

The Southern Africa Bishops Conference AIDS office (SACBC) Team; Johan, Nandi, Surprise and Onesmus- Constellation visited Inkanyezi in Orange farm on the 14 April 2010. Inkanyezi is a HIV/AIDS care and treatment centre being supported by Cordaid through SACBC.

On the onset of our visit, we began by sharing from strengths with a group of 14 patients (6 men and 7 women) who were eagerly waiting for us. Patients were most proud of themselves and gave varying yet different reflections on their lives and experiences for health and healing.

- When I discovered that I was HIV+, my family stood alongside me.
- I was receiving care from the Home based care givers of Inkanyezi, I got well and my family was happy. I then said to myself, why can't I extend my care to others as well?
- My wife visited the clinic when she was pregnant. She tested positive but then she kept asking herself on how she could encourage her husband to come and test too. There was reluctance but the husband agreed to test and was later put on ART.
- We all know our status in the whole family. When our alarm alert rings, our children remind us that it's time to take our medicine.
- I can now work for my children. I was too sick.
- More people are being encouraged to come to Inkanyezi to test for HIV.
- We can influence change in our Community.
- I have Friends who can support me to address my concerns related to healthy decisions on family life and relationship with my husband who is currently not doing well on ART Treatment.

The patients offered to share their experiences for others to be inspired and change.

Michael, my wife saved our Marriage from Collapsing!

"We accepted, disclosed and influenced others to test for HIV."

Michael Nkosi is a resident of Orange farm Drieziek 3, Soweto in Gauteng Province, South Africa. He is married with 2 kids. He lives



with his mother, wife, 2 kids and his 2 sisters and works in a restaurant. Michael is adaptable to changes, honest to himself and his family, very courageous, supportive, flexible, willing to learn and educative to other people.

Michael learned about his status after his wife went for treatment at the local clinic and was referred to Inkanyezi for VCT. She learned that she was HIV positive and had the courage to tell Michael, who in turn was reluctant and suggested that they must separate because he was not comfortable to talk about HIV/AIDS especially amongst his peers and family. Michael thought it was better to look for a new girlfriend who won't talk about HIV/AIDS.

When the wife got more ill, he realized that maybe he should go for VCT. The wife was patient with Michael until they both went to Inkanyezi for Michael to talk to a

counsellor and get tested. The results also came out positive and in Michael's mind came a question of "How am I going to disclose to my mother". His wife had courage to tell the mother-in-law that they are both HIV positive. Michaels mother received the news without prejudiced and to their amazement. She said to them, "you are my children and I cannot forsake you. The whole family will stand alongside you all the time". Michael was then encouraged to go on with his ARV treatment and to talk about his status openly and freely both within his family, with friends and neighbours, colleagues at work- He has regularly told his colleagues at the restaurant that he was HIV positive. The colleagues thought that he was joking until it was time for Michael to take his medication in front of them. During and over this period, Michael had two of his colleagues calling upon him and asked about the ARV's and where to go for information and help. Michael has learnt that there were many people that had buried their heads in the sand in fear of being stigmatized and discriminated by their families, friends and relatives. He felt that People need to be encouraged and accompanied as his family and wife did. Based on Michaels learning, He has referred the two colleagues to Inkanyezi care and Treatment Centre for VCT and were put on treatment. Michael and his wife were able to tell their children that they are taking medication and they have set their cell phones alarms as a reminder for their time to take medication. So in the evening when the phone rings their children reminds them that it's time for medication. During the day they phone each other to remind one of his/her medication. Michael also highlighted that before he was put on ARV Treatment two (2) weeks ago. His skin was becoming dark and had pimples but now there are no pimples and the skin is lighter. "If you look at my face now, I look like a boyfriend because my face has become younger and tender... Inkanyezi has become a beacon of hope for long life for the orange farm community," reflected Michael.

"If you look at my face now, I look like a boyfriend because my face has become younger and tender..." affirms Michael.

Daddy, Mom, it's your time to take medicine, reminds Michaels Children

"Story highlights and illustrations are as a result of the progress realised by SACBC relevance to support the churches and church structures present with people in communities where they live and work. They can do it, they just need support. That's how you cultivate ownership with people and movements," asserts Johan Program Manager SACBC AIDS Office.