

AGRI AIDS



NEWSLETTER NR 2 - MARCH 2005

Latest News

In our first newsletter, (1 December, 2004) we promised to send a second newsletter within two months. We have taken a little longer, but we are now ready to inform you about the latest developments.

During February 2005 a business plan/funding proposal has been developed for the National Platform. The purpose of this document was to outline the vision and objectives of the Platform in order to start the process to obtain funding. As a result, funding from a Dutch organisation (*Stop Aids Now*) has been secured for about 10.000 Euro and will be utilised to set the wheels in motion.

The National Platform, with the legal identity of a trust, is in the final stages of being established. A Programme Co-ordinator will be appointed to implement Platform activities as soon as sufficient funding is obtained. The board of trustees has been given the mandate to proceed with this at the last meeting in March 2005. The trustees till now, are the undersigned, and we are looking for more representatives from the agricultural sector.

The name of the Platform has been changed from AgriSAids into Agri-Aids, to prevent confusion with another very well known agricultural organisation in South Africa.

To start creating awareness on HIV/AIDS within the agricultural sector, presentations to different key organisations, including the National African Farmers' Union (NAFU) and the Agricultural Business Chamber (ABC), have been made. Gretha Kostwinder was invited to the recent NAFU congress to do a short presentation about the impact of HIV/AIDS in the agricultural sector.

A web site for Agri-Aids is currently under construction and we will send you details soon.

Third Platform Meeting

On 8 March the third meeting of the National Platform took place in Pretoria at the Netherlands Embassy.

Amongst them were representatives from Deciduous Fruit Producers Trust, Cane Growers Association, Agri SA, SA Poultry Association and SA Vegetables. A video was shown on the impact of HIV/AIDS on a farm, which was thought provoking and impressive.

Gretha Kostwinder and Marianne Laarse

Focus on the Medical Pilot

The Ndlovu HAART Farm project started the 17th of November 2004, south of Johannesburg. This farm has app. 400 employees in the vegetable section. The main part of the employees is female. Five of the employees were already on ARV's, before we started

The farm had established their own Primary Health Care unit at their premises for this project.

The second farm was selected outside Groblersdal. The farm has app. 500 workers in the citrus section and has a Primary Health Care Unit with a professional nurse full time employed.

After visiting the farms and receiving data, we learned that the HIV prevalence on these farms is relatively high (in some cases even more than 40%). Because of this fact, and because they have met the selection criteria in order to participate in the program they received HIV/AIDS care and treatment.

Current trends confirm the immediate need to control and manage HIV/AIDS on farm level. Our Awareness and treatment program started in a very difficult environment where HIV/AIDS is controlled by stigmatisation and taboos, but we are very optimistic about the outcome and courageously continue with our teams

The third and fourth farms to be selected are being visited in the two weeks to come. In our next newsletter article we hope to tell you more about results and the influence of this on the work floor.

Dr Hugo Tempelman

HIV/AIDS Rural Barometer

In this section, we hope to update you with the latest news and research coming from existing organisations working with HIV/AIDS, with emphasis on rural communities. In December 2004, the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) hosted a workshop in Gauteng on developing HIV/AIDS guidelines in the commercial agriculture sector in the SADC region. This formed part of the PHAMSA project activities (Partnership on HIV/AIDS and Mobile Populations in Southern Africa). During the conference, the AEO (Agricultural Employers Organisation) reported that:

- the majority of commercial farmers had no HIV/AIDS policies or strategies in place,
- myths around HIV and Aids abound among farm workers,
- women on farms are often the worse affected, due to gender inequality and lack of control over their sexuality,
- employees are often afraid to divulge their HIV/AIDS status due to fear of losing their jobs,
- employers are losing in terms of productivity and income due to the prolonged sickness of infected workers.

For a list of recommendations and other information concerning the workshop, visit the IOM web site: www.iom.org.za

According to UNAIDS, by the end of 2003, an estimated 5.3 million South Africans were infected with HIV, the largest number of individuals living with the virus in a single country.

These statistics confirm the need for the Platform to participate in addressing this problem, especially in rural communities where HIV/AIDS has reached endemic proportions.

Links:

www.iom.org.za

www.unaids.org

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