friends that I can talk to. There are other girls I know who have lost a parent. One of them wanted to kill herself when her father died. People made so much fun of her; they laughed at her.

I wish there were more relatives that I could talk to, but they don't visit anymore. Because we do not have anything they will think that all we want is to ask them for money. They came when my father was alive because he would buy everyone beer and drinks. But they do

not come anymore. I do not stay with boys but I do like talking with them, but I wish I had an auntie I could talk to. I only see my relatives at funerals now and we say we are fine, but we aren't.

If you have time with your parents you learn many things from them. You can learn what to cook. You can learn about life. But in my family no one is going to get that because no one can do that for us.

We have figured out how to live together as a new family – Seun is like the father. I do the cleaning. Today is Saturday, it is the day to clean my mother's room. We all share the chores.

Piet Motsoeneng (23) - brother

You know things are different but not that difficult. What has changed the most is that we do not have enough money. But I think it is only temporary. I think I will get a job so that I can help pay our bills.

Winnie Motsoeneng (14) - youngest sister

I was close to my father. I miss hearing him call me by my nickname – 'Nku.' He used to call me to come and sit with him and his friends. He was proud of me and that I did well in school and in sports. I was always glad to show him my grades and my special awards.

Now I do not know what will happen. I have a dream of being a doctor, but now I do not know if I can go to the university because I do not have the money. Maybe I will go to the technikon. Sometimes I think that if my dad were alive he would help me go to university.

When my mom was sick I used to run home from school just so that I could hug her. She was the best mother. At school people ask how things feel, "How are they at home, do you remember your mother?" I sometimes remember her when I am in school. But you know, you have to be careful about what you say. Sometimes it is better for people not to know what has happened. They can say very cruel things to you. Teachers can hurt your feelings and they may not even know it. Sometimes they think they know all about something, but they don't. I am afraid they will criticise me.

Some children have said they would kill themselves if their parents passed away, but I know that with the support I get from my family I will not. My family always encourages me. ○



Back from left to right: Pierre Brouard (45), Peter Busse (46). Front from left to right: Penny Plowman (46), Jenny Hunter (48), Khanya Hunter (Peter's goddaughter, 10).

Peter Busse and friends

Walking into Peter Busse's home in Observatory, Johannesburg, in February 2005, there is an air of tranquillity. The comfortable lounge is filled with sunlight and there are photographs of dancers on the walls and sculptures and art from Thailand all around. From there you can see out onto the garden and the aviary. Books fill the shelves, music is playing and conversations flow easily and fully. This feels like a home where visitors are welcomed as family members.

Peter has a core of friends who look after him and who are his family by choice. At times, particularly in 1999, when Peter faced unemployment and serious ill health – a very distressing time for him – his family of friends held meetings to organise his care and support. Included in this was the setting up of a trust fund to help him with his medical expenses.

Penny Plowman (46)

Peter and I are very close. We met in Swaziland in 1982, and have been soul mates ever since. He knows my family and is a part of my family. People know that where I go, Peter comes too.

He disclosed to me as we were driving to the airport. I was returning to England. It was in 1992. I was traumatised; I felt very alone with it and afraid for Peter; yet I knew that we would go through this together.

And it has been a long journey for us. Reflecting on Peter's illness in 1999, there was many a day when it was Jenny and other core friends who would cook soup and bring it to Peter for lunch. Peter's domestic worker, Rose, also was a tremendous support. She knew what was going on and was there for him. Sometimes she would just hug him and give him comfort.

There were times when his friends met and we all realised that this was not the Peter we knew. It was very scary to see that he could not make decisions or be alone. That was when we all moved into action and we made a plan. We each had particular things that we excelled at and that we could give to Peter and to each other. So that we would not burden each other, we went to other friends for practical things as well as for emotional support.

People sometimes find it hard to understand the closeness between all of us, because we are not his 'real' family but Peter, Pierre and Jenny are family to me, and I am to them. There is a certain freedom in such closeness with friends; you are freed from family expectations,

obligations and old baggage. Peter and I keep on redefining and maintaining our relationship, and we go in and out of intensity and try to learn from our patterns.

Accompanying Peter has been filled with complex feelings. I have realised the power of believing in someone. I have also seen how much power I have to make a difference. Our journey together has been so rich. You do not know what is going to happen, what is around the corner.

We have had to deal with death and dying, loss, and more.

It puts a lot of things into perspective. The experience makes a difference in how you relate to people. For me, the journey has been about learning to love him unconditionally.

Jenny Hunter (48)

Peter disclosed to me in a library we were working in back in the late 1980's. Since then we have a

continuous and consistent friendship that has been affected by HIV/AIDS. But that is only a part of it, our friendship has always been a two-way street of giving and asking for advice and support.

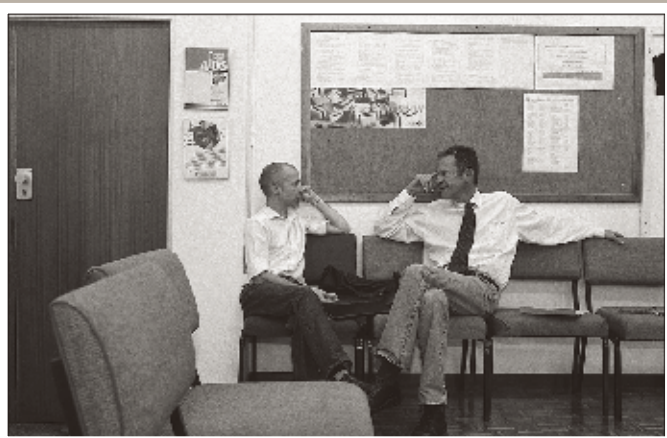
Although Peter and I are close, I have also seen myself as a support to Penny, who for a while was living with Peter. Because I have a family I could not give as much of my time as Penny. With close friendships you do not carry the baggage of families. We allow each other more freedom. We allow each other the right to make mistakes, as we are free from obligation. That has been a real strength in all of our relationships.

My daughter Khanya is Peter's goddaughter. They have a close relationship also. Once when Peter was ill we all went to a game reserve, this was when Khanya was old enough to know that Peter had HIV, and she wrote him the most beautiful letter expressing her love and support. I have learned a lot on this journey. I have come into contact with a lot of different people and now HIV has also become a part of my work.

Pierre Brouard (45)

Peter and I have been friends since 1986. Since then we have been very much a part of each other's lives in every way. We have been able to share things about love relationships; we have been a part of a 'gay men in the helping professions' support group, and we have gone through the death of lovers together. We have no secrets from each other.

"These past few years have been a coming home for me."



Peter trained as a trainer at the Esselen Street AIDS Clinic that I was a part of and we have also set up a 'youth to youth' project and a personal efficacy project at the University of Pretoria.

We have been able to navigate many hurdles together. Amazingly, we have never had a falling out and there has never been tension between us. A strong connection is that we are both gay. We can talk about sex and risks and be sounding boards for each other.

Loyalty is very important to me. You believe in your friends and you stand up for them. This past year I also had a health crisis – I had open-heart surgery – and Peter was able to support me.

I understand better what it is to have a future that is threatened, to be on medication for the rest of my life, to see that mortality is not abstract. At times we were two wobbly people getting back on track.

Peter is amazing. He has always had a sense of hope and this optimism has rubbed off on me. It has been important for us to keep Peter going because we all need that from him. At difficult times I am now able to say: "This too will pass." He can be bossy but he can also make things fun and find joy in small things.

Peter is very matter of fact about it all. He doesn't get upset and keeps us on the ball with his optimism. Yet he is also able to be fragile, afraid and vulnerable. We have all needed Peter to be strong to allay our fears and he has never played the victim. He lives with conviction, style and determination, even when there is fragility.

Peter's friends love and adore him. He is larger than life and inspires people. This also made it possible for us to get the support that we needed.

Peter and I have talked about dying and about our multiple losses. Because we have shared so much, we do not need to talk about everything all the time. There is value in being able to be together without having to talk. We have never said thank you to each other, because it is not important.

Peter (46)

It will be 20 years soon that I am HIV-positive and I am going to have a big party – a '20 years living' celebration! I have worked with so many people and so many people have been there for me and I want to bring them together to say: "Thank you, we have survived!"

My lover, John, who was HIV-positive, died in 1995. He didn't have lots of support from family and friends as he was going through his illness. Later, when I was also struggling with illness I saw that it is love and support that has made it possible for me to be where I am today. Love is very important, but it is often the most overlooked factor. I found out I was HIV-positive back in 1985 yet I did not tell most people. People disclose for many reasons. For me it was a gradual process, and not so much for support but because I needed to share my reality. I knew I couldn't be free to be fully myself if I kept my HIV status a secret.

So I decided to tell my closest friends first.

Disclosing to Pierre, Jenny and Penny was the beginning of a very long journey that has changed all of us. It has allowed us to go through this together and for them to be able to get the support that they need as well.

I have gone through a number of hard times. In 1999, I was very sick and unemployed. I didn't have an income and I did not know if things were ever going to get better. I felt that my life was suspended in a bubble. Nothing was working in the way that I was accustomed to. My life was filled with HIV. My gardener had HIV. His brothers had HIV. Everywhere I turned I was surrounded by it. At times I was in deep despair.

It was Penny, Jenny and Pierre who came together and called 'family meetings' so we could all discuss what to do. I am someone who is normally in control, so when I got sick I really struggled with being dependent on others. I could not make my own decisions and that was totally foreign to me. I had always felt confident that I would not be a burden, but that became something that we all had to talk about: how to deal with the fact that I could not take care of myself.

I moved in with Penny at one stage because I could not cope with being alone. At the family planning meetings people helped me with strategic planning and making decisions. A schedule was set up, with many people participating - of people being with me, of people cooking and delivering soup for me.

I have really grown from the experiences of the past 20 years. I have learned that you cannot do any of it on your own. I think I have an ability now to be graceful in needing and in accepting help.

Without the support of my friends I know I would not be here. We have gone through so much together. We have had the difficult discussions about dying. We have shared things that are very core. We have gone places that are beyond the realm of most friendships - we have created a family.

I am at a place in my life now where all the things that I have wanted to address have come together - work, teaching, travelling, reading, going to the gym, paying attention to my needs, and having a hobby. I have an aviary and a garden. This is the first time I have a home on my own, and I have to say that these past few years have been a coming home for me.

I have been able to sort through what is valuable in life, and that goes way beyond salaries and cars. If I review my life it is rather fabulous, and none of it would have happened without my friends. When I was almost dying I went to Thailand. I had never been very religious, yet I came back energised and spirituality is now a part of my daily life.

Things are falling into place. Once I was able to deal with HIV because of the support of others, I was able to do more, to realise my dreams. I was able to come home. ○



Back from left to right: Dudu (Momo's aunt, 38), Zandile (Momo's mother, 41), Nonhlanhla (Dudu's daughter, 21). Middle from left to right: Lerato (Dudu's granddaughter, 5), Calvin (Momo's brother), Takatso (Dudu's son, 17). Front from left to right: Tsholofelo (Dudu's daughter, 15), Lebohlang (Dudu's son, 4), Thabo (Momo's son), Momo (Zandile's daughter, 23).

The Mabena family

The Mabena family lives in the East Rand township of Duduza. Although they live in two separate houses, the boundaries between the households are fluid and the family eagerly gathers on the couches to talk about the illness that has struck them. They clearly enjoy each other and telling stories about their life together as a family dealing with HIV.

The family consists of the two sisters – Dudu (38) and Zandile (41) – and their children and grandchildren.

Momo (23) is Zandile's daughter and is HIV-positive.

She has a three-year old son, Thabo. She comes across as a cheerful person who relies on her faith to get her through difficult times.

When we interviewed them, none of the members of the family had any work or income. They live on the R750 grant that Momo gets and the R170 grant for her son Thabo.

Zandile Mabena (41) – Momo's mother

I was so worried when I found out that Momo is HIV-positive. I was staying in another house and so I moved here. I thought my child will die and I'm not working and nobody can help us.

I was working for 17 years at Duduza Service Station, but when I got sick I did not receive a cent. I did not even get my provident fund payout. When I went to the Department of Labour they said: "No, there is no money, the owner is owing." I'm tired of this now. I just clean the house and go to church.

At first Momo didn't want to go outside. She didn't want to talk to anyone – she just slept. If you told her that somebody wanted to talk to her, she refused because she was losing weight.

I decided on my own to go to the clinic to talk to someone. They sent an AIDS activist to support Momo, keep her busy and tell her not to sleep all day because she will be more affected. They told her she must go to the clinic because there is always something happening there – meetings and talks.

The children learn about AIDS at school. And when we were talking, Calvin asked: "Mama, what is wrong with Momo?" Then I told him. He told a teacher at school that his sister has got HIV. So the school wrote me a letter asking: "What is wrong with Calvin? He tells us that his sister is sick." I told them that she is.

Calvin is cheeky. When Momo was sick he liked to sit with his sister and once said to her: "Don't cry, eat!"

Momo said, "Go away Calvin!" By that time she was still bad and didn't want anyone to talk to her.

But I can see my child is relieved now and she is starting to eat, gaining weight. She eats anything. I just have to watch which kind of food is not right for her, like spices. And she doesn't drink. Today I am happy and I pray to God: "Oh my God, you are so great."

Dudu Mabena (38) – Momo's aunt

We are very united as a family. On the weekend we are

here or at my place. There is no one who is going to the other side to drink. If there is something, we get together and go to church.

We always pray and take some healing water. I got it from a magogo at Duduza location. It tastes like salt – something like seawater. You only pay R30 for it. We go to sleep at eight and then maybe we set the watches

to wake us up at 12 so that we can pray. If you feel any problem you must talk to God.

Momo now is so free. She talks to others about her HIV. She is not afraid of anyone. And she says to my son: "I'm going to tell my mom that if I die, you are going to take care of Thabo. If I'm dead, don't run away from my son. Love my son as you love me."

Momo Mabena (23)

In 2001, after I had my baby, I went to hospital for a blood test. Somehow I never went back to fetch my results. Then in October 2003, I was very sick. I couldn't walk or eat. So my family decided that I have to go back and fetch my results so that we can know what is wrong with me.

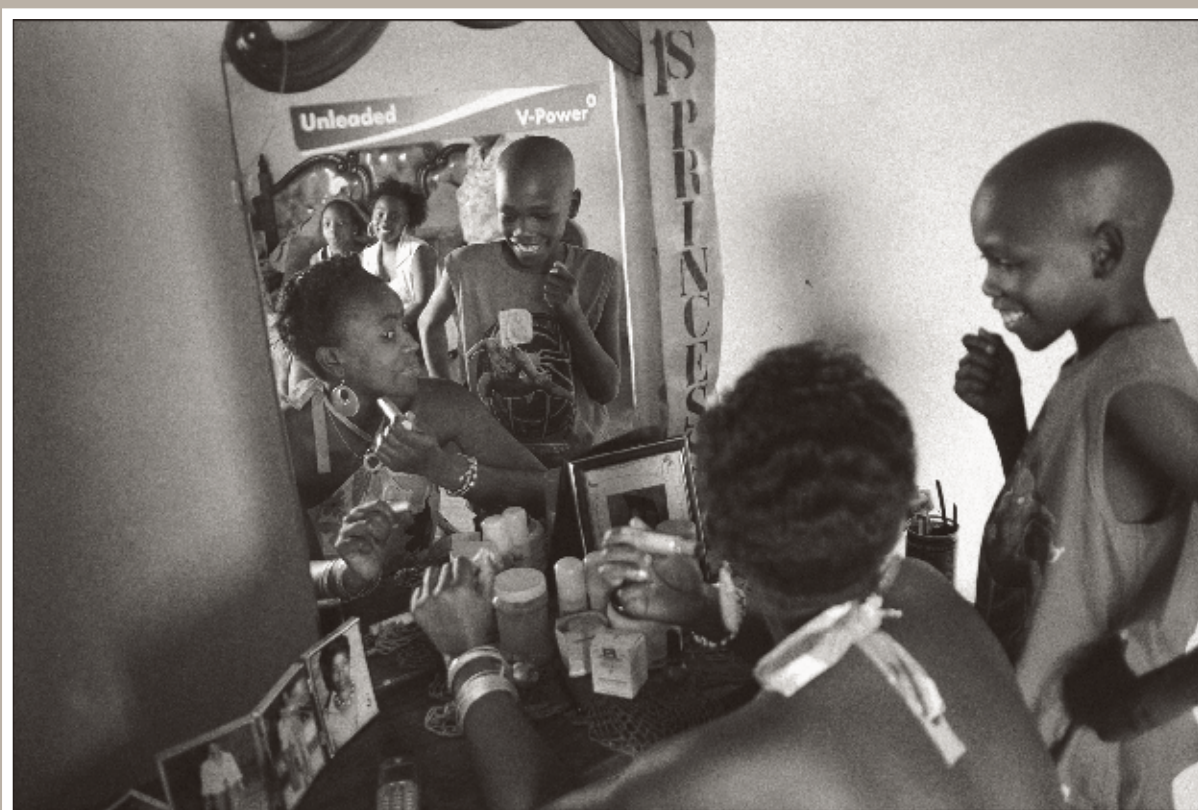
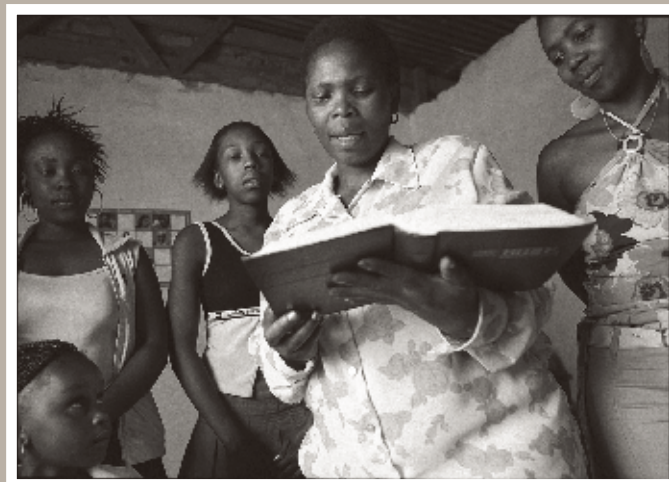
The sister at the clinic told me that I was HIV-positive and that I must go somewhere for help. After that I did not even want to go outside. I was scared. I thought people are going to see what is wrong with me.

I was sleeping the whole week. I just looked at my son and cried. I was going to die and he was going to stay alone. And he is still so small. Everything became like darkness. I was panicking, always crying, closing the door and sleeping in my room.

Then my mom decided to take me to the clinic. From there I started to get better. They counselled me, telling me that I'm still me and that I just have to accept this and talk to God and ask God to help me. Counselling is a very good thing. It's something that helps many people.

My counsellor is Lucky. He made me feel comfortable

**"These past few
years have been
a coming home
for me."**



to talk about AIDS. He told me about his story and I thought: "This person is fine. Nothing is wrong with him. So why should I not be able to become like him?" That's when I came back home and disclosed to my family. Nowadays I like to help other people to disclose.

I told my boy's father about the results and then he went away for a month. When he came back he said he didn't want to go for a test.

Nothing has changed much in my life. I do go out with my boyfriend. I go to parties and sometimes I do drink, but not much. Then my mother feels very bad: "Momo don't do that, it's not good for you." My mother and my aunt are like my friends. I can tell my aunt everything.

Most of the people don't believe that I have HIV. They say: "You don't look like someone who is HIV-positive." I tell them that a person who is HIV does not have to be

thin. It's not like you are dead, always on the bed doing nothing. If you are positive, live your life as other people do. The only difference is just that the blood is positive. They ask me if my son is okay and I tell them: "He is fine."

The very first time when I got sick people started to believe that I was HIV-positive. I showed them the treatment that I was drinking.

I went to the clinic and they said I must eat this and this but I did not manage to buy those kinds of things because they are too expensive - like brown bread, grape juice, spinach and fruits. But my aunt Dudu has bought healing water. That did help me. Before I could not walk, but the water made me to walk. I even have appetite now.

What I can say to others is to accept that being HIV-positive is like any other disease. ○



CONVERSATIONS PUBLICATION, PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY AND WORKSHOPS

The **Conversations Project** consists of three components: a publication, the photographic display and workshops. The display can be used as a stand-alone or together with workshops.

PUBLICATION

Conversations: HIV and the Family tells the stories of 12 South African families living with HIV. Combining photographs and first-person reflections, it tells of how HIV came into their lives and how they are dealing with the disease.

PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY

The photographic display with accompanying quotations from the families that participated in the project has been designed to be mobile, allowing for it to travel across South Africa, reaching its people. The screens fold up into bags that are easy to carry, transport and set up. It comprises of 10 display units that roll out into 1m x 2m freestanding displays.

Displays can be presented in a multitude of venues and spaces e.g., foyers, high density corridors within clinics, hospitals, businesses, educational institutions, community halls etc.

For further information concerning the publication and photographic display initiative, contact CADRE on telephone (011) 339-2611.

WORKSHOPS

The workshops that have been created around the *Conversations: HIV and the Family* Project use Social Therapy as the preferred methodology. Social Therapy recasts development as a social creative process - a process more akin to the creation of a play, a dance, a painting, than to the unfolding of fixed developmental stages.

The workshops aim to support people's development by helping them experience the power of belonging to a group, as well as to expose them to the healing power of collective creativity. This group experience nurtures and puts into motion ways of interacting that build communities.

Interactive workshops are customised for use in various settings and for different purposes. The workshops are flexible in format and tailored to meet specific needs. They are available upon request for use by community-based organisations, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, donor agencies, institutions (churches, schools), and groups who would like to use

the opportunity to explore living with HIV in the family or in the workplace.

This project can be tailor-made for the corporate sector / private organisations who believe that this activity can assist towards creating dialogue with their employees, therefore leading to a better understanding of how living with HIV impacts on the family and the workplace.

For more information regarding the workshops, please contact Betsi Pendry, Director of The Living Together Project on 082-666-5505 or bitpendry@mweb.co.za



