

**Sr. Vinaya, Fr. Tony and Sr. Nalini, Botswana HIV/AIDS Holistic Care
September 2005**

Holistic care

The HIV/AIDS has hit Botswana very badly. Every person in the country is either affected or infected. Many families are completely wiped off by the pandemic disease of AIDS. Every earning person in the country has to feed additional five members besides his/her family because AIDS has left too many children orphaned.

We, namely Sr. Vinaya, Fr. Tony and Sr. Nalini are teamed up to do some good for those who are suffering from HIV/ AIDS. We try our best to bring some joy and happiness to those around us. We have started a very simple program and so we would like to call it Holistic Care because through this we aim to bring a total well being to the persons we care for. We began this program in 2004.

About 350 to 400 people attend our program out of these 250 to 300 come very regularly. About 50 to 70 orphans and vulnerable children (children of those with HIV/ AIDS, they are either positive or negative) are also part of our programs.

Our program.

At present we cater to the sick (those with HIV/AIDS) in three different villages namely Mogoditshane, Mmopane and Metsi Motlabe and so we have three centers. We visit them regularly in their homes. Once a week the sick and the children come to the center for a group gathering. All those who are able to walk come by themselves others are brought in by our by our vehicle. Our group gathering is about four to five hours during which we have a number of activities like Bible study and faith sharing, games and recreation, breathing and body exercises, health education, discussions and sharing, and counseling. And a nutritious good meal is served for all. At times those are not able to come, food is taken to their homes. We also collect food, clothing etc from the people around and are given to the sick as the need arises.

Some one was very generous to give us some Vitamin pills for our sick. Every person who got the pills experienced a great improvement in their health. Many people do not have even a meal a day. And when they do take a meal it is not nutritious. So the vitamin supplements are very essential to them. Even though the Government supplies free medication for HIV/AIDS, vitamins are never given. As a result Vitamin deficiencies are seen in almost every person.

We have managed to make houses for two of our sick with the generosity of the Vincent de Paul society in our parish.

Some areas of success we have experienced

- * Most of the sick have improved their health and have a sense of well being.
- * About 20% of them were able to return to their old jobs or found new jobs.
- * They are able to cope with life better as they have the support of the group.
- Those who have died have died with dignity and felt cared till the end.
- All most all of them feel that the quality of their life has improved.

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- Many experience a change of attitude towards life and behavioral change is taking place.
- Some have developed a positive outlook for life and have hope.
- With the generosity of the Vincent de Paul Society at our parish we are able to make house for two of the sick.
- Our centers have become a model caring centers for the country and so many groups are thinking of starting a center like ours.

Areas of collaboration with others.

Many people collaborate with us in our ministry without which our programs will not be a success.

- The Catholic Women's Association helps us with the visiting of the sick and the group sharing.
- The home based care of the Tirisanyo Catholic Commission cook food for us in one center.
- The Novices of the Stigmatine Community help with the transporting of the sick.
- The Nurses and other staff of the Primary Health Center also collaborate with us, they have been providing the wheel chairs.
- We work in collaboration with the Society of the Divine Word priests and brothers.
- The Vincent de Paul society has helped us by building houses for two of our sick.
- A number of lay volunteers help us with our weekly programs.
- A person known to us donated enough money to buy a van (vehicle) to transport the patients.
- In all three places we are using the church for our gatherings, as we have no other place. The priests of Mogoditshane, Mmopane and Metsi Motlabe are generous in allowing us to use the church.
- A volunteer from the Couples for Christ Group help us in all three places.

What are our plans for continuing these sites

In Mmopane we have 50 to 70 orphans/vulnerable children from 3 to 6 years of age comes every Wednesday. We take some classes for them and play with them just to keep them occupied. We hope to make this a regular day care center where they will be able to come daily and study and have at least a meal a day, so that they can go to school and be incorporated in to the main stream of society. In two centers we have no place for cooking and so the cooking is done in the open.

We are trying to get, as much help from the local resources but that is not sufficient for the running of the three centers at present. We do depend on the generous contribution of any one who can help us. We feel the need to expand the centers, as there are too many sick all around us. We would like to do it slowly after stabilizing the present centers and making sure that the resources are available.