



## Newsletter AgriAids no 7 April 2008

In our Newsletter number 6, from November 2007 we have informed you about different developments. With this newsletter we would like to update you on the progress made so far.

### **Situational Analysis/Feasibility Study**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, there will be a workshop where the first results of this situational analysis will be discussed. In close participation with the participants of the workshop, we will draft together a strategic plan for the prevention and management of HIV/Aids in the agricultural sector. Identifying best-practice models to inform new project development, based on experience of existing successes/best practises, will be discussed as well.

### **More farms involved: "The battle of Brits"**



Recently we started with implementing HIV/Aids programmes together with the Foundation for Professional Development, FPD, on 2 new farms in the neighbourhood of Brits.

We decided to start "small", not being completely reassured about the capacity of the Brits Public Hospital, ARV-clinic.

The cooperation of the farm owners was heart warming. We did realise once again how critically important the support of the farm owner is, for successful implementation of a HIV/Aids programme.

Farm owners' support is crucial for farm

workers to come forward and get tested; especially to have assurance that jobs will be secured, irrespective of testing positive or negative. This is completely different from implementing a HIV/Aids programme in a more anonymous setting of e.g. a meat factory where the relation between the boss and the worker is far more distantly. Despite the fact that we planned to start "small", the interest was overwhelming. In just 2 days we tested more than 200 farm workers!

Also interesting to see was the difference in time spent on awareness training compared with a few years ago. In effect it took, provided the assurances and leadership of the farm-owners, little more then 30 minutes or so. After this

“awareness talk” all the farm workers, not one excluded, went for the VCT (Voluntary Counselling and Testing). A remarkable result, thanks to the great commitment of the woman who did this talk.

It goes without saying that equally critical was the awareness provided by AgriAids to the farm owners, prior to the VCT-sessions.

We will continue with our activities around Brits implementing HIV/Aids programmes on more farms in the near future.

### **Describing of the process of implementing an HIV/Aids programme on farms**

The IMS study will provide us with a strategic plan for the prevention and management of HIV/Aids in the agricultural sector as well as the identification of a best practise model.

Together with this we also need to describe the procedures needed if a farmer asks us what to do if he/she wants to implement a HIV/Aids programme on his/her farm, including the development and documentation of project protocols and standard operating procedures (S.O.P's)

This is complementary to the IMS study and far more detailed. We believe we have found someone who has a lot of experience already in implementing HIV/Aids programmes in farming/rural communities and is willing to start this challenging task.

This, together with the strategic plan, will enable us to put HIV-programmes in place in different communities in South Africa without reinventing the wheel all over again.



### **New organisational structure of AgriAids**

The first meeting with the new trustees took place recently. We are lucky to have 4 skilled and dedicated people on board. They are: Deon Minnies from the University of Cape Town, Yvette Geyer from IDASA, Jill Axten a farmer and Buzi Dlamini from ABC Ulwazi. For more information on their backgrounds, please visit the website, which has been updated recently ([www.agri aids.org.za](http://www.agri aids.org.za).)

We are in the process of finalizing the new Advisory Board and are pleased that we have found experts who are willing to participate as members. Their names will be published on the website quite soon. One of them is Kallie Schoeman, a farmer familiar to most of you.

Marianne van der Laarse and Gretha Kostwinder have officially “resigned” as trustees and will in the future act as the managers of AgriAids. This is a “confirmation” of the practise of the last 1.5 year. Hugo Tempelman from

Ndlovu Medical Center, also a previous trustee, will stay involved as a member of the Advisory Board.

## **Funding**

We are very busy in organising funding. The good news is that we passed phase 1 from the USAID funding application and we are currently applying for phase 2. That is still not a guarantee that we will be “awarded” for all our good work, but we are so to say, still in the race.

The bad news is, with an exception of one farmer only, none of the organisations we approached for additional money needed for the IMS study to fill the gap, reacted positively. (One of the original funders let us down). This will however not stop us, and we will continue with our quest to urge the agricultural industry to participate actively in our fight against this pandemic.

## **Other news:**

Jonny Steinberg, an award winner writer, wrote a book called:

**Three Letter Plague** (Jonathan Ball Publishers, ISBN 978-1-86842-228-3; ZAR 174.00) It is about pride and shame, sex and death, factors why the Three Letter Plague, HIV, is so complicated.

This book is a must for everybody who wants to understand the HIV/Aids crisis in South Africa, notably in the rural areas.

Kind regards,

The Directors

Gretha Kostwinder

Marianne van der Laarse