



## Looking back:

It is that time of the year for celebrating but also for reflection. AgriAids is reflecting on results, successes and failures of the past year and eager to look forward to the future. We will use the lessons of the past for the benefit of our future activities.

As an NGO, AgriAids is grateful for the support and funding from PEPFAR/USAID, trusting us in the work we do. Nowadays it is not easy to secure funding for the longer term. Meeting the set targets is not enough. As important is the question, did we offer the right services and how sustainable is our programme? These questions are more difficult to answer.

### *Programme Achievements/targets:*

Over the past year AgriAids reached 10,000 farm workers on sexual prevention messages. We tested 7500 farm workers for HIV, glucose, blood pressure and screening for TB. These numbers were the targets as set for the past year and we are proud to mention that these targets were met. This amount includes farm workers from the previous year who are not forgotten and will be monitored by our District Coordinators/counselors. This support is important because people do not always realize the need of regular medical check -ups to monitor the progress of HIV. Being tested HIV positive means that you will need medical care for the rest of your life and especially farm workers need some extra help to keep them in the medical care system, support we are gladly to offer.

### *Did we do it right?*

In the past two years we developed an HIV/Aids wellness model for farm workers that proved its validity. AgriAids has from day one worked in close collaboration with the Public Health Care to make our programme sustainable. Especially in an organisation where you put great responsibilities on the shoulders of your field staff, you need a good communication system with the head office staff –to understand the daily “field” lessons, challenges and the support needed. Training on a regular basis is also a requirement. But the most important feedback has to come from our clients through (follow-up sessions) with the farm workers and their management. The feedback of our clients will be used as input to improve our work. “*Are they happy with our services? What can be improved etc?*”.

A monitoring system will be used to get a random feedback from our target group on a quarterly basis. As an NGO, being a service oriented organisation, we have to learn not just to talk to ourselves and our funders but also to listen to our clients in the first place.

## Recent Farmers events:

In the past months we were involved in two big HIV- farm workers events.

These two events are the result of an intensified attention of the Government for the position of farm workers. Our Minister of Health, Dr Motsoaldi has made it clear that he is

very serious about implementing HIV/Aids wellness programmes for farm workers, realizing that most farm workers, due to all kind of circumstances, have lacked the services they are entitled to. You will understand that AgriAids, targeting farm workers, feels supported by this development.



The first event took place in Sekhukhune and was organised by AgriAids. This event took place at Schoeman Boerdery where 534 farm workers were tested. Other service providers assisted with the HCT campaign during this day. The day was attended by the MEC of health Mme Magazi and the head of HAST Dr. Shilumani.

The second event was organised by the Provincial DOH. The Honorable Deputy Minister of Health, Mme Ramokgopa and the Provincial MEC of Limpopo were present amongst several other VIP's. This event is the start of implementing a sustainable HIV/Wellness programme at the ZZ2 farm which could benefit 7000 farm workers and their dependants. AgriAids has already made primarily arrangements with the management of the ZZ2 farm to start with this huge programme in January.



ZZ2 is the biggest tomato farm in Southern Africa. The Farm is based in Mopani District. The farm has employed  $\pm$  7000 farm worker.

### **World Aids Day**

The theme for this year

**"Zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths"**

This slogan expresses a renewed hope that we will be able to defeat HIV.

Last year AgriAids “celebrated” the 1<sup>st</sup> of December in Barberton on a vegetable farm. This year we do it a bit different. We are invited by the Public Health Care (PHC) in two Provinces to participate in testing events organised by the PHC. Our mobile units and the field staff will perform HCT, together with the PHC, in Limpopo, in Mopani district and in Mpumalanga in the Nkangala district, so our two mobile units will be fully booked during World Aids Day.



It is for us an acknowledgment that farm workers, being underserved for too long, need special attention and support to know their status and get access to care and treatment and have the same (human) rights like everybody else in our society.

### **Impact of the Government’s HIV- Policy**

The action Campaign of the Government to test 15 million people on HIV between July 2010 and July 2011 will be continued in the coming years. More and more people will get to know their status and receive (ARV)-medication. This means that more and more people will stay alive. This implies that the prevalence of people living with HIV in South Africa will increase. The infection rate has to go down and the prevalence rate has to go up. Not all people do realize this, but it is part of the success of the policy of the Government. Instead of dying on HIV you stay alive with HIV.

HIV develops over time. Depending on your life circumstances you will need ARV-medication between 3 and 7 years after being infected with the virus. Monitoring of the disease is therefore crucial but cannot be the responsibility of the Government alone. Patients need to take responsibility for their own health as well. But, this is only possible if you educate and inform the people infected with HIV.

*People are not stupid, people are kept ignorant and that is why people are not taking responsibility.*

Medical professionals have to inform their patients far better and patients have to learn to ask questions. There is too much distance between medical staff and patients, a huge challenge for South African medical staff, from doctors to nurses, to change this attitude and to bridge this gap.



*Don't keep them ignorant any longer.*

### **Looking forward:**

The struggle continues (A Luta Continua)....

NGO's are facing a difficult time. The financial world is in turmoil. This has an impact on the availability of funding. (International) funding will not increase but is already decreasing. It is a reality we have to face being part of a global economy. What is also a sad reality is that poor people are mostly the first to be affected in a struggling economy and our target group is generally poor. This means that we will have to fight hard for our farm workers to give them access to HIV/wellness services also in the years to come. It is their human right to receive care and treatment, especially now the medication is available that has changed HIV from a deadly into a chronic disease.

### **AgriAids on the move:**

Onwards 7th of December you will find us in a new office. Our office was getting too small and we needed more space. Below you will find our new contact details.

In a growing organisation you will see from time to time new faces. Even founders, after serving many years will leave and accept new challenges. Last month we said farewell to Marianne van der Laarse, one of the co-founders of AgriAids. She played an important role in selecting of farms and convincing the agricultural sector of the need of HIV/Aids programmes for farm workers. Marianne has found a new challenge with an international agricultural organisation, the PMA, and we wish her well.

Marianne's position of Deputy Director will be taken over by our Programme Manager, Monene Mamabolo, familiar to most of you. She will play an important role to keep the quality of our programmes in place and will therefore be in "the field" on a regular base. We are also happy to welcome a new Programme Manager, Ntombi Mtshweni, she will be responsible for the provinces KZN and Mpumalanga and you will also find her as the District Coordinator in the Ehlanzeni area. Last but not least we appointed a new finance/HR manager. Her name is Karin Jenkins and she will replace Drienie Sieling who is moving to greener pastures in the corporate world. Karin has a financial background in the NGO world.

We wish them both all the best in their new jobs.

**New contact details AgriAids**

**Onwards 7 December 2011**

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On behalf of the AgriAids team we wish you well, a happy festive season and thank you for your trust in AgriAids.

Gretha Kostwinder, Monene Mamabolo.